

ALL POLITICS IS NOT LOCAL: THE ROLE OF COMPETING NATIONALISMS IN
THE RHETORIC OF AMERICAN POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

by

David Sepulveda

Copyright © David Sepulveda 2012

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

WITH A MAJOR IN

RHETORIC, COMPOSITION, AND THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2012

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by David Sepulveda entitled “All Politics is Not Local: The Role of Competing Nationalisms in the Rhetoric of American Political Ideologies” and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date: April 11, 2012
Thomas P. Miller, PhD
Associate Provost, Faculty Affairs

Date: April 11, 2012
Theresa Enos, PhD
Professor

Date: April 11, 2012
Cristina Ramirez, PhD
Assistant Professor

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate’s submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

Date: April 11, 2012
Dissertation Director: Thomas P. Miller, PhD
Associate Provost, Faculty Affairs

STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

This dissertation has been submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for an advanced degree at The University of Arizona and is deposited in the University Library to be made available to borrowers under rules of the Library.

Brief quotations from this dissertation are allowable without special permission, provided that accurate acknowledgment of source is made. Requests for permission for extended quotation from or reproduction of this manuscript in whole or in part may be granted by the copyright holder.

SIGNED: David Sepulveda

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I must express my sincere gratitude to the members of my dissertation committee, Drs. Thomas P. Miller, Theresa Enos, and Cristina Ramirez. Dr. Miller, whom I secretly came to think of as “Doubting Thomas” for the way he constantly pushed me to fully develop my lines of argument. Dr. Enos, whose amazing attention to detail forced me to look at every word and sentence with a critical eye, and who will surely raise an eyebrow at this sentence fragment. And Dr. Ramirez, whose thoughtful commentary and positive reinforcement always seemed to come at the times when I most needed them.

I must also thank my friends and colleagues Drs. Ben Ristow and Daylanne Markwardt for their thoughtful comments on early drafts. I can only hope that I was as helpful to them as they were to me.

Thanks, as well, to the JAs. You know who you are.

Finally, I would like to thank my family: Mom, Dad, Danny, Heather, Patty, Rusten, Landon, Connor, Elijah, and my as yet unnamed niece-to-be. I love you all very much.

DEDICATION

To my parents, who have worked harder on me
than I have ever worked on anything.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	9
CHAPTER 1: ACCOUNTING FOR IDEOLOGICAL CHOICE	10
The Basic Thesis.....	13
The Quandary of Ideological Choice	17
Ideological Arguments and Labels	22
Political Ideology as a Function of Attitudes toward Change	29
Political Ideology as a Function of Family Ideals	32
Political Ideology as a Function of Epistemology	38
Political Ideology as a Function of Branding	40
Still Looking for Answers	42
CHAPTER 2: NATIONALISMS AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGY IN THE UNITED STATES	45
Nation, State, and Nationalism.....	50
Civil Rights and the Rise of a New US Nationalism.....	56
National Formation	58

The History of US Nationalism	67
Contesting and Defining the US National Identity	75
Identification and Consubstantiality in Nationalisms and Politics	82
Ethos, Nationalism, and Ideology	84
CHAPTER 3: CONTESTING NATIONAL IDENTITY IN POPULAR CULTURE.....	89
Philadelphia, Limbaugh, and McNabb	91
Sportswriters React	95
Ideological Readings of Sportswriters' Reactions.....	103
National Formation Defines the Middle Ground.....	119
CHAPTER 4: VALUES VOTING AS NATION FORMING.....	124
Narrating Nationalism	129
Obama in 2004	132
Palin in 2008.....	145
Competing National Narratives	155
CHAPTER 5: REVERSING THE AMBIGUITY	157
Ideological Arguments in "The Zone of Ambiguity"	158

Making Use of Zones of Ambiguity in American Political Rhetoric..... 165

Opportunities for Reversing the Ambiguity 177

Conclusion: Not Entirely Local 184

WORKS CITED..... 189

ABSTRACT

This dissertation addresses the different ways in which Americans define citizenship and nationhood and the associated implications for politics and political rhetoric. I argue that the contesting of the national identity—the ways in which a given image of the United States is privileged over other images of the nation—is central to the ideological divisions of the United States today. The dissertation begins by examining existing scholarship on the nature of ideological divisions and arguments in contemporary US politics, and the survey demonstrates that each of these approaches tells us a great deal about how certain individual factors influence ideological arguments, but these insights tend to come at the cost of minimizing the roles played by extremely powerful societal forces like race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and sexual orientation. I propose, therefore, a view of the left-center-right political spectrum in the United States as a spectrum based on competing—and sometimes overlapping—nationalist ideologies, with opposing groups competing for control of the state agencies that sustain and diffuse the national high culture. According to this view, individuals define their position in the ideological spectrum based on whom they culturally identify with, and practitioners of political rhetoric would benefit from identifying the culture of their ideology with the American “mainstream.” Toward this end, the dissertation draws on nationalism theory to establish a theory to examine how competing national identities are contested both in political rhetoric and in popular media that is not explicitly political. The dissertation then concludes by identifying rhetorical strategies that have been effective at crossing ideological lines in the past and proposing new strategies that can be effective at crossing ideological lines in the future.

CHAPTER 1: ACCOUNTING FOR IDEOLOGICAL CHOICE

Tip O’Neill needed an acute political mind to climb from the Massachusetts state legislature to a decade-long tenure as the Speaker of the US House of Representatives. He is, in fact, widely regarded as one of the savviest political operators of the 20th century, and his famous maxim that “All politics is local” is still echoed by political operatives decades after O’Neill’s retirement in 1987 and passing in 1994. Yet, he developed that maxim and built his extraordinary political career at a time when American politics and American political communication were vastly different animals than they are now. The last decade of O’Neill’s political career marked the rise of a political ideology that explicitly opposed the ideology that had governed the country since the Great Depression. Even Republican presidents of that period—Eisenhower, Nixon, and Ford—are not regarded as truly conservative by the standards of today’s conservatives. Wes Vernon, for instance, offers an offhand assertion in the conservative publication *Newsmax* that Nixon “governed as a liberal,” and conservative author and policy commentator Stephen Hayward has argued that “any other president who compiled Nixon’s domestic and foreign record would be regarded as standing firmly in the liberal progressive tradition.” Similarly, in a *New York Times* op-ed, Kurt Anderson describes Nixon as “further to the left than any president who followed him.”

The country had only seen a glimpse of the fallout of the Reagan Revolution by the time of O’Neill’s retirement in 1986. What’s more, the two-and-a-half decades that followed have seen the rise of new media—cable television, wireless communications,

the Internet—that have connected previously disparate political communities. Whereas the grassroots movements of O’Neill’s era relied on nationally recognized figures to make those movements relevant in a national context, today’s protestors—be they of the green, antiwar, antigovernment, or Tea Party ilk—can use modern communications technologies to organize not just locally, but nationally as well. That is, where politicians once had to find ways of appealing to each individual grassroots movement at the local level, the modern interconnections of those movements means that they can be appealed to based on the central ideas that connect them rather than each group’s local needs.

Put simply, local politics has seen its primacy fade in the two-plus decades that followed the end of O’Neill’s political career. I submit that this is a product of two primary factors. The first is a transformation in what Habermas calls the public sphere, the modes through which civil society communicates its needs to government (31). Whereas the limits of communication technology once meant that citizens were much more closely connected to their local and state politics than they were to national politics, the ongoing decline of city newspapers and the rise of national cable news channels and online political blogs have turned once-obscure US congressional races into national events. This was never clearer than in 2009 when a special election for New York’s 23rd Congressional District turned into a national media spectacle. The race to represent this rural northeast corner of the State of New York was dubbed by some as a referendum on the Obama presidency and the future of the Republican Party (Bauman), and losing candidate Doug Hoffman’s website strikes an unmistakably national tone. The site’s homepage makes no mention of even a single local issue but does indulge in a number of

tropes that evoke a national context: “take back our country”; “retake our country”; “mortgaging our country, destroying our healthcare system and threatening our moral character”; “I believe in the people of this great nation.” To drive the point home, the site quotes the closing line of the “Gettysburg Address”: “. . . a government of the people, by the people and for the people, will not parish from this earth” (*Hoffman for Congress*; ellipses in the site’s original text). Hoffman received public endorsements from nationally recognized conservatives with no connection to New York politics, most notably Sarah Palin of Alaska and Fred Thompson of Tennessee, and Hoffman’s successful branding as a “true conservative” proved enough to drive out local Republican leaders’ preferred candidate, Dede Scozzafava (Nagourney and Peters 1).

The second major factor contributing to the declining primacy of local politics is an ideological divide that is based, at least in part, on competing conceptions of the national identity. The height of O’Neill’s political career coincided not just with the rise of ideological conservatism, but also with the end of the Civil Rights era. That is, the late ‘70s and early ‘80s composed a period in which the country had begun to incorporate previously underrepresented groups—women and minorities—more fully into the political process. Yet, even after the country had explicitly acknowledged the equal rights under the law of all Americans, the narratives and symbols associated with American patriotism continued to be the same narratives and symbols that predated Civil Rights. The Father of Our Country was still a slave owner. The Hero of the Battle of New Orleans and the founder of Jacksonian democracy was still responsible for the forced migration of thousands of Native Americans. The most-loved general of the Civil

War still fought on the side of slavery, and the US armed forces were still segregated when they bailed Europe out of two World Wars (Truman would go on desegregate the military via Executive Order 9981 in July of 1948, some three years after the end of World War II; “Desegregation of the Armed Forces”). The stories of American patriotism, in other words, were still the stories of white men told from the perspectives of white men.

Perhaps to Speaker O’Neill’s chagrin, changes to the public sphere have erased many of the distinctions between national and local politics, and that change has helped to transform popularly accepted attitudes about gender, race, ethnicity, and national identity.

The Basic Thesis

The basic questions that this dissertation seeks to address are what motivates voters in the United States to identify with a given political ideology, and how can practitioners of political rhetoric account for these motives? I deploy the term *ideology* here in a way that is consistent with both Althusser’s definition of ideology as a representation of “imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence,” as well as with Laclau’s notion that ideology represents a way of articulating “different visions of the world” (161). *Political ideology*, therefore, refers to the imaginary relationships of individuals to the polity in which they exist, their way of envisioning their political world. Put in the context of the United States, *US political ideology* refers to the relationships that Americans imagine themselves having with their

government and with other individuals who are subject to that government. The most typical labels that contemporary Americans employ in order to identify their political ideologies are *moderate*, *liberal*, and *conservative* (*neoconservative*, *social conservative*, and *fiscal conservative* are subcategories ideologically and linguistically tied to the broader umbrella category of *conservative*). With this in mind, the basic questions of this dissertation can be expanded to read as follows: What motivates US voters to identify themselves as conservative, liberal, or moderate, and how can rhetorical strategies account for these motivations?

I characterize these three commonly deployed labels as ideological ones rather than as labels that refer to philosophies of governance because, as this chapter will demonstrate, none of the three labels represents a clearly defined set of governing principles that are applied consistently by those who identify with a given label. Brock et al. are among the scholars who have sought to define conservative, liberal, and moderate in terms of governing philosophy, and they acknowledge the frustrations endemic to such an approach, noting that “the common labels *liberal* and *conservative* do little to predict where an individual will stand on any particular issue” (1). With this in mind, I propose a conception of American political ideologies as one that is based on relationships rather than policy preference. That is, I will argue that Americans select their political ideologies based in large part on how they see themselves and their communities in relation to other individuals and communities and in relation to the nation as a whole. Toward that end, treating the terms *liberal* and *conservative* as ideological labels

provides us with a useful frame of analysis that deals explicitly with how individuals imagine their relations with the polities in which they exist.

Chapter Two provides a more complete discussion of the role of nationalism in US political ideologies, but it suits our purpose here to note that it's a relatively new idea to suggest that women and people of color are just as representative of the American people as white men are. It is not a terribly profound observation to note that the authors of the United States' founding documents had different understandings than we do today of phrases like "We the people" and "all men are created equal." Yet, it is not at all clear that modern Americans all share with each other the same understandings of those phrases today. Are a Muslim American of Arabic ethnicity and the daughter of Mexican immigrants just as American as a white Nebraskan corn farmer or the New English grandson of Irish immigrants? To suggest that the politically correct answer to this question reflects a strong national consensus is to suggest that O'Neill's contemporaries and the generation of Americans who followed have completely reconceived of their image of the country.

That such a reimagining of the country was necessary after Civil Rights is unquestionable. Exactly what this new image should look like, on the other hand, remains very much in question. As the following chapters of this text will argue, the contesting of the national identity—the ways in which a given image of the United States is privileged over other images of the nation—is central to the ideological divisions of the United States today. In chapter 2 I will propose a view of contemporary US political ideology that is based on the concept of national formation, the process by which a sense

of nationhood is produced and dispersed. As Ernest Gellner explains, the production of a nationalist ideology, or a given sense of nationhood, relies on “a pervasive false consciousness,” which claims to defend a mythical folk culture when it is in fact forging and promoting an invented high culture (113). The maintenance of a high culture requires centralized state agencies with the resources to sustain and diffuse it throughout an entire population (135). I propose, therefore, a view of the left-center-right political spectrum in the United States as a spectrum based on competing—and sometimes overlapping—nationalist ideologies, with opposing groups competing for control of the state agencies that sustain and diffuse the national high culture and define who we are as a people. According to this view, individuals define their position in the ideological spectrum based on whom they culturally identify with, and practitioners of political rhetoric would benefit from identifying the culture of their ideology with the American “mainstream.”

The remainder of this chapter will address the reasons why this dissertation’s primary questions are relevant and important, and then the chapter will survey existing scholarship on the nature of ideological divisions and arguments in contemporary US politics. Each of the analyses and theories described carries some significant merit and is useful to developing our understanding of US politics and ideological arguments. Yet this survey will demonstrate that each of these approaches tells us a great deal about how certain individual factors influence ideological arguments; these insights, however, can come at the cost of minimizing the roles played by extremely powerful societal forces like race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and sexual orientation. The goal of this dissertation

is to develop an approach to ideological rhetoric that maintains an awareness of these social forces while also accounting for the nuances reflected in existing scholarship on US political rhetoric.

The Quandary of Ideological Choice

In 2009 Gallup asked over forty thousand Americans to identify their political views as either very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal, or very liberal. Forty percent of survey respondents self-identified as either conservative or very conservative, 21% as liberal or very liberal, and 35% as moderate. Only 4% had no opinion. That is to say, 96% of respondents readily placed themselves as sitting somewhere on the conservative-moderate-liberal ideological spectrum (Saad). Interestingly, when Rasmussen asked respondents in a 2007 survey to separate their political views with fiscal issues on one side and social issues on the other, similarly small numbers declined to identify themselves as conservative, moderate, or liberal for either set of issues; only 4% answered “not sure” on fiscal issues and 3% on social issues. Yet, significant numbers of respondents were willing to associate themselves with different ideological labels across the two sets of issues. Only 24% of respondents identified themselves as both socially and fiscally conservative, 17% as moderate on both sets of issues, and 9% as liberal across both fiscal and social issues. On the other hand, 41% of respondents answered with different ideological affiliations for fiscal issues versus social issues; that is, 41% of respondents might have preferred conservative policies on taxes and government spending but liberal policies on issues like gay marriage and affirmative

action, or vice versa (“24% are Both”). Meanwhile, Rasmussen has also published data indicating that over the last thirty years ideological identification has become a stronger indicator of voting trends and party affiliation. When Jimmy Carter won the presidency in 1976, moderate and conservative whites made up 59% of the Democratic Party’s coalition. By Barack Obama’s election in 2008, moderate and conservative whites accounted for only 33% of the party’s coalition. Over that same span, conservative whites’ share of the Republican Party’s coalition jumped from 48% in 1976 to 61% in 2008. Across those three decades, the GOP’s diversity factor remained marginal, with the nonwhite segment of the party increasing from 4% to 6%, while the Democratic Party has gone from 20% nonwhites to 39% nonwhites (Abramowitz).

This myriad of data, while fascinating, is open to so many different possible interpretations that it becomes difficult to put the information to any practical use. The Gallup poll says that the number of Americans who identify as conservative is almost twice the number who identify as liberal, and Rasmussen tells us that only 9% are liberal on both social and fiscal issues. This would seem to indicate that conservatism remains in the ascendency, while liberalism continues to decline. On the other hand, Abramowitz tells us that the coalition that elected Obama is considerably more liberal than the ones that elected Clinton and Carter, and the continuing increase in nonwhite voters means that “the Democratic Party enjoys a large advantage over the Republican Party in the size of its electoral base—an advantage that is almost certain to continue growing for the foreseeable future.” Similarly, Rasmussen’s survey in which 41% of respondents changed their ideological perspective across fiscal and social issues might indicate that

ideological identification is too malleable to serve as a strong indicator of party affiliation and voting habits, yet Abramowitz—writing as an analyst for the very same Rasmussen publication—reached the opposite conclusion based on changes in the parties’ demographics.

One unquestionable fact that we can take from the polling data is that the vast majority of Americans identify themselves as liberal, moderate, or conservative, though we still don’t know much about why individuals select a given ideology over the others. Under these circumstances, it seems appropriate to take a step back and ask, what exactly do Americans mean when they deploy ideological labels like *liberal* and *conservative*? And, how can political rhetors make use of these meanings? Unfortunately, Rasmussen and Gallup’s surveys tell us little about what motivates Americans to align themselves with a given political ideology, and intellectual ideologues do little to help us understand the motives behind ideological allegiances.

To begin with, among the three ideological labels we have to work with—*conservative*, *moderate*, and *liberal*—only conservatism has a rich stock of individuals and texts that seek to define what it means to be a conservative in a modern context. Unlike liberals and moderates, conservatives can point to major figures within their ideology from the post-World War II era who explicitly seek to define that ideology. In William F. Buckley and his myriad of writings, conservatives have an intellectual founder and writings upon which to base their approach to governing. In one-time presidential candidate Barry Goldwater and his iconic book *The Conscience of a Conservative*, the right has a political founder and set of first principles written in

language accessible to most Americans. In less than a hundred pages, the book lays out the basic goals of movement conservatism as defeating communism abroad and shrinking federal government at home. Goldwater explains among other things that conservatism is based on the principle that government power is inherently corruptive and so must be limited (14-19), that the federal government's establishment of a welfare state is an unconstitutional violation of states' rights (20-23), that government intervention in the economy has historically created more problems than it has solved, especially in the area of agriculture (29-32), and that taxes constitute a restriction on freedom (42-47). It seems fair to say that many conservatives continue to invoke these basic principles on domestic governance: limited government, minimal taxation, and states' rights. Ronald Reagan in particular continued to espouse those principles on his way to establishing himself as a champion who personifies conservative ideology. One might say that Buckley, Goldwater, and Reagan are to the modern conservative movement what Ben Franklin, Thomas Paine (and his *Common Sense*), and George Washington were to early American nationalism. That is, they provide anchors for the rank and file of each movement to cling to.

Liberals, by contrast, have no central set of figures and texts that speak specifically to the governance of a modern industrialized superpower. The figures most associated with American liberalism in the twentieth century—Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson—never set out to explicitly define liberalism as an ideology as Reagan and Goldwater did for conservatism. And while any number of 20th-century liberal intellectuals have published texts explaining their

philosophies on governing, none has ever been recognized as being central to his or her ideology as Buckley is to conservatism. As *The New York Times* put it after Buckley's death in 2008, "Mr. Buckley's greatest achievement was making conservatism—not just electoral Republicanism but conservatism as a system of ideas—respectable in liberal post-World War II America" (Douglas 1).

There was no exigency in America during the first two decades after World War II for a liberal counterpart to Buckley because liberalism "as a system of ideas" was already tacitly accepted, thus not needing a public intellectual to define it and give it legitimacy (see Murphy for a more complete discussion of the liberal consensus of that period). Paul Krugman, the Nobel Laureate in economics and columnist for *The New York Times*, tries to fill this void with *The Conscience of a Liberal*, a book clearly meant to be a somewhat belated answer to Goldwater. Krugman cannot be said to hold a congruent status among liberals that Goldwater or Buckley hold among conservatives; similarly, *Conscience of a Liberal* cannot be compared to *Conscience of a Conservative* in terms of influence, but Krugman's book does represent an attempt to articulate the liberal ideology by a figure who is relatively well recognized and respected by the liberal intelligentsia. For Krugman, the basic goal of liberalism is to grow and empower the middleclass, and Krugman's roadmap for achieving this is based on progressive taxation that reduces income inequality and a robust welfare state that provides essential public services, most notably public pensions for seniors and access to quality healthcare for all (244-64). While these principles are reflected in the initiatives and institutions we tend to associate with liberalism—higher taxes on the wealthy, Social Security, universal

healthcare—it would be outlandish to claim that “reduce income inequality” is a slogan that carries as much purchase with liberals as “shrink government” carries with conservatives. In other words, while liberal intellectuals like Krugman have made efforts to articulate the principles of their ideology, those articulations have not been embraced among rank-and-file liberals.

Moderates, meanwhile, lack a clear system of ideas to define their ideology other than being somewhere in between liberalism and conservatism, a problem further compounded by a lack of a clear definition of modern American liberalism. The moderate ideology, therefore, might easily be characterized (mistakenly, as I will argue) as either an ideology without ideas, an ideology that defines itself only by *what it is not*, or something that is, in fact, not an ideology at all.

Is it incorrect, then, to characterize the conservative-moderate-liberal spectrum as an ideological one, as Gallup and Rasmussen do and as I propose to do in this study? Finding an answer to this question might benefit from a look at how recent scholarship in rhetoric and communications studies treat the terms *conservative*, *moderate*, *liberal*, and *ideology*.

Ideological Arguments and Labels

As Sharon E. Jarvis notes in her analysis of political branding, the meanings we associate with labels have a tendency to shift over time, often without us being aware of the shift while it is happening (24). It’s important to note here that this research effort is concerned with the terms *liberal*, *moderate*, and *conservative* only as they relate to

contemporary US politics and governance. A discussion of foundational figures and texts relating to the classical or philosophical applications of the terms would require extensive examination of Plato, Cicero, Edmund Burke, John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and any number of other notable thinkers far removed from American politics, but those examinations would have little to do with the specific ideas, personas, and motives that register with modern American audiences when the terms *liberal*, *moderate*, and *conservative* are invoked. If, however, we accept Jarvis' assertion that the meanings and uses of these terms have shifted over time, then our discussion of foundational figures should focus on rhetors who were active during and immediately after the most recent major shift.

With this in mind, I propose to locate the foundation of the contemporary US political ideologies in the 1960s. As John M. Murphy explains as part of his analysis of a John F. Kennedy speech, the time of Kennedy and his contemporaries was marked by the end of a period of broad liberal consensus. Murphy describes the period following World War II as something of a golden age of American liberalism. This is not to say that Murphy falls into the nostalgia for the 1950s that is commonly deployed and extremely problematic for its tendency to gloss over the less-than-nostalgic conditions of women and minorities during that era. Rather, Murphy is referring to a sense of optimism enjoyed by white men—the primary political constituency of consequence during that period, and therefore the natural target of persuasion for both Kennedy and his political opponents. From the perspective of this population, the experiment of active governance had proved an unqualified success: the United States had won the war, polio was on its

way toward eradication, and continued economic growth indefinitely into the future—an idealistic fantasy just a couple of decades earlier—was an uncontested presumption by the mid 1950s. As Murphy puts it, “Then [before World War II] it was assumed that the government could do little to change the economy or society; now [by the mid 1950s] it was known that the government could create jobs and cure disease” (142). This age of optimism, however, had begun to decline by 1960 thanks to a recession in 1958, better comparative economic growth in Western Europe, and the continued ascendancy of the Soviet Union. In other words, by the mid 1950s liberalism had achieved a degree of hegemony that had lifted its core principles to the status of “common sense,” but by the end of the decade the sensibility of these principles began to be questioned, if by only a small minority.

That minority would prove to be the founding members of the then-nascent conservative movement, championed by Goldwater, a senator from Arizona and a presidential candidate whose rhetorical legacy John C. Hammerback offers an insightful analysis of. Taking Goldwater’s 1964 speech accepting the Republican presidential nomination as his site of analysis, Hammerback argues that the founder of modern conservatism did not simply find a way of appealing to conservative audiences; rather, Hammerback argues that Goldwater *created* a conservative audience in the sense that he was able to “create a rhetorical identification powerful enough to reformulate the character of audience members” (324). Put in more practical terms, Goldwater was able to bring under the same ideological tent four distinct groups, identified by Hammerback as “college students, frustrated Americans who sought simple answers to complex

problems, traditional conservatives, and members of the far-right wing of American politics” (325). By the latter two categories, Hammerback seems to be referring to devoutly religious people and intensely anticommunist people, whom today we might call the religious right and neoconservatives.

Goldwater’s great achievements then, according to Hammerback, were twofold: he redefined the American conservative so as to lead members of each of these four distinct groups to identify with this new personification of conservatism, and in doing so Goldwater showed future generations of Republicans how to animate their core supporters and give their candidates legitimacy (329). Hammerback convincingly argues that Goldwater was able to do this “primarily through personal identification as much or more than through discursive argument on substantive issues” (330). That is, Goldwater merged his ideology with his personal image as a rugged, uncompromising, God-fearing individualist, and as a result “he not only asked audiences to think some way or do something, he asked them to be somebody” (329).

Hammerback’s analysis of Goldwater’s rhetorical style tells us nothing about the motivations behind the ideological choices of liberals and moderates, but if we accept Hammerback’s conclusions regarding Goldwater’s use of identification and the subsequent adoption of this strategy by future conservatives in general, and Ronald Reagan in particular, then we might add some clarity to the question of what motivates the ideological choices of conservatives. If it was, in fact, Goldwater’s persona that brought together distinct groups into a solid base of supporters that came to identify

themselves as conservative, then this would seem to further highlight the limitations of a strictly policy-centric view of political ideology.

Whereas Hammerback's focus is on a speech and a political figure that are foundational to the contemporary conservative movement, Robert Asen offers an examination of a text and author that do not enjoy Goldwater's notoriety, but which Asen holds as representative of the "conservative counterintelligentsia." The text in question is William E. Simon's *The Time for Truth*, and although Simon might be largely unknown to most conservative voters today, Asen points out that Simon was an extremely influential figure in conservative politics during the two decades that followed Goldwater's failed bid for the presidency. Simon served as Secretary of the Treasury under Presidents Nixon and Ford, and then went on to lead the John M. Olin Foundation, a major funder of conservative institutions, and he served on the boards of the Heritage Foundation and the Hoover Institution, two extremely influential and well funded conservative think tanks (264). As Asen puts it, "Simon articulated a coherent vision of a reinvigorated conservative political network that included think tanks, media organizations, and policy actors" (264). It seems relevant to an analysis of contemporary ideological rhetoric, then, to examine the rhetoric of Simon's vision, a vision that was at least partially realized with the fallout of the Reagan Revolution.

As Asen explains, Simon sets out to articulate a counterintelligentsia in order "to challenge that [liberal] ideological monopoly" (Simon qtd. in Asen 263). Asen situates Simon within a rising conservative counterintelligentsia movement which argued that liberalism had achieved a domination of the public sphere that effectively silenced the

American business executive, among others, resulting in conservative ideas being excluded from discourse on policy (272-75). Simon takes up these arguments, holding himself up as a “heroic truth teller,” as Asen puts it, standing up bravely for marginalized conservatives and against the evils of egalitarianism and collectivism which, Simon argues, threaten individual liberty by denying our individual differences (Asen 276-78). At the heart of Simon’s argument, then, is the belief that constriction of individual freedoms is the inevitable result of using the levers of government in order to try to effect any kind of collective good—be that, for instance, the reduction of poverty, workers’ protections, or more equitable distribution of economic opportunities. What’s more, Simon holds himself as a champion of the marginalized victims of these efforts to rob hard-working Americans of their rights.

As we might anticipate from this characterization of Simon’s text, Asen is not entirely persuaded that Simon is advocating for a truly marginalized population. Asen, in arriving at his critique, notes the difficulties that Simon presents for public sphere scholars: how do we negotiate the relationships between counterpublicity, ideology, and materiality? That is, we cannot dismiss Simon’s claim of ideological marginalization just because of his obvious wealth and influence, but neither can we simply accept the claim without critical reflection. In answer to this conundrum, Asen offers a three-part method of critical engagement directed toward determining if a rhetor is contesting the privilege of others or simply asserting his or her own privilege. The first of these raises the question of consistent application of values; is the rhetor consistently applying the same values across all peoples and concepts? Asen argues that Simon fails this first test with

his insistence on asserting a negative definition of freedom (the absence of government interference) while ignoring “the constraints on human agency that afford greater freedom to some people than to others” (282). The second part of Asen’s analysis focuses on the textual markers of a rhetor’s social standing, and he concludes that Simon’s “plan for a conservative counterintelligentsia drew on substantial financial and institutional resources, and his self-presentation suggested a patrician background and bearing” (282). The third and final part of Asen’s framework of analysis assesses whether a rhetor is seeking to expand or restrict discursive space for others, and he concludes that Simon “ignores the complexities of a pluralist society” with his unsupported assertion of his preferred governing philosophy and elevation of negative freedom as the only virtuous political value (282). Asen, therefore, concludes that the arguments of the conservative counterintelligentsia are based on a paradoxical sense of both victimhood and privilege, the former of which is not consistent with material reality, and the latter of which is not consistent with the basic notions of counterpublicity as being something that stands in opposition to privileged publicity.

Let us now return to Murphy’s analysis of Kennedy’s 1962 commencement address at Yale University, where Murphy argues that Kennedy builds a compelling ethos by taking advantage of the times. He uses the memory of the country’s postwar success to argue for active government management of the economy, and Kennedy simultaneously uses the waning optimism of the early 1960s to argue that new times called for more rational and reasoned management than that offered by his opponents (145-47). Perhaps most important, according to Murphy, Kennedy builds an ethos of

inclusivity while emphasizing his superior judgment: “The implicit arrogance of that posture was relieved by the authoritative ethos he developed, an ironic stance which consistently emphasized his humor, his willingness to listen to alternative arguments, and the rationality with which one should undertake public tasks” (153). Because the language of this liberal consensus relied so heavily on Kennedy’s personal ethos and on his definition of the times, according to Murphy, the loss of Kennedy and the change in times resulted in the loss of this language of liberal consensus, and therefore the loss of an explicit argument for affirmative government (156).

These analyses from Murphy, Hammerback, and Asen illustrate the difficulties associated with asking political ideologies to define themselves. We cannot trust political ideologies to accurately articulate themselves because they have self-interest in representing themselves in ways that advance their agendas. It suited Kennedy’s agenda to represent himself and liberal principles as rational and inclusive. Similarly, it suited Goldwater’s purposes to identify conservatism with god-fearing individualism and Simon’s purposes to present conservatives as an oppressed minority in the face of extraordinary material evidence to the contrary.

With this in mind, it seems appropriate to investigate how people who have not held political office seek to define political ideologies.

Political Ideology as a Function of Attitudes toward Change

In Brock et al.’s analysis of contemporary American political ideology, they break the left-to-right political spectrum into four parts, delineated based on attitudes toward

change: radical (far left), liberal (left), conservative (right), and reactionary (far right). Radicals, Brock and colleagues argue, favor broad-based political reforms that cannot be achieved within existing institutional structures, which they define as “common assumptions and procedures that shape public implementation of a policy” (75). Liberals favor reform but also accept the need for existing institutional structures. Conservatives similarly accept the existing structures and use them to oppose societal changes. And reactionaries, meanwhile, see existing structures as the cause of unwanted societal changes (75-78).

Brock et al. then apply the lens of Kenneth Burke’s dramatic pentad to demonstrate the ways in which each group tends to frame its arguments about change and institutional structures. As Burke explains in *A Grammar of Motives*, a “rounded statement about motives” will include language that names the act, other words that identify the scene or context of the act, words that identify the person or agent performing the act, the means or agency by which the act occurs, and the purpose of the act (xv). Brock et al. associate each of their four political positions with an emphasis on at least one particular feature of Burke’s pentad—act, scene, agent, agency, or purpose. According to Brock and colleagues, reactionaries typically place emphasis on a purpose that they associate with “given or natural laws” (85). They provide the example of President George W. Bush defending the Iraq War on the grounds that its purpose was to spread freedom, which the president regarded as “the Almighty’s gift to every man and woman in this world” (qtd. in Brock et al. 85). Conservatives, for their part, place an emphasis on the character of the agent, with Brock et al. providing the examples of the

Western cowboy and the heroic detective as icons of American conservatism (86-87).

Liberals, on the other hand, favor an emphasis on scene because they “describe circumstances as the major force influencing behavior” (88). And Radicals, according to Brock and colleagues, place primary emphasis on agency because they “believe that the means of delivery or structure of any policy or process is central to its effectiveness” (88).

Brock et al.’s analysis is part of their broader argument for a stronger connection between political action and attitudes toward structural and policy reform. In their view, elected political leaders would keep more of the popular support that got them elected if they stayed more loyal to their ideologies. At the very least, they argue, the democratic process would work better: “Arrival at legitimate democratic action is facilitated if a consistency across time and place provides predictability in the response of citizens and leaders. Ideology is the source of such consistency. It is the web of meaning that gives any isolated action coherence and purpose” (53). They blame what they call the “erosion of the ties among ideology, language, and political action” (2) on the “politics of personality” (7). Their argument is that government would work better if politicians and political parties clearly explained the logic behind their positions on structural and policy reform and consistently applied that same logic to new structural and policy issues, rather than simply winning support by relying on personal likability.

While there is a great deal of usefulness to Brock et al.’s analysis of ideological arguments, it assumes a policy-centric motive behind ideological choice. Brock and colleagues’ application of the Burkean pentad provides an excellent explanation of the

generic logic behind ideological motives, which is extremely useful for arriving at judgments about policy, but less useful for determining why large groups of voters align themselves with a given set of policies. As Brock et al. note at the beginning of their book, “Beyond the superficial label of *Republican* or *Democrat*, the common labels *liberal* and *conservative* do little to predict where an individual will stand on any particular issue” (1). That is, there are plenty of conservatives who favor spending on agriculture subsidies and entitlement programs, and there are plenty of liberals who are pro-life, supportive of free trade, and hawkish on foreign policy. The conservative and liberal labels, on the other hand, do a great deal to predict how a citizen will vote and which political party that citizen will affiliate with. That is, the ideology with which a person identifies reflects a strong tendency of whom that person will align himself or herself with, and Brock et al.’s policy-centric analysis doesn’t explain why these alignment tendencies remain strong despite each groups’ logical inconsistencies.

Political Ideology as a Function of Family Ideals

George Lakoff offers an alternative explanation to the logic behind liberalism and conservatism. His answer to the riddle of modern political coalitions is that people’s votes are determined not by rational self-interest but by shared values based on ideals about family life. Conservatives, says Lakoff, think in terms of a “strict father” viewpoint, while liberals think in terms of a “nurturant parent” perspective. Both sides make decisions based on seeing the nation as a metaphor for a family, with the federal government functioning for conservatives as a strict father and for liberals as a nurturing,

gender-neutral parent (*Moral Politics* 12-13). Political rhetoric, therefore, should use language that invokes the metaphor—should adopt the appropriate rhetorical “frame”—that is in line with the rhetor’s worldview (*Elephant* 3).

Though a novel idea with some usefulness, this notion of metaphors for family being at the center of political rhetoric has important limitations, and it’s worth noting two important ones here. The first is Lakoff’s insistence on a universal application of these family metaphors. This comes at the cost of minimizing the importance of how social forces like religion, race, education, and sexual orientation influence our worldviews. Second, Lakoff tends to overemphasize the role of metaphors in our thought processes. As Steven Pinker explains in his review of a Lakoff text, Lakoff’s “use of cognitive neuroscience goes way beyond any consensus within that field.” As Pinker explains, the idea asserted by Lakoff that people are locked into a single conceptual frame—that is, a single metaphor that determines how a person interprets information—is not “anywhere to be found in cognitive science.” On the contrary, Pinker explains, scholarship in cognitive linguistics has found that “people can switch among many framings made available by their language.” Lakoff’s willingness to take leaps well beyond the consensus of his own scientific discipline leads him to dismiss how metaphors have a way of integrating themselves into language so that we mentally access them in the same way that we access literal language. People, for example, can say “take off” as a synonym for “depart” without invoking an image of an airplane or rocket leaving the ground. Burke seems to voice agreement with Pinker in Burke’s assertion

that “the expression of past eras survives in fragments, and often without explicit reference to the situations in which it arose” (*Rhetoric* 110).

Lakoff’s excessive enthusiasm for his own ideas notwithstanding, his observance of the role of values and worldviews in political persuasion gives a plausible explanation for the motivations behind ideological choice. That is to say, it gives us a means of conceiving of voters’ interests in a way that avoids the change-based paradigm offered by Brock et al. while still going beyond economic or class-based analyses. To be clear, I am not endorsing a complete discarding of the role of economic class in political ideology and persuasion, but there seems to be obvious value in situating economic forces in mutual context with other powerful social forces. Stuart Hall convincingly argues that dealing with “the question of ‘race’” requires a balanced consideration of both social and economic factors (38-43). It does not seem a stretch to conclude that dealing with the question of political ideology in a country of such racial, ethnic, and religious diversity requires a similar balance. Neither class, nor cognitive framing, nor values alone can explain why people make the ideological choices they make. As Hall says with regard to the articulation of economic and social theory, “Both premises are indeed required . . . each on its own is not sufficient” (43).

John Kenneth White agrees with Lakoff’s emphasis on the role of values—that is, notions about the ideal family form—in modern American political ideologies. Like Lakoff, White sees rhetorical framing as central to the effectiveness of political and ideological rhetoric, though he does not adopt Lakoff’s emphasis on building rhetorical frames through the use of family-based metaphors. However, White does see shifting

and competing notions of family as central to divisions in American politics, as he explains in his aptly titled book *The Values Divide*. White argues that values have always been a matter of concern for Americans, but values have risen to the forefront of American politics in recent decades because of the rise of new family forms that are carving out niches for themselves alongside the once-predominant nuclear family (1-13). For White, “while race, ethnicity, religion, and the economy remain important concerns to many Americans, values provide the *connective tissue* linking public policy to voter attitudes about contemporary politics” (10, emphasis in the original).

White illustrates his view of the role of values in the American politics of recent decades by citing the rhetoric of Reagan and Bill Clinton. Reagan, as White explains, evoked images of “small-town America populated by hardworking, middle-class families,” and he produced that image by repeating a mantra of “family, work, neighborhood, peace, and freedom” (120). Citing Reagan pollster and adviser Richard B. Wirthlin, White concludes that Reagan was no policy wonk; the minutia of governing was not of great concern for the 40th president. For Reagan, “the essence of the American polity” was about “a romantic preference for shared values,” according to White, and he credits Reagan’s values rhetoric for his stunning electoral success in 1980 and 1984 (120). White finds these successes particularly impressive because at the time Democrats held a decisive advantage over Republicans in terms of which party voters found to be more representative of “traditional family values,” and he cites a 1986 CBS News/*New York Times* poll that favored Democrats 45-33 on this issue (121). In other

words, Reagan's romanticism for shared values overcame the lingering shadow that Watergate continued to cast over the Republican Party.

By 1998-99, those numbers were reversed. White cites polls from those two years in which Republicans scored better in eight out of nine values questions, with Democrats only winning on "shows compassion toward the disadvantaged" (138). These polls, of course, followed a term-and-a-half of Clinton scandals, the most notable being the Lewinsky affair that led to his impeachment trial. Yet, White identifies impressive feats of political rhetoric in each of Clinton's presidential campaigns that allowed him to overcome the public's distaste for his personal lifestyle, which was seen as less-than-virtuous thanks to allegations of sexual harassment and a *60 Minutes* interview in which he tacitly admitted to not always being faithful to his wife and explicitly admitted to smoking marijuana without inhaling (White 125). According to White's analysis, Clinton overcame the obstacles of his personal image through the use of Reagan-era values rhetoric, including the mantra of "opportunity, community, and responsibility" (123). Then followed two years of legislative defeats—with unsuccessful policy rhetoric that accompanied them—and a catastrophic midterm election that swung both houses of Congress to the Republicans in 1994. As White sees it, Clinton learned his lesson by his State of the Union speech in 1995, where he abandoned the language of policy wonks and turned to Reagan-style story-telling about American heroes. White describes this as Clinton at last learning "how to apply Reagan's values lessons," and White seems to see his analysis as confirmed by Clinton's convincing victory in 1996 (129).

In Lakoff and White we have scholars from two different fields of study—cognitive linguistics and political science, respectively—arriving at similar conclusions about the role of values in contemporary US political rhetoric. Yet in both cases they define values as a function of family, which I submit is an inherently conservative frame (though I suspect Lakoff at least would not care for the suggestion that he has internalized conservative frames of thought). To the extent to which these two scholars see class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion as relevant to the values discussion is the extent to which those factors are relevant to notions of traditional family life. By granting this central position to the concept of the nuclear family, Lakoff and White are granting privilege to that concept. Put in the context of Brock et al.'s change-based view, Lakoff and White's analyses grant to the idyllic 1950s romanticized image of the nuclear family a status of *that which came before change*. This is particularly troubling because White himself acknowledges that this idyllic family image is much more a product of television than reality (3). While he clearly laments the control that social conservatives have asserted over the Republican Party, devoting an entire chapter to it (79-116), White never explicitly explores how those social conservatives deploy the term *family* as a shield that permits them to refuse engagement with issues that have little or nothing to do with their families.

So it seems fair to say that Lakoff and White's arguments regarding the centrality of values and familial ideals provide some useful insights regarding the process by which Americans choose to identify themselves with a given political ideology. However, it seems just as fair to note that—as is the case with Brock et al.'s change-based

paradigm—Lakoff and White’s singular focus on values is not entirely satisfactory. The remaining sources mentioned in this chapter will discuss other causes of ideological divisions in modern US politics, and the chapter will conclude with an exploration of how a rhetoric of values can be expanded in a way that situates other social and economic forces on a level playing field alongside competing notions of the American family.

Political Ideology as a Function of Epistemology

In *Toward a Civil Discourse*, Sharon Crowley limits the scope of her analysis of political ideology to what she believes to be the prime hegemonic struggle of our times: the ideological clash between liberalism and religious fundamentalism—or more specifically, “apocalypticism,” the belief that the end of the world is nearly at hand and the United States has a special role to play in it. She asserts that productive argument between the two ideologies is virtually impossible because the two sides operate under mutually exclusive epistemologies: “To attack a fundamentalism on the ground that it is not rational is to apply a standard that is valued in some belief systems and not in others; to treat rationality as universally binding is, willy-nilly, to fall into yet another fundamentalism” (13). In other words, neither side accepts the premises on which the other bases its arguments, which makes traditional syllogisms of little persuasive value.

Crowley offers two primary rhetorical solutions to this impasse—story-telling about the past and conjecture about the future. Advocates of a given ideology should, she argues, make a habit of telling histories that emphasize that ideology’s role in the country’s past successes (198-99). A Christian fundamentalist history, for example,

would emphasize (others might say “promote”) the religious affiliations of the country’s founders and other patriotic figures while a liberal history would take special note of efforts toward inclusivity and religious neutrality. Fundamentalist or liberal conjectures, similarly, would describe a world resulting from the implementation of the policies they promote. “It follows that liberal and leftist rhetors,” says Crowley, “should not only tell audiences that they support universal health care; they should depict the world as it would exist with this policy in place, and they should depict it with all the *pathos* and compelling detail they can muster” (199).

Crowley’s analysis of the differences between the left and the fundamentalist right clearly delineates some seemingly irreconcilable differences between the two ideological groups, but Crowley’s work centers on what might be described as an unfair pairing of the mainstream left with part of the extreme right. The result is that her epistemological lens gives an incomplete answer to the question of ideological choice, in part because answering that question is not something that Crowley set out to do. Rather, in addition to offering less-than-revolutionary rhetorical solutions to the epistemological impasse, Crowley’s focus seems to be on highlighting how far outside of the American mainstream the religious right stands, and she makes that argument persuasively. Left unanswered is the question of what unites “religious conservatives” with other ideological subgroups that may not share a fundamentalist epistemology, such as “fiscal conservatives” and “neoconservatives.”

Political Ideology as a Function of Branding

Sharon E. Jarvis takes an entirely different approach to the question of ideological choice in *The Talk of the Party*. Jarvis focuses her analysis on investigating the shifting meanings associated with key political labels. In particular, she is concerned with what she calls “six pivotal words” and their derivatives: *Democrat*, *Republican*, *independent*, *liberal*, *conservative*, and *party* (3). She draws on scholarship in sociolinguistics, political science, and rhetoric to justify her brand-analysis approach, noting that “Because subtle adjustments in language use—especially those that are not immediately noticed—can build to create new habits for a group, it is critical to keep an eye on word use over time” (21). Jarvis goes on to cite a number of scholars—including such notable names as Edward Sapir, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, and Murray Edelman—who assign importance to the power of names and labels to unconsciously influence people’s understandings of their environments (20-24). Her review also includes mention of Kenneth Burke’s notion of identification, noting that he views affiliation through unconscious association as the strongest type of connections that are made through language (23). As Jarvis sums up,

[N]ames and labels are important because they help individuals frame thoughts and share ideas, and they are often beyond conscious control. . . . [N]ames and labels can also shift in understated ways, often without citizens noticing how such slight changes can influence their thoughts, their understandings of the social scene, and even their identities. (24)

The rest of Jarvis’ book discusses how her “six pivotal terms” have evolved in meaning over time. Among her conclusions that are most relevant to this study is that the

perception of the label of *independent* has shifted from one that was once depicted negatively as a frustration to the major parties to a label that is now associated favorably with autonomy (210). Unsurprisingly, this shift coincided with a period during which individual loyalty to the two major parties was becoming less and less common, yet the rise of the *independent* label has not resulted in significantly increased success for independent candidates (9-11).

Also noteworthy are Jarvis' conclusions regarding the trajectories of the two most ideological of her "pivotal terms": *conservative* and *liberal*. She tracks how the latter term was transformed from having positive implications in the 1940s and '50s to having negative implications in the '80s and '90s. Jarvis cites speeches by former presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson from the 1956 presidential campaign in which he associates the *liberal* label with youth, creativity, forward thinking, and the fight against ignorance, poverty, misery, and war. Jarvis then notes how Bill Clinton either avoided the term or disassociated himself from it during his 1992 campaign, and how George H.W. Bush and Bob Dole associated the liberal label with excess, elitism, and weakness (179-83). The conservative label, by contrast, has been left almost entirely alone by elite discourse with the exception of George W. Bush's evoking of "compassionate conservatism" during his 2000 campaign (187).

Jarvis blames the redefining of the *liberal* label on an organized and sustained attack on the term while its "natural defenders" abandoned it. As she says, the answer to how *liberal* became a dirty word was "almost too easy to discover: the term *liberal* is drenched in ideology by Republicans and left undefended by Democrats" (177). Jarvis

reserves some blame for “the media” for being complicit in “Republican efforts to make liberal a pejorative word,” but she also blames Democrats not just for failing to defend the term, but also for failing to attack the *conservative* label in return (184). What’s more, Jarvis supports the notion that changing reactions to the *liberal* label do not necessarily imply changing attitudes about “traditionally liberal causes” by citing polling data indicating that citizens are politically sympathetic with those causes so long as the *liberal* label is not attached to them (186). That is to say, the polling data and Jarvis’ study of political branding seem to indicate that ideological choice—the process that leads someone to self-identify as conservative, liberal, or moderate/independent—is often divorced from the policies and ideas associated with a chosen ideology.

Still Looking for Answers

The degree to which we can accurately attribute the loss of the 1950s’ liberal consensus to the loss of Kennedy is unclear, and Murphy doesn’t do a great deal to address the impact of other significant events that followed the JFK assassination. The credibility of liberalism was further damaged by Johnson’s leadership during the Vietnam War, and Civil Rights divided the Democratic coalition that had been critical to liberal advances of the 1930s and ‘40s. All of these events—the assassination, Vietnam, and Civil Rights—coincided with the rise of the Goldwater-led attack on affirmative government, and it seems a lot to ask of the Kennedy ethos to think that he would have been able to avert the conservative backlash. But liberalism didn’t simply suffer from the

absence of a credible champion after Kennedy; as Jarvis notes, liberalism's natural defenders seemed to lose their will to champion their ideological label.

So, as the political realignment of the 1960s took shape—as the South turned from solidly Democratic to solidly Republican—Goldwater was creating the conservative audience (Hammerback 329) and Simon was crafting a plan for an organized and well-resourced attack on liberalism (as Asen explains). Liberalism, meanwhile, lost the voice that Murphy regards as the ideology's rhetorical champion, and as Jarvis observes, nobody stepped in to fill that void after Kennedy's death. As a result, we are left with only partially adequate articulations of the liberal ideology in the modern context, such as Krugman's *Conscience of a Liberal*, the family-based metaphor offered by Lakoff, the epistemological explanation offered by Crowley, and the under-contextualized logos-based framework offered by Brock et al. Left ignored in all of this—or, at least, extremely underaddressed—is any effort to articulate a moderate ideology even though 35% of Americans polled by Gallup identify as moderate (Saad).

In other words, it remains difficult to say with any confidence what motivates people to select the ideologies with which they identify or—more to the point as far as this research effort is concerned—how to strategize rhetoric that appeals to those motivations. We are, however, left with a number of useful starting points: change, values, notions of family, branding, epistemology, and foundational legacies. Yet, strict focus on any one of these areas comes at not only the cost of the others but also at the cost of minimizing the importance of extraordinarily powerful social forces related to gender, race, ethnicity, class, and religion. Chapter 2 will propose a framework for

bringing together these disparate elements into a single unified theory of US political ideology that may be useful for developing rhetorical strategies that have potential for crossing ideological boundaries.

CHAPTER 2: NATIONALISMS AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGY IN THE UNITED STATES

When the rhetoric of a given nationalism fails to appeal to all members in the polity—such as when small ethnic or racial groups are denied the right to fully participate in government—the development of a counternationalism, along with the accompanying rhetoric, seems inevitable. As Ernest Gellner explains, the conditions of modernity tend to make sure that “almost everyone, at some time or other, has cause to feel unjustly treated, and that he can identify the culprits as being of another ‘nation.’ If he can also identify enough of the victims as being of the same ‘nation’ as himself, a nationalism is born” (108). That is, once members of that small ethnic group obtain the ability to contest their status as less-than-complete citizens, they are likely to contest that status by either defining themselves as a different nation and beginning a separatist movement or redefining the entire nation to include their group on level ground with the rest of the polity. And when the counternationalists are politically empowered, as has become the case with peoples who were once explicitly excluded from membership in the American nation, then the contesting of nationalist privilege must inevitably spill into the political arena. Nationalism is reduced to the role that Anthony D. Smith characterizes as “a political instrument of political factions, no more” (84). The only other options are violence or resuming the exclusion of those voices who would contest the dominant nationalism. Within the context of the United States, then, the question is not whether nationalisms are being contested in the political arena, but how they are being contested.

Which political agents, ideologies, and policies are working to maintain existing restrictions and which ones are working to break down those restrictions in a way that assigns an equal degree of national membership to all citizens?

Unfortunately, among the sources that we cannot trust to provide honest answers to these questions are the political ideologies themselves, as conservatives, liberals, and moderates have all taken to claiming victim status to one degree or another. As Simon shows us, many prominent conservative thinkers believe that their voices, especially the CEOs among them, have been marginalized since the establishment of the welfare state. Meanwhile, liberals, as Jarvis demonstrates, are so convinced that they are under attack that they have been scared out of defending their own label. And although moderates lack the institutions with which to make direct arguments in the public sphere (political action committees, major political parties, think tanks), it has become commonplace to invoke the need for politics to move “back to the middle,” implying that there was once a prevalent moderate voice in American politics that has been silenced. Gellner anticipates this phenomenon—that the claims of nationalist ideologues cannot be trusted uncritically—explaining that because nationalisms suffer from “a pervasive false consciousness . . . we shall not learn too much about nationalism from the study of its own prophets” (119-20).

Nationalism theory provides a useful lens for analyzing these conflicting claims of marginalization. By looking at the ways that nationalisms come into being and exert influence over the political process, we can see the important role that nationalism plays in striking a balance between stability and inclusivity, and we can conceive of the

American political spectrum as one in which the far right stands for stability, the far left stands for inclusivity, and the middle searches for a balance between the two. To paraphrase the foundational principles behind Omi and Winant's theory of racial formation (124), ideological rhetoric in the United States bears heavy influence over how the category of "American" is created, inhabited, and transformed. And just as Omi and Winant see racial formation as the outcome of a series of racial projects (125), the process by which nationalist categorization occurs—*national formation*—is a product of a countless series of nationalist projects, each of which attempts to influence access to participatory citizenship based on a given definition of "American."

Similar to how Omi and Winant argue that not all racial projects are racist—the project would need to create or reproduce structures of dominance in order for Omi and Winant to consider it racist (135)—nationalist projects need not be inherently exclusionary. The Civil Rights movement, for instance, was a nationalist project that resulted in the political inclusion of new groups that were not previously considered fully American. The result was the rise of a new nationalism, which Desmond King has labeled "democratic nationalism," that sought to redefine those who share equal claim to American sovereignty and territory (6). However, this new nationalism has to find some accommodation with the "old" nationalism, which King labels "assimilationist nationalism" (6), and which Gellner would regard as largely an invention born of the political and economic necessities of the industrial age (19-23) and Benedict Anderson would see as an "imagining" born out of "the large cultural system which preceded it" (12). That is, nationalisms old and young are dependent on mass education systems that

simultaneously train an industrial work force and spread a national culture. And just as industrialism spreads unevenly—consider the industrialized Antebellum North compared to the agricultural economy of the Antebellum South—so too do nationalisms spread unevenly, creating pockets of communities—what Gellner calls “entropy-resistant” groups (63)—that are not complete members of the nation even though they reside completely within the nation’s political boundaries.

Civil Rights and the Cold War forced the US to revise these exclusionist policies (King 134), but the uneven spread of industrialism and memories of fictive “golden ages,” which Smith holds as key to “national regeneration” (47), continue to exert exclusionary influence over how Americans imagine themselves fitting into their social and political world. Until the 1960s, US government policy explicitly excluded from full national membership groups deemed incapable of assimilating into American culture (King 12), but the end of those policies represents the beginning, not the end, of nationalist politics in the US. Public debate over, for instance, how science should be taught in schools, over how we define marriage and family, over our national attitude toward human rights issues related to immigration and torture are all debates over nationalist projects. The outcomes of those debates result in the implementation of new nationalist projects which will exert influence over how we define categories of Americans.

What this all means for rhetoric and politics in the United States is that clearly articulating the competing national identities at work in US politics defines for political rhetors the identities with which they should be trying to identify. And it is this act of

identification which Kenneth Burke holds as critical to persuasion, as identification is what leads an audience to feel as though they share the same interests as the speaker (*A Rhetoric of Motives* 55-58). Put in political terms, voters are persuaded by political leaders only insofar as they see themselves participating in the formation of those political leaders' views. Nationalism is produced rhetorically, meaning that nationalist appeals are also rhetorical appeals. Those appeals, according to Burkean theory, are most successful when the rhetor creates a sense of identification with the audience, allowing the audience to feel that the rhetor's interests are substantially the same as the audience's interest, achieving a state of what Burke calls "consubstantiality" (21). When that identification is based on congruent nationalist sentiments, the audience is made to feel that the rhetor's national interests are the same as the audience's national interests. Disagreements over *who we should be*, therefore, begin with conflicting claims over *who we are*.

Articulated in the terms of nationalism scholars, the question is not whether government policies seek to impose a national high culture on small-group cultures or on a "traditional American" folk culture, but rather, to what extent does each small-group culture get to inform the national high culture? With this in mind, the logic behind American political ideologies seems easiest to understand if we consider them in terms of the ethos associated with competing nationalisms. Toward this end, this chapter will engage scholarship in nationalism theory and the history of American nationalism in order to arrive at a theory of national formation in the United States and discuss the implications of competing nationalisms for American politics and political rhetoric.

Nation, State, and Nationalism

John Breuily, in his introduction to the 2006 edition of the late Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism*, names Gellner's scholarship as "the single most important attempt to provide a theory of nationalism as a whole" (iii). As told by Breuily, a professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science, Gellner's theory of nationalism as something located both uniquely and universally in the modern industrialized world is not without its faults. Indeed, Gellner's work is perhaps most vulnerable to criticism for its ambition, for insisting on a one-size-fits-all approach to the growth and spread of nationalism instead of a historically specific one. Yet, even attempts to build on and contextualize Gellner's theory—and this dissertation could be described at least in part as such an attempt—have engaged Gellner's definitions of some fundamental terms. With this in mind, I will begin this attempt to use the work of nationalism theorists to shine light on the underlying assumptions behind American ideological rhetoric by drawing on a handful of Gellner's key definitions.

First, *nationalism*. Gellner begins by defining it as "primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent" and "a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones, and, in particular, that ethnic boundaries within a given state . . . should not separate power-holders from the rest" (1). That Gellner felt the need to provide readers with two different articulations of the same definition on the same page hints at the complexity of the task before us, and it's not clear if he helps us or not with the further

articulations he offers in *Nations and Nationalism*: “the organization of human groups into large, centrally educated, culturally homogeneous units” (34); “the striving to make culture and polity congruent, to endow a culture with its own political roof, and only one roof at that” (42); “the crystallization of new [ethnic and cultural] units, suitable for the conditions now prevailing” (48); “the general imposition of high culture on society” (56); and “the principle of homogeneous cultural units as the foundations of political life, and the obligatory cultural unity of rules and ruled” (120). Gellner also usefully provides a definition of *nationalist sentiment* as “the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle [of nationalism], or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment” (1).

Before we endeavor to make sense of these definitions, let us first turn to Gellner’s definitions of two other key terms: *state* and *nation*. He adopts Max Weber’s famous definition of the state as “that agency within society which possesses the monopoly on legitimate violence” (Gellner 3). While Gellner acknowledges that this definition isn’t universally binding across the width and breadth of history, he holds it as adequate for the study of a phenomenon that is unique to industrial modernity (3-5), and it seems just as adequate for a study of political ideologies in the contemporary United States. Arriving at a workable definition of *nation* is a little more complicated. Gellner emphasizes the role of culture in his definition of *nation*: “Two [people] share the same nation if and only if they share the same culture” (6). Gellner, however, notes that definitions of culture tend to be “notoriously difficult and unsatisfactory,” and so he supplements his definition with an articulation that emphasizes mutual recognition in

place of culture: “Two [people] are of the same nation if and only if they *recognize* each other as belonging to the same nation” (7, emphasis in the original).

We see in these definitions and others a temptation to substitute either *culture* or *ethnicity* as a synonym for *nation*, which is problematic in any context and particularly inapplicable in a context of the contemporary United States. Defining *culture* is slippery enough as it is without trying to use it in place of another already-slippery term, and however one might choose to define *culture*, we can easily see cultural differences between, say, Midwestern steel miners and Southern farmers, yet they may still share similar nationalist sentiments. That is, they might be likely to respond with similar anger or satisfaction to the nationalist implications of the same event. *Ethnicity*, meanwhile, presents its own problems due to the murkiness of the boundaries that the term draws. As Balibar explains, there is no such thing as a natural ethnic base for any modern nation. As small communities become nationalized, their populations become “ethnicized . . . represented in the past or in the future *as if* they formed a natural community” (224, emphasis in the original). Whether or not two individuals share the same ethnicity, therefore, is a question that is open to subjective interpretation. Consider, for instance, the ethnic lines between Americans of Irish-Catholic descent and of English-Protestant descent, which were once much more pronounced than they are today. Whether or not these two groups can be classified under a single ethnicity today is an open question, and while it has implications for contemporary US nationalism, it need not be resolved here in order to arrive at useful conclusions about nationalism and US political ideology. More to the point, the question of ethnic lines between American Irish-Catholics and

American English-Protestants is one that is determined largely by members of those communities.

Anthony D. Smith, who does not accept Gellner's thesis that nations and nationalism are strictly modern inventions, offers a more concrete definition of the nation, though Smith prefaces with the disclaimer that the nation is an ideal-type "that is never finally achieved, but is always being developed" (16). Smith defines this ideal as "a named and self-defined human community whose members cultivate common myths, memories and symbols, possess a distinctive public culture, occupy a historic homeland, and observe common laws and shared customs" (17). Elsewhere, Smith substitutes "demarcated territory" for "historic homeland," which represents an attempt to reconcile civic-based and ethnic-based definitions of the nation (42). The former is concerned with territory, economy, law, and education, while the latter is concerned with genealogy, demography, traditional culture, and history (41). Smith emphasizes the need to bring together these two overlapping concepts of the nation into a unified definition because, according to Smith, the civic components, such as common laws and shared customs, can only last so long as the ethnic components—like myths, memories, and symbols—have "resonance" throughout a national territory (44). For Smith, then, a nation's durability is linked to its ability to see its demarcated territory as a historic homeland, regardless of the actual history of that land.

Benedict Anderson, meanwhile, offers a definition of *nation* that includes key elements of both Gellner and Smith's definitions while avoiding the hang-ups associated with terms like *culture* and *ethnicity*. For Anderson, the nation is "an imagined political

community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). By *limited*, Anderson means that the nation is imagined as having borders beyond which lie other nations. He also emphasizes *sovereign* because the notion of the modern nation arose during an age in which Enlightenment and revolution were challenging the principle of divine dynastic sovereignty, creating a need for a new legitimization of sovereign power. And Anderson explains that the nation is imagined as a *community* because, although inequality and exploitation may exist in reality, “the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (7). Thus, it seems fair to say that Anderson agrees with Gellner that for two people to share the same nation, they must each imagine the other as sharing a “horizontal comradeship” (the adamant anticommunist might prefer to substitute an “association of peers”). Anderson would also seem to agree with Smith that a nation is connected to a limited/demarcated territory. Smith, however, is more specific in regard to how members of a political community come to imagine their peers (through laws, education, culture, genealogy, demography, and history).

With this in mind, Anderson’s definition of *nation* based on communal imagination—two people share the same nation if they both imagine each other to share equally in the same sovereign political community—seems to be the one that is most useful to us. Anderson’s emphases on sovereignty, territory, and community address the complications associated with Gellner’s definition based on mutual recognition of national membership that Gellner himself points out—a similar definition can be applied to any number of clubs, conspiracies, or parties. Also, while Anderson partially breaks with Smith’s definition by declining to specify the grounds for communal imaginings,

Anderson's inclusion of territory and sovereignty in his definition would seem to encompass at least some of Smith's specifications, such as those concerning the roles of land, economy, and law. Smith's insistence that the territory must be seen as a historic homeland seems only partially applicable to nationalism in the United States, which makes no claim to territorial antiquity. While New England and (perhaps to a lesser extent) northern Virginia are often regarded as the cradle of the American national identity, the vast majority of US territory has been mythologized as new land that was explored and settled by intrepid pioneers. This contrasts with Old World nationalisms that can project a history in which their territory was producing their nationality even before the establishment of the state; the territory that makes up modern-day France, for instance, can be imagined as having always been producing Frenchmen even before the French state was established. This is not the case with US nationalism, which is explicitly aware of a time when no Americans lived in America.

With our understandings of *state* and *nation* established, we can now substitute those definitions for "political unit" and "national unit," respectively, in Gellner's primary definition of nationalism and put it in a strictly American context: **American nationalism is a principle holding that the institution which keeps monopoly on legitimate violence in the United States—government, be it local, state, or federal—should be controlled by those who mutually imagine each other as sharing equal claim to American sovereignty and territory.** The beauty and the problem of this definition are that it leaves room for multiple nationalisms to unhappily coexist. Or rather, it leaves room for multiple nationalisms to compete with each other, be it through

violence (the Civil War), through social activism (Civil Rights and women's rights), through state institutions (monuments, memorials, and public education), or through modern politics. The end of the large-scale social activism that characterized the 1960s did not represent the end of the Civil Rights and women's rights movements; the end of frequent, angry, and broad-based protests represented the end of the beginning for those movements, the end of the period where advancing the causes of Civil Rights and women's rights depended more on what happened in the streets than on what happened in the voting booth. The success of those social movements was not the achievement of equal membership in the American nation; it was the achievement of the right to contest exclusion primarily through politics instead of through protests.

Civil Rights and the Rise of a New US Nationalism

In Desmond King's excellent study of American nationalism, *The Liberty of Strangers: Making the American Nation*, he begins by quoting from Lyndon B. Johnson's 1965 speech on Civil Rights delivered at Howard University, and I trust that King will forgive me for borrowing his starting point. Said Johnson, "[I]n far too many ways American Negroes have been another nation: deprived of freedom, crippled by hatred, the doors of opportunity closed to hope." Implicit in this statement is the idea that for the Civil Rights movement to be a success, it was not enough for Americans to simply recognize the basic humanity of all individuals regardless of race or ethnicity; also of extraordinary importance was the need to recognize the basic *Americanness* of all US citizens. That is, it is not enough to simply understand that an African American is just

as human as, say, an Irishman in Dublin or white New Englander in Boston. Just as important is the need to recognize that the African American and the white New Englander share precisely the same claim to American citizenship and participatory democracy, a claim which is entirely denied to Dubliners of any kind, even if they share a closer ethnicity with white Bostonians than an African American does.

For Johnson, then, Civil Rights was about more than just persuading white Americans to accept the basic humanity of nonwhites; Civil Rights was about redefining what it means *to be American*. Opponents to the Civil Rights movement—led by Barry Goldwater and Southern Democrats-turned-Republicans (commonly referred to as “Dixiecrats”)—were therefore fighting to maintain old restrictions as to how we imagine the American nation. Goldwater and his cadre of supporters who made up the nascent conservative movement lost the legislative battle with the passing of laws that protected the rights of African Americans to vote and participate equally in the marketplace, but imagination is something that is rather difficult to legislate. So, while Civil Rights legislation—which received strong bipartisan support outside of the conservative movement, which was still seen as radical outside of the Deep South—forced racists to respect the legal rights of all Americans, Civil Rights laws did little to force conservatives to inclusively reimagine the nation.

During the Civil Rights movement, then, we can see how conditions were right for the rise of a new American nationalism. The new nationalism was one which sought to extend full membership in the American political community—along with the legitimate authority to inform the national identity—to people who had previously been

excluded (racial and ethnic minorities) or granted only partial membership (white women and non-Protestant whites). The old nationalism was one which sought to maintain the old restrictions that defined the nation, in its very essence, as white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and masculine. Now, neither of these nationalisms that I have just glossed is monolithic; they represent the ends of a spectrum of nationalisms, with plenty of room for moderates between each end. One might, for instance, imagine a nation that is inclusive in racial and ethnic terms, but exclusive in religious terms (say, African American and Latino Christians are mostly in; Muslims and atheists of any ilk are mostly out). And just as these nationalisms are not monolithic, neither are they static in terms of content or dispersion. As Gellner and Anderson explain, a nationalism tends to spread congruently with industrialism and print-capitalism. Groups that are excluded from the improved living standards associated with industrialism and print-capitalism tend to also be excluded from the spread of nationalism. But once those excluded groups acquire political agency, then they will inevitably use the levers of politics and government in order to contest their exclusion and articulate a new nationalism in which they are included. Clearly defining this new national identity that rose out of the Civil Rights movement would be extremely useful to political rhetors seeking to establish a sense of Burkean consubstantiality with audiences who identify with the new US nationalism.

National Formation

If there is one point upon which Smith, Gellner, and Anderson all agree, it is that the articulation of a nationalism is a rhetorical act that functions as a tool for asserting

political legitimacy. For a nationalism to succeed in establishing a sustainable claim to political power, its nationalistic claims must have a means of acquiring legitimacy in the eyes of nearly all members of the nation who possess political agency. In other words, nationalism is a tool that allows a regime to maintain hegemony over government, meaning that any political faction's permanency is dependent on the perceived legitimacy of its nationalistic claims. A study of political and ideological rhetoric, therefore, would seem to benefit from an examination of the process by which nationalistic rhetorics acquire legitimacy in order to discover how competing nationalisms—that is, competing political factions—can effectively challenge each other's legitimacy. Put specifically in a US context, understanding the process by which traditional American nationalism developed legitimacy can reveal how it deploys ideological rhetoric in order to defend itself against the counternationalisms of rival political ideologies.

Exactly how nations and nationalisms come into being is the subject of ongoing debate, but even in their disagreements nationalism theorists tend to agree that the continuing endurance of modern nations and nationalisms depends on specific elements of modernity: mass education and its ability to spread a folk culture within the boundaries of the state. Theorists will quibble over whether any culture so deliberately transmitted can make an honest claim to folksiness and whether the authenticity of the claim even matters, but they tend to agree that some kind of cultural homogeneity is required for a nation to endure, and given the size of most modern nations, spreading the culture throughout the territory of the state requires mass literacy, the ability for people to communicate in non-face-to-face interactions.

Beneath this broad consensus concerning literacy and culture, however, are some notable disagreements. To begin with, the three leading nationalism scholars with which I began this chapter—Gellner, Anderson, and Smith—do not agree entirely on the origins of nations and nationalisms. For Gellner, the national political unit as we conceive of it today is a wholly modern creation. The vast majority of individuals in agrarian societies, Gellner argues, were almost entirely illiterate and therefore incapable of experiencing relationships with people whom they could not interact with face-to-face. As Gellner explains,

Literacy, the establishment of a reasonably permanent and standardized script, means in effect the possibility of cultural and cognitive storage and centralization. The cognitive centralization and codification effected by a clerisy, and the political centralization which *is* the state, need not go hand-in-hand. Often they are rivals; sometimes one may capture the other; but more often, the Red and the Black, the specialists of violence and of faith, are indeed independently operating rivals, and their territories are often not co-extensive. (9, emphasis in the original)

At the risk of reinforcing a Eurocentric perspective for which Gellner might accurately be criticized, we can see how the phenomenon that Gellner describes evolved in agrarian Europe. The literate clergy used Latin script to operate across the boundaries of dynastic realms and provided political legitimacy by assigning to each dynast the divine right to rule. Those dynasts, in turn, dispersed power among the small portion of their population that was most effective at coercing compliance from the peasantry and other nobles through violence (recall the popular image of the expensively trained and equipped noble

knight on horseback). The dynasts would deploy their capacity for violence against each other in contests for territory and resources even while drawing the legitimacy of their violence from the same source—the clergy. Not required in any of this is any kind of cultural identification between ruler and ruled. For instance, as Anderson points out, William the Conqueror, who has been passed down to us as a foundational figure in English history, was in fact a Norman-French duke who, along with several generations of his successors, spoke not a word of the Anglo-Saxon language of the peasants over whom he ruled (41). Similarly, the court of the Romanov dynasty of Ivan the Terrible’s agrarian Russia communicated almost entirely in French and German (42). The point here is twofold: first, an illiterate subject of William’s tending a farm in the shadow of a castle guarding the border with Wales was extremely unlikely to feel any sense of community with a subject of William’s tending a similar farm in sight of the English Channel; second, neither of those peasant farmers would be likely to feel any sense of common ethnicity or culture with William or members of his court. Put more generally, without mass literacy cultural identification is impossible among people who do not interact face-to-face, and nations and nationalisms cannot exist without that cultural identification. In Gellner’s view, then, no nation can make an honest claim to a cultural identification with any largely illiterate agrarian societies of antiquity.

This pattern of (non)relationships that was characteristic of agrarian societies would remain in place, according to Gellner, until industrialism took hold, meaning that any nationalist ideology’s claim to preindustrial origins are inherently fictive inventions perpetuated for the benefit of political factions. As Gellner tells it, industrialism brought

with it a new kind of political legitimacy, one that relied on “sustained and perpetual growth, on an expected and continuous movement” (22). He calls this mode of social control a “universal Danegeld,” a reference to the old Danish practice of protecting their lands from plundering by paying off Viking raiders. Says Gellner,

[Industrial society’s] favored mode of social control is . . . buying off social aggression with material enhancement; its greatest weakness is its inability to survive any temporary reduction of the social bribery fund, and to weather the loss of legitimacy which befalls it if the cornucopia becomes temporarily jammed and the flow falters. (22)

Drawing on Adam Smith, Gellner points out that achieving the rewards of industrialism (improved production) requires a certain kind of division of labor, one that is “not merely complex, but also perpetually, and often rapidly, changing” (24). The point at which Gellner arrives is that the success of industrial society depends on a standardized training system—public education—that allows workers to adapt to new roles: “They must be able to communicate by means of written, impersonal, context-free, to-whom-it-may-concern type messages. Hence, these communications must be in the same shared and standardized linguistic medium and script” (34). In order to achieve the required mobility, then, most of the job training that occurs in industrial societies is generic training, with specialized training coming only at the end of the educational process (26-27). This key role that education plays in the spreading of nationalism leads Gellner to conclude, “The monopoly of legitimate education is now more important, more central than is the monopoly of legitimate violence” (33).

Allow me to illustrate Gellner's point with an example. In preindustrial societies a future blacksmith, for instance, would be apprenticed at a young age to a master blacksmith. The apprentice would learn the tools of the trade through the course of his (almost never "her") adolescence, and would be likely to achieve the rank of master smith without ever having learned how to read and write. If, once his training is complete, he should find that his village has no demand for a new blacksmith, he would have to find a new village, as he lacks the generic training (primarily literacy) required to pick up a new trade later in life. In an industrialized society, on the other hand, the training process is quite different. Young future workers receive standardized educations, leaving them literate and capable of making elementary mathematical calculations. Members of the labor force may receive specialized training at the end of the educational process, but their generic grounding in letters and numbers leaves them capable of acquiring new specializations when necessary. Thus, a man born to an early industrializing society who began adulthood as, say, a printer, could through the course of his life work as a journalist, an inventor (perhaps of a particular kind of stove), a scientific researcher (discoverer of, say, electricity), a politician, a diplomat, an author, a philosopher, and the founder of a university that would go on to help train the labor force required for the coming industrial age. If an early industrial society might revere such a man as something of a national "father," by late modernity he would likely be regarded as, simply, quite accomplished, perhaps exceptional even, but no longer so rare as to be mythologized in the national narrative.

To summarize, Gellner sees mass literacy first as a product of industrialism and second as the means of standardizing and spreading a culture that would be distributed within the boundaries of a state along with the spread of industrialism until the culture eventually comes to be regarded as a national one. That is, nationalism is not the awakening of an existing-but-dormant sense of nationhood, as the agrarian societies that preceded industrialism had no means of creating or nurturing any such sense of nationhood. Instead, for Gellner, nationalism is a product of industrialism, and the modern nation as we conceive of it today is, perhaps paradoxically, the product of nationalism. Thus, nations and nationalisms are the redheaded stepchildren of industrialism, meaning that any nationalistic claims of ancient ethnic origins are inherently fictive.

Smith, for his part, is willing to assign a greater degree of legitimacy to a nationalism's claim to ancient origins, which is to say that he is not as quick to dismiss modern political ideologies that rely on nationalistic claims for their authority. Although Smith draws on a great deal on Gellner's theory of nationalism, Smith insists on a greater degree of historical specificity and objects to Gellner's basic goal of arriving at a single general theory:

For Gellner it is possible and desirable to have a general theory of nationalism, one that derives from the postulates of modernity. For myself, no such general theory is possible I feel that the differences between nationalisms across periods and continents are too great to be embraced by a single Euclidean theory.

(78)

Smith's sensitivity to the differences across time and place, however, doesn't prevent him from making some generalizations that are rather sweeping—though not necessarily invalid. The most significant of these generalizations concerns a nation's (and therefore a nationalism's) connection to the past. While Gellner dismisses any such connections as inventions of modern societies, Smith counters that although connections to an ancient past may be embellished, the myths and traditions that invent the connection “only last if they have resonance” (44), and Smith later argues that the very fact that so many nations insist on finding a historical antecedent for themselves “suggests that there are mechanism at work which ensure some connection and even continuity between the modern nation and one or more pasts” (69). In answer to Gellner, Smith ultimately concludes,

Until we find a way of taking the myths of nations seriously (though not at their face value) and treating the historical traditions of their ethnic pasts with respect (though agnostically) we shall simply debar ourselves from grasping the almost ubiquitous appeal of the nation and nationalism today. (52)

The task of taking something both seriously and not at face value while treating it with agnostic respect does little to rescue us from the implicit paternalism of Gellner's dismissals. Anderson's solution here may strike as little more than a change of tone, but it provides us with language that is useful for carrying this discussion forward: “The drawback of [Gellner's] formulation,” says Anderson, “is that Gellner is so anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false pretences that he assimilates ‘invention’ to ‘fabrication’ and ‘falsity,’ rather than to ‘imagining’ and ‘creation’” (6).

So, where Gellner would have us pay no attention to a nationalism's claim to ethnic antiquity, Smith would have us ask why some such claims hold purchase while others do not, and Anderson would have us regard those claims as tools for imagining a political community that even Gellner agrees modernity requires us to imagine. Anderson takes us only a small step away from the pitfall of paternalism, but at least he solves the problem inherent in Gellner's condemnation of nationalist reasoning which he himself says is essential to the Modern Age. High productivity (and the accompanying improvement in living standards) requires industrialism, which requires the invention of nationalisms, which therefore requires the invention (or, perhaps for Smith, emergence) of modern nations. If we accept these premises, as Anderson and Gellner both do, then there doesn't seem to be a great deal of usefulness in arriving at intense moral judgments on a series of phenomena—industrialism, mass literacy, and national culture—which we've just determined were prerequisites to our ability to arrive at and communicate those same moral judgments. It's also important to note here that Smith is more concerned with our understanding of nationalisms than with promoting their legitimacies, as he notes that "nationalism serves as a vital political discourse (or argument) able to mobilize different strata, uniting divergent social interests and legitimating their political aspirations. In other words, a political instrument of political factions, no more" (84). This is a key point upon which all three theorists seem to implicitly agree and which I will return to shortly in an attempt to apply these concepts to the context of the contemporary United States.

The History of US Nationalism

Recall now the definition of American nationalism as the principle holding that government should be controlled by those who mutually imagine each other as sharing equal claim to American sovereignty and territory, and this definition leaves open the possibility for multiple nationalisms to exist in competition with each other. Recall also that I have suggested two primary archetypes of American nationalism prevalent today. One is based on a restrictive definition of membership in the American nation, and the other is based on inclusivity. In *The Liberty of Strangers*, Desmond King provides labels for these two nationalisms: *assimilationist democracy* and *democratic nationalism*. He refers to adherents of these nationalisms as *assimilationist democrats* and *democratic nationalists*, respectively, though in the interest of avoiding confusion it is important to note that he is employing the common-noun definition of *democrat*—someone who believes in democracy—and not the proper-noun definition of *Democrat*, which refers to a member of the political party (5-6).

King describes assimilationist democrats as individuals who “defend a majority culture or group and make assimilation to that standard a condition of membership. They value the nation above democratic inclusion; that is, ensuring the integrity of the political system is deemed more important than guaranteeing equality of rights” (6). King contrasts this with a description of democratic nationalists as individuals who “work to avoid creating ‘other nations’ (groups of citizens whose membership is in some way unequal) within the polity while tolerating strong group identities, including transnational ties” (6). He elaborates further on the distinction:

[I]n an assimilationist democratic vision, group identity is a danger to patriotic fervor and political stability, while in addressing and accommodating group sources of exclusion, a democratic nationalist vision of nationhood allows group identity to complement individualism, without displacing either. (6)

Although King does not explicitly reference Gellner here, King's argument is in line with Gellner's explanation that just as industrialism spreads unevenly, so do the nationalism and the societal benefits associated with industrialism. As industrialism spreads, it erodes the structures of agrarian society, replacing it with what Gellner describes as "an internally random and fluid totality, within which there is not much . . . by way of genuine sub-structures" (62). That is, with industrialism and mass literacy come both mobility and homogenization, resulting in an erosion of subgroupings and the elevation of the nation to supreme importance. This erosion of subgroupings is at the heart of the purpose of nationalism—to transfer loyalties from several factions to the single whole nation. Some subgroups, however, are resistant to this erosion, namely those groups that carry a specific attribute that, even with the passage of time, does not become dispersed evenly throughout the entire society (63-64).

Typical of Gellner, he illustrates this point through the use of a hypothetical—people of a blue pigmentation. Due to some accident of the antecedent agrarian society, industrialization comes later to blues, as Gellner calls them, than to the rest of society, resulting in blues being associated with the lower strata of society, which creates a prejudice against the blues. When members of the bottom strata of society appear to represent a random sample of the entire population, according to Gellner, then it becomes

impossible to associate the bottom with any particular trait. But when a specific trait—blueness in this case—is overrepresented in the bottom strata, “then the prejudice which is engendered among slightly higher strata against those below them by fear of being pushed downward, inevitably spreads to blueness” (67). Expectations of egalitarianism and homogeneity meet up with the reality of non-egalitarian prejudice, resulting in acute political tension (72). The two versions of American nationalism that King describes reflect Gellner’s postulates that nationalism tends to erode most subgroups within a nation except those resistant subgroups which carry identifiable traits that are not dispersed evenly throughout society. King would likely agree with Gellner’s assertion that these resistant traits often lead to political tension and “constitute a very serious problem for industrial society” (Gellner 64).

King begins his attempt to reconcile enduring group distinctions and US national unity by describing how government policy helped to underscore those distinctions through explicit exclusion. First, King points to a rhetorical feature of American nationalism that has remained constant since the end of the Civil War: “that the United States is composed of ‘one people’ sutured by shared loyalty to the polity” (5). Yet for a century after the war, government policy continued to explicitly exclude groups that were deemed incapable of assimilating into the “one people,” and these policies were not limited to the famous Jim Crow of the Deep South. For instance, as recently as the 1960s, immigration policy continued to be based on a sense of racial and ethnic compatibility with American nationhood (12). As a result, many of the group distinctions denied by the rhetoric of one-people nationalism were in fact deepened. As

King explains, public policy operated on two core assumptions: only people of European ethnic backgrounds could achieve full membership in the American nation, and even those who were capable of achieving full membership would require “intense acculturation in the ways and content of American nationhood” (22). The result was the creation of two categories of membership based on race, ethnicity, and national background: “new but assimilated members, such as Eastern and Southern Europeans, and the excluded, such as Chinese or Japanese Americans” (22). Consistent with Gellner’s view that a monopoly on public education is of prime importance to any nationalism, access to public education was based on different groups’ eligibility for membership. Those deemed capable of assimilating were granted full access, while those who were excluded from membership were either granted separate, lower-quality education or denied access altogether. Separate education systems were, of course, antithetical to the logic of one-people nationalism and served only to further deepen group distinctions (25-36).

King argues that international pressure forced many changes to these exclusive government policies (108-35). Many of these policy changes came during the Johnson administration, not just his Civil Rights legislation, but also the abolition of immigration policy based on national origin. King argues that it is no small coincidence that these changes came during the height of the Cold War, noting that the country’s role in defending democracy abroad “helped to trigger the democratization of American nationhood. . . . Politically and diplomatically, the Cold War could not be waged without some initiatives from American nation-builders to improve Civil Rights and institutions

at home” (133-34). But King is quick to point out that these measures did not dissolve group distinctions within the American polity; instead, they recast the political dimension of those group distinctions, leading to “a politics divided in group terms, not the often anticipated erosion of group-based distinctions into an individualistic nation” (135). Also among King’s insightful conclusions is the revelation that, contrary to the individualistic rhetoric that is common to both kinds of American nationalisms, the sweeping impact of government policies related to membership in the American nation reveals a state that is much stronger and involved in citizens’ lives than American political culture would suggest (174).

King’s history of US nationalisms usefully illuminates the role that government policies have played in shaping and perpetuating a particular kind of nationalism, but he declines to address the basic question on the minds of nationalism theorists: where did this nationalism come from in the first place? Gellner would likely argue that US nationalism (and the US nation) was shaped by industrialism, that nationalism was created by the need to train a workforce required by the industrial era. Anderson could be expected to make a similar argument, though he would likely substitute the term “print-capitalism” in place of “industrialism,” thus emphasizing the importance of long-distance social networks that tend to accompany the interconnections of marketplaces. Either perspective would seem to help explain, at least in part, how the country’s sense of national unity transformed so much during the century that followed the Civil War—it is a period that coincides with the Industrial Revolution and the establishment of a national infrastructure (transcontinental railroads, telephone lines, interstate highways) that greatly

increased communication and mobility. But this only explains why *a* nationalism formed, not why it took the shape that it did.

One factor that could explain the shape of early American nationalism is the allure of golden age myths. According to Smith, nationalism makes good use of such myths: “Not only are they [golden age myths] elaborated and fleshed out by historical and linguistic scholarship, they become standards and models for inspiring a national regeneration and their very idealization allows for different messages or inspiration for the present” (47). He later elaborates: “It is modern citizens who need and reconstruct a heroic ethnic past; but once reconstructed, that past exerts its own power of definition through ancestry and shared, albeit taught, memory” (75). Here, Smith explicitly acknowledges that such heroic narratives are produced at least as much by their modern audience as they are by their historic subjects, a position which is relatively consistent with both Gellner and Anderson. However, where Gellner judges harshly the modern agents of the mythology as promoting fictive inventions meant to legitimize their own power, Anderson sees them as morally neutral “imaginings” necessary to build community, and Smith seems to see them as necessary in the interest of producing national unity.

The ability of golden age myths to hold purchase is not so much a function of the myth’s factuality but, as Smith explains, its ability to resonate within a given culture. But, how could this apply to a country that is explicitly aware of its lack of antiquity? The US, by the standards of Old World nations, simply does not have an ancient past from which to draw inspiration. The thick haziness of ancient history that allows a

French Duke to be seen as a quintessential Englishman had thinned by 1800, meaning that the raw materials available for American myth-making were much less malleable than those enjoyed by the Old World. As a result, it is much more difficult to simply whitewash the racism and sexism of early American heroes than it is to overlook the obvious Frenchness of William.

Thus, the very fact that Americans knew more about their foundational legacies than the English knew about theirs *at the time of the myth-making* means that the nationalism spawned by American myths would inevitably be more infused with the actual character and values of the myths' heroes. That is, because the English invented their nationalist myths some seven centuries after the events that inspired them, the articulation of those myths was free to express the character and values of the myth-tellers over those of William and his contemporaries. But the American foundation myth was written self-consciously by its own protagonists, as is made evident by the obvious historical awareness in the writings of George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin. Thus, it should come as no surprise that the American foundational legacy should produce a nationalism that was willing to deal with (by ignoring) the contradictions of men who adamantly defended their natural rights while denying those rights to others.

While this helps explain why the dominant form of early American nationalism took the shape that it did, the foundation legacy is only one of the golden age narratives influencing modern US nationalisms, and it might not even be the most influential one. The more recent golden age narrative—the one where the American GI twice rescued his

European cousins from themselves and then returned home to build a suburban paradise—was aided by a new advancement in communication technology—television—and one might say a new kind of literacy as well. As is explained by Jeremy McInerney in his history of classical Greece and Nicole Loraux in *The Invention of Athens*, the invention of the ancient Greek golden age can be seen as a product of the intersection of two factors: oral traditions proclaiming a heroic past and the development of literacy, which allowed those heroic epics to be written down and spread farther and faster throughout the Greek-speaking world. The result was that Greeks' knowledge of their past was dominated by stories like Homer's account of the sacking of Troy, leading newly literate Greeks to imagine a fictional golden age which they would earnestly try to recreate in the centuries that followed.

I submit that the image of the American golden age of the 20th century followed a similar evolution, with Berlin and Tokyo playing the roles of modern-day Troys and television playing the role of a new literacy that allowed the myth to be distributed farther, faster, and more efficiently than was previously possible. This idea is consistent with James Paul Gee's definition of literacy as control of language used in discourses that involve institutions outside of the family (541-42), and it is also consistent with the role in the spreading of culture that Gellner assigns to literacy. This new mode of spreading culture reached broad distribution at the same time that the country's cultural leaders were basking in the warm glow of recent military heroism and the growing economic optimism that came to characterize the 1950s. The result was that these images of heroism and optimism became the images carried by the new communication technology,

thus distributing the myth of a golden age and shaping a nationalism that was content to turn a blind eye to the contradictions associated with fighting and dying to defend the freedoms of foreigners while continuing to deny freedoms to people within our own borders.

These golden age myths act alongside any number of policies and narratives that influence the shape of American national identity. Arriving at a more inclusive and egalitarian definition of the nation, therefore, depends on the ability of inclusive nationalists to advance policies and arguments that make room for small-group identities to exist noncompetitively alongside a common national identity. The quest for Burkean consubstantiality with those small groups depends on a political rhetor's ability to create a sense of identification with how members of those small groups see themselves in relation to other small groups and to the nation as a whole.

Contesting and Defining the US National Identity

Taken together, exclusionary government policies, economic consequences of the uneven spread of industrialism and print-capitalism, culturally infused interpretations of history, and the development of new literacies can all be seen as colluding in the development of what David Theo Goldberg calls "racial Americanization," the process by which existing racial categories and power relations in the United States come to be seen "*as if they were the nature of things*" (96, emphasis in the original). As Goldberg and King's accounts of American nationalisms clearly suggest, any discussion of American nationalisms must inevitably address questions of race and ethnicity. That is

not to say that race and ethnicity are the only factors influencing American nationalisms, but critical race theory does provide us with a useful model of a methodology for investigating how nationalisms are contested. Specifically, I propose a conceptualization of US national formation—the process of forming the US national identity—that is based on Omi and Winant’s concept of racial formation, which they define as “the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed” (124). In arriving at this definition, Omi and Winant begin by acknowledging that the term *race* is an arbitrary and nebulous one because the creation of racial categories are historical and sociological processes, not biological ones. Yet we cannot simply refuse to engage the term because those categories have become central to our identities and understanding of the social world (123-24).

Omi and Winant further describe racial formation as a product of an endless series of racial projects, which are defined as “simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines” (125). That is, racial formation is not the result of any single idea, movement, or government policy. It is, in fact, the outcome of countless ideas, movements, and policies that are based on racial categories. Some of these projects were government policies explicitly designed to allocate more resources to people of a particular racial category. Other projects might have taken the form of widely distributed explanations for why people of a given category are the way they are. Yet others might have taken the form of broadly accepted social practices that were based on racial categories.

I propose a similar approach for defining US national formation: *the sociohistorical process by which the category of “American” is created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed*. National formation, the process by which the national identity is contested and defined, is therefore a product of a series of nationalist projects, which I define as simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of US sociopolitical dynamics and an effort to assign the rights of participatory citizenship based on different categories of “Americans.” King’s history of how membership in the American nation has been defined and redefined can therefore be seen as a narrative of a series of nationalist projects.

And just as Omi and Winant demonstrate that not all racial projects are racist, not all nationalist projects are assimilationist. According to Omi and Winant, “A racial project can be defined as *racist* only if it *creates or reproduces structures of domination based on essentialist categories of race*” (135, emphasis in the original). “Structures of domination” are key here. No reasonably objective observer can deny that US government at the federal and state level has in the past treated people differently based on race. Omi and Winant (and many others) argue that these government policies established social structures that have continued to perpetuate themselves even after those government policies were terminated. For government to now simply “declare itself ‘colorblind,’” as Omi and Winant put it, is to tacitly endorse those structures of racial dominance that continue to perpetuate themselves (126). Even with the end of government segregationist practices, for instance, *de facto* segregation in the private sphere has continued long after the end of the Civil Rights movement. As Goldberg puts

it, “By the 1980s, increasingly members of ethnoracially defined and identified groups, and not only blacks, tend to live not only in separate neighborhoods from whites but in different cities” (93). That is, removing racism from our laws does not remove it from our traditions, beliefs, and culture. It is for this reason that minority “set-aside” programs cannot be regarded as racist, according to Omi and Winant, because they serve to interrupt self-perpetuating structures of dominance—such as *de facto* segregation in the private sphere—rather than to reinforce existing ones or establish new ones. Similarly, not all nationalist projects should be regarded with the moral disapproval that Gellner holds for nationalism in general. A nationalist project that seeks to allow “group identity to complement individualism, without displacing either” (if I may borrow King’s language) serves to contest assimilationist privilege. Put another way, a nationalist project that reinforces the idea that there is a particular cultural identity to which all Americans must conform is clearly an assimilationist project. Yet, another kind of nationalist project would be one that seeks to expand the definition of American by acknowledging the existence of subgroups without elevating one as more American than the rest. This kind of project, one which seeks to transform the national consciousness into a more inclusive one, would advance a democratic nationalist ideology instead of an assimilationist one.

This kind of “consciousness transformation” is central to Gramsci’s notions of ideological hegemony, which Carl Boggs succinctly defines as “a shared system of values that [provide] widespread legitimacy to dominant institutions and interests” (49). For Gramsci, in advanced capitalist societies these shared values are disseminated by

education, the news media, law, and mass culture. With this in mind, he argues that the conditions for socialist revolution were heavily dependent on the creation of a “counterhegemonic’ worldview” (Boggs 17). So, even from the perspective of a political ideology that held as its explicit goal the abolishment of the capitalistic class structure seen as overwhelmingly dominated by bourgeois elites, Gramsci argued that the movement’s political success depended on its ability to tap into people’s sense of themselves in relation to existing social and political structures—including the ones that Gramsci intended to destroy.

It is entirely appropriate, therefore, to conceive of any society as a mixed mash of ideologies constantly competing with each other for hegemonic status. This mixture of worldviews is perhaps more complex than usual in the United States because its “melting pot” nature brings different cultures into contact with one another under a common government in an uncommon way. The unique element here is not so much the number of cultures under a single government; the English Empire at its height, for example, reigned over the peoples of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and several fragmented nations in West Africa, South Africa, the Indian Subcontinent, East Asia, the South Pacific, the Middle East, and North America. The difference here is that most of these non-English subjects of the English Empire were not afforded legal citizenship status, meaning that no significant counterhegemonic movement could be a strictly political movement (a movement that operates within the constraints of existing institutions of government) because they had no real institutional power with which to contest their colonizers’ dominance.

The hegemonic process in the US, on the other hand, has resulted in the slow expansion of the franchise with the elimination of voting restrictions based on property ownership, gender, and race. Whether or not this can honestly be called “universal suffrage” is complicated by valid claims of under-enfranchisement due to voter intimidation, lack of access to education, and gerrymandering, but it does seem fair to say that nondominant groups have some institutional means with which to contest government authority. These institutional means may not be empowered to the extent that many of us consider fair, but they are significant enough to make politicians court the votes of previously underrepresented groups, including African Americans, women, Latinos, gays, and naturalized immigrants. That is, nondominant worldviews can contest dominance from within the framework of the government, making them a part of the political process, unlike the vast majority of colonized peoples in the old English Empire.

Now, it is important to note that worldviews are not static, and that outcomes in hegemonic struggles tend to be incremental. Instead of a broad-scale revolution in which previously subjugated groups become dominant, the dominant group makes minor adjustments to its worldview in exchange for keeping other factions from “rising up.” The Civil Rights movement and its outcomes serve well to demonstrate how this happens in the US. A worldview that sought to assert rights of racial minorities won concessions from those at the top of the existing power structure. Government-sanctioned segregation was outlawed, major efforts to protect voting rights were enacted, and the once-commonplace language of explicit racism was driven underground. These concessions are by no means negligible, but they resulted in only modest changes to the distribution

of wealth and access to the heights of government. That is, for all the successes of Civil Rights, those in charge before for the most part remained in charge after.

More to the point, the engagement and concessions between worldviews play decisive roles in how we conceive of ourselves as a nation. These negotiations are essential for the creation of a shared national identity because no modern nation possesses a natural ethnic basis for national unity. As Balibar explains,

The fundamental problem is therefore to produce the people. More exactly, it is to make the people produce itself continually as national community. Or again, it is to produce the effect of unity by virtue of which the people will appear, in everyone's eyes, "as a people," that is, as the basis and origin of political power.

(221)

This is not a matter of setting a national identity against individual identities. Identities will inevitably remain individual, but they are also inevitably constructed within the social values and behavioral norms specific to the given historic context (Balibar 221).

The result is the creation of what Balibar calls a "fictive ethnicity," the sense of a national ethnic identity that does not exist naturally but has been made to seem to exist as if it were natural (223-24). Balibar agrees with Gellner that education is the primary institution through which this fictive ethnicity is produced, but this is not restricted to the formal education that takes place in schools: "the state, economic exchange, and family life are also schools in a sense, organs of the ideal nation recognizable by a common language which belongs to them 'as their own'" (Balibar 226).

In light of this, it is easy to see how organs that produce a fictive national ethnicity are at the center of almost all of the major political issues of any historical period. As I noted in the introduction to this chapter, over the last decade we have seen public debate over how science should be taught in schools, over how we define marriage and family, over our national attitude toward human rights issues related to immigration and torture. The processes and outcomes of these debates have direct impact on the identity of the country as religious or secular, tolerant or exclusive, strong or weak, timid or ruthless.

The votes people cast on these issues, then, to a certain extent represent attempts to contest our national identity, and winning those votes depends in large part on a political rhetor's ability to project an image of the nation that is congruent with the audience's sense of national identity. In other words, for a voter to believe that a political leader shares that voter's interests, that political leader has to demonstrate that he or she shares the voter's sense of who deserves complete membership in the nation and who should be barred from membership.

Identification and Consubstantiality in Nationalisms and Politics

Implicit here is awareness that, like politics, *nationalisms are produced rhetorically*. Regardless of the appeals a nationalism makes to ethnicity, history, tradition, myth, or what have you, those appeals are rhetorical ones based largely on identification. Kenneth Burke in *A Rhetoric of Motives* conceives of rhetoric as being grounded largely in the concept of identification. He sees the role of identification as the

“ironic counterpart” of division, which is implicit in the very need for communication (22-23). If divisions did not exist naturally and ubiquitously, “communication would be of a man’s very essence . . . natural, spontaneous, and total” (22). Because divisions do indeed exist naturally and are found at every turn, “Rhetoric is concerned with the state of Babel after the Fall” (23). In other words, rhetoric is the tool we use to proclaim our unity, which is made necessary by our natural divisions. With this need to proclaim unity in mind, Burke introduces the concept of “consubstantiality.” This is defined as a state in which two naturally separate beings that are not identical come to identify their interests with the interests of the other. That is, two separate individuals are consubstantial with one another when they come to see themselves as wanting the same things. Under these circumstances, the two individuals become “substantially one” even as each “remains unique, an individual locus of motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with one another” (20-21).

These premises led Burke to conclude that a rhetor can only persuade a given audience insofar as she can use language—“speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea”—with which the audience identifies (55). By displaying the appropriate “signs,” the orator gives deference to the audience’s “opinions,” and while the orator will often need to change the audience’s opinion in one regard, her success depends largely on her ability to demonstrate agreement with the audience’s opinions in other respects (55-56). This is most successful when the act of identification is so complete that the audience comes to feel as though they are participating in the formation of the speaker’s assertions. Burke punctuates this point with a rhetorical question: “Could we say that, in

such cases, the audience is exalted by the assertion because it has the feel of collaborating in the assertion?" (57-58).

This kind of "exalted," participatory audience is at the heart of values voting and nation forming. Although Lakoff's scholarship demonstrates no awareness of Burke's work on identification, Lakoff's insistence on the need for politicians to identify with the values of their audience echoes aspects of *A Rhetoric of Motives*. On first glance, Lakoff's focus on "values" over "interests" may seem to be at odds with Burke's definition of consubstantiality as being based on common interests, but Gramsci, Balibar, Gellner, Anderson, and Smith give us a clear means for understanding how voters can see influencing the shape of the national identity as being in their interest. Voters, after all, have an interest in contesting ideological dominance based on their sense of themselves in relation to political and social power structures that define the national identity. Or put in something closer to Burke's language, voters are persuaded by political leaders only insofar as the voters see themselves as participating in the formation of those political leaders' views. Political contests, therefore, hinge largely on the question of whose subgroup identities are awarded the privilege of informing and defining the national identity.

Ethos, Nationalism, and Ideology

In chapter 1, I surveyed a number of different texts that sought to explain the nature of the ideological divide in American politics, and among them was the approach advanced by Brock and colleagues that was based on divergent attitudes toward change.

They argue that each ideology has an internal logic that politicians or political parties could apply consistently if they so chose, but Brock et al. do not fully address the motivations behind logical inconsistencies. In light of the universality of such inconsistencies, the usefulness of conceiving of American political ideologies as being based on logic seems rather limited. Any investigation into American political ideology would seem to have to either account for those inconsistencies or, as I suggest, define those ideologies in a new way, a way that is more consistent with people's actions.

For instance, Brock et al.'s approach to ideology that emphasizes logical consistency in the terms of public policy doesn't do much to help us understand why an ideological group would have such drastically different-yet-intense reactions to changes in, say, immigration and healthcare policies. Why do conservatives react so negatively, and liberals so positively, to proposed changes in healthcare policy, while the reverse is true of their reactions to proposed changes to immigration policy? The answer that these groups are responding to *societal* changes rather than *policy* changes reverses the axis of the healthcare-immigration example, but the essential paradox remains. Just as one might argue that the purpose of changes to immigration policy is to stem the tide of societal changes (more non-English speaking communities, for instance) being caused by current immigration policies, one can argue just as convincingly that the purpose of changes to healthcare policy is to stem the tide of societal changes (more middle-class people living without access to doctors and medicine) caused by old healthcare policies. This illuminates the major problem with defining American political ideology in terms of change: the vague way in which the term is deployed leaves it susceptible to normative

interpretation. The contest between ideologies, therefore, begins not with defining attitudes about change, but with the very definition of the term *change*, or rather, the definition of *that which came before change*. Put in terms of ethos, arguments about *who we should be* by their nature begin with conflicting definitions of *who we are*.

In light of this, American political ideologies seem most capable of maintaining logical coherence if we conceive of them in terms defined by competing nationalisms. That is, American politics is a struggle over how we define the national folk culture, and this returns us to the question of marginalization and counterpublicity. At the heart of the conservative argument about counterpublicity—as articulated by Simon, among others (see chapter 1)—is the assertion that mass media and public education are being used to disseminate a high culture that is intended to supersede traditional American folk culture. Implicit here is the assumption of a single folk culture which is essentially—that is, in its very essence—more American than the high culture that is being disseminated. However, this conception of a high culture being imposed on an American folk culture implies a binary cultural worldview. There is *the* folk culture and *other* culture, and a refusal by “new” Americans to assimilate to the folk culture constitutes an encroachment on traditional America.

As King explains, this reflects the position of assimilationist nationalism. The answer from the perspective of democratic nationalists is that what conservatives see as a nontraditional “high culture” is in fact a “multiculture,” if you will. It self-identifies as a collection, or perhaps an intersection, of many folk cultures. A multicultural worldview, which King describes as one that sees any given folk culture as one of a countless number

of folk cultures of relatively equal value, cannot maintain logical consistency with the concept of one particular folk culture deserving of a privileged status above all other folk cultures combined. As Gellner and Smith explain, the authenticity of claims to ancient nationalist origins must be viewed with a certain degree of skepticism. In Gellner's words, "The cultures [nationalism] claims to defend and revive are often its own inventions" (55). Even Smith, who advocates a healthy respect for connections to the past that "have resonance" in modernity, acknowledges that modern cultures tend to augment such connections for their own sake (44). To use Anderson's language, the connections are more imaginings than reality. What this means in terms of contemporary US nationalism is that the "traditional American" folk culture is not what it imagines itself to be: the rituals, practices, and power relations of past American cultural icons—Pilgrims, Minutemen, Pioneers—would look extremely foreign to those who identify themselves with today's quintessential American folk culture. Moreover, to argue that a "traditional American" folk culture is the unfair victim of the multicultural fails to recognize that the "traditional American" culture is by far the most influential of all the folk cultures that make up the American high culture/multiculture. That is, conservative claims of cultural marginalization fail to recognize the privileged status which their "traditional" culture already enjoys.

With this in mind, it seems fair to characterize American politics as a contest with inclusive nationalism on the left end of the spectrum and exclusive nationalism on the right end, and in between are various degrees of inclusion and exclusion. According to Burkean rhetorical theory, then, political rhetors would benefit from using language that

maximizes the exclusive identification, language that makes the largest number of people feel as though they are part of the exclusive American club. In the next chapter, I will examine how competing nationalisms—and therefore competing political ideologies—are contested in popular media that is not explicitly political, and chapter 4 will show how those nationalisms are contested in the political arena. The final chapter will demonstrate how each ideology is capable of adopting the language of the opposition's rhetoric in order to increase the number of Americans who are made to feel as though they are part of the same "in crowd" as the speaker.

CHAPTER 3: CONTESTING NATIONAL IDENTITY IN POPULAR CULTURE

The previous chapter concluded that ideological arguments in the United States necessarily begin with disagreements over how Americans define themselves as a people. In this chapter, I will examine how these disagreements take shape in a context that is seemingly apolitical—the world of professional sports. I designate it as “seemingly apolitical” because of the temptation to put aside the social contexts in which competitions are set and focus strictly on the physical abilities and accomplishments of the athletes. However, professional athletes, coaches, franchise owners, members of the media, and consumers of professional sports (fans) all exist in a social milieu that is not left behind when they enter the stadium or turn on the television. More importantly, as this chapter will demonstrate, the everyday experiences of people in and around professional sports both contest and reinforce assumptions and attitudes concerning how we imagine our place in the social world around us.

In order to demonstrate how these ideological reinforcements and contestations take shape, this chapter will examine the reactions of sportswriters to a pair of ideologically charged claims concerning Donovan McNabb, the former quarterback for the Philadelphia Eagles. The first incident concerns a claim made in 2003 by conservative media personality Rush Limbaugh in which he asserted that the respect McNabb received from the sports intelligentsia was primarily a product of a popular desire to see a black quarterback do well in the NFL. The second incident concerns a

claim made in 2007 by McNabb himself in which he asserted that black quarterbacks had to do “a little bit extra” in order to receive the recognition awarded to white quarterbacks. Both incidents resulted in a wave of responding commentary from sportswriters all over the country, and the ideological implications of those commentaries are the focus of this chapter. Ultimately, analyses of these commentaries reveal that the vast majority of sportswriters applied an ideology of moderate nationalism, one which rejects Limbaugh’s exclusivity and claim to counterpublicity but also refuses McNabb’s call for self-examination in the interest of greater inclusivity. In other words, the vast majority of sportswriters’ reactions reflected pride in society’s existing degree of inclusivity but also an aversion to suggestions that past initiatives have not gone far enough to break down exclusivity. As I explained in chapter 2, it is this kind of respect for inclusivity balanced against a desire for stability that characterizes moderate nationalism.

This chapter will contrast the conclusions of an analysis based on nationalist sentiment against the conclusions of an analysis based on critical race theory and another analysis from the view of conservative counterintelligentsia theory. The latter two perspectives conclude, rather paradoxically, that their worldviews are under attack by the majority of sportswriters whose commentaries make up the sample. That is, a race theory reading suggests that most sportswriters applied and reinforced principles of colorblind racism, while the opposite end of the political spectrum, represented by the view that conservative thought is marginalized and silenced in public discourse, suggests that its views were, well, marginalized and silenced by the majority of sportswriters. In other words, the left-wing ideology and the right-wing ideology both conclude that the majority

of voices in the print-based public sphere are arrayed against them. The result is that neither race theory nor conservative counterintelligentsia theory leaves room to articulate moderate viewpoints. In answer to this I submit a reading based on my theory of national formation, which holds that an American's choice of political ideology is largely a product of attitudes toward national inclusivity. The moderate US political ideology, therefore, believes in maintaining some restrictions with regard to who is awarded complete membership in the American nation, more restrictions than those advocated by the far left and fewer restrictions than what the far right would want. A national formation reading allows us to see how sportswriters participated in the negotiating of balance between inclusivity and exclusivity, which gives us some means of articulating a moderate position, or "middle ground," which both race theory and conservative counterintelligentsia theory fail to acknowledge.

Philadelphia, Limbaugh, and McNabb

As quarterback of the Philadelphia Eagles, McNabb was already among the most scrutinized athletes in North American professional sports. He played the most visible and important position on a professional football team, and he did it in Philadelphia, the home of quite likely the most spitefully critical sports fans in the United States. It's a city known for booing its own favorite sons, including baseball hall-of-famer Mike Schmidt and basketball hall-of-famer Charles Barkley. Its most beloved sports figure, Rocky, is a fictional one, and Philadelphians once famously booed Santa Claus during halftime of an Eagles game (Mihoces).

It only makes sense that McNabb would be a central player in a major national dialogue on race in sports. McNabb became intimately familiar with one of the more unfortunate sides of American society at an early age, when his family's home in suburban Chicago was broken into and vandalized by people who were unwilling to accept a black family in their mostly white neighborhood ("Episode 126"). He also became acquainted with the nature of Philadelphia sports the very instant he joined the Eagles, as he was greeted with a loud chorus of boos after the team selected him with the second pick in the 1999 draft (the fans wanted University of Texas running back Ricky Williams).

The city came around quickly, at least as far as Philadelphia sports fans ever warm up to anything. McNabb established himself as an elite player, leading the team to three conference championship games and one Super Bowl appearance, and playing in five Pro Bowls (the NFL's version of an all-star game, which pits the league's best players against each other; "Donovan McNabb Statistics"). As Jeff Duncan notes in one of the columns included as part of this research effort, as of September 2007 McNabb had won 66.3% of the games that he had started in his career, which at the time was the best mark by any active quarterback who had started at least 95 games. He won 70.7 percent of his first 75 starts, which was also the best in the league. To be fair, McNabb's critics are quick to point out that he has never won a Super Bowl, which is certainly a fair criticism, but the history of the NFL is littered with great players who never won the big one, including quarterback legends Jim Kelly and Dan Marino, both of whom were voted into the NFL Hall of Fame the first year they were eligible (NFL players have to be

retired for five years before they can be admitted to the Hall of Fame;

Profootballhof.com).

Without question, the most famous criticism ever leveled at McNabb came from conservative pundit Rush Limbaugh. ESPN, the country's most widely viewed 24-hour cable sports station, hired Limbaugh in 2003 to represent the voice of the "common fan" on *Sunday NFL Countdown*, a Sunday-morning show that previews the weekend's games. On September 28 of that year, only a few weeks after joining the show, Limbaugh offered this commentary on McNabb's early-season struggles:

Sorry to say this, I don't think he's been that good from the get-go. . . . What we have here is a little social concern in the NFL. The media has been very desirous that a black quarterback can do well—black coaches and black quarterbacks doing well. . . . There's a little hope invested in McNabb, and he got credit for the performance of his team that he didn't deserve. The defense [has] carried this team. (qtd. in Hartmann 46)

The statement drew an avalanche of criticism from sports media and mainstream media alike, and Limbaugh announced his resignation from ESPN three days later. Douglass Hartmann, in his insightful analysis of the episode and its aftermath, notes that while Limbaugh expressed regret for offering an opinion that "caused discomfort to the crew," the conservative pundit never backed down from his remarks, telling *Newsweek*, "I know I'm right. . . . I'm not going to retract anything" (qtd. in Hartmann 47). What's more, the day after announcing his resignation, Limbaugh defended his position in a prepared speech in front of the National Press Association, adding, "All this has become the

tempest that it is because I must have been right about something. If I wasn't right, there wouldn't be this cacophony of outrage that has sprung up in the sportswriter community" ("QB Disappointed").

It's worth noting here that Limbaugh was not without some evidence to support his claim that McNabb was overrated; the Eagles defense was indeed highly regarded, and McNabb's stats over the first two games of that season were extremely poor. However, the most common counterargument made against Limbaugh—that McNabb's no-small-amount of success had come despite throwing to less-than-stellar wide receivers—seemed to be validated in 2004. That year was the only one in McNabb's career prior to 2009 in which he had a Pro Bowl wide receiver, Terrell Owens, to throw to, and the quarterback responded by setting team records in quarterback rating, passing yards, and completion percentage and taking his team to the Super Bowl despite Owens being injured through most of the playoffs ("Donovan McNabb"; for a full treatment on the (in)validity of Limbaugh's claim, see Hartmann 48-50).

Some four years passed between the Limbaugh episode and the next time McNabb found himself in the middle of a controversy concerning race and sports. Considering the critical nature of the Philadelphia sports community and McNabb's previous run-in with Limbaugh, very few people outside of Philadelphia would have batted an eye had McNabb simply noted that he has to deal with an extraordinary amount of criticism. But the reaction was altogether different when McNabb asserted in a television interview that race plays a role in the amount of criticism that he and other black quarterbacks have to face. "There's not that many African American quarterbacks,

so we have to do a little bit extra,” McNabb said. “Because the percentage of us playing this position, which people didn’t want us to play . . . is so low, so we do a little bit extra.” When the interviewer from HBO’s *Real Sports with Bryant Gumble* asked if white quarterbacks like Carson Palmer of the Cincinnati Bengals or Peyton Manning of the Indianapolis Colts aren’t treated with the same critical eye, McNabb responded, “Let me start by saying I love those guys. But they don’t get criticized as much as we do. They don’t.”

Sportswriters React

With the expanding popularity of 24-hour sports networks and Web pages with up-to-the-minute updates, the flurry of responses to McNabb was to be expected. The reactions encompassed the entire range of positions, from complete agreement to angry, bitter disagreement. And the nature of these responses can be reflective of the reading public’s perceptions of race and, perhaps more importantly, can reinforce attitudes and assumptions concerning race, as the media play a role in how we shape both our individual and communal identities, including ideas about ethnicity, race, nationality, and sexuality.

This chapter focuses on the everyday experiences of people who follow sports and read the sports page of a daily newspaper. I will begin by surveying the results of Hartmann’s analysis of sportswriters’ reactions to Limbaugh in 2003, and then I will extend that conversation by surveying responses to McNabb’s 2007 comments. I will follow with analyses from the perspectives of each end of the ideological spectrum in

order to demonstrate that neither perspective leaves us with a means of separating moderate from extreme viewpoints. Neither reading, in other words, leaves room for those who are neither “with them” nor “against them.” I will then conclude with a reading based on national formation theory, which delineates ideological categories based on attitudes toward national inclusivity. This perspective will provide a means of articulating ideologically moderate positions, which are left unacknowledged by both the conservative counterintelligentsia and critical race theorists.

Hartmann arrived at some interesting insights from his readings of commentaries published in response to Limbaugh. While the sportswriters’ reactions were overwhelmingly critical of the conservative pundit, Hartmann found that they showed signs of being informed by perspectives similar to Limbaugh’s. Only six of the 44 articles in Hartmann’s study criticized Limbaugh directly for being racist, and three of those six were written by the same author. About a half-dozen commentaries offered a nonracial condemnation of Limbaugh as a sports novice who had no business inserting his opinion into a conversation that he knew very little about (Hartmann 52).

The final two groupings are the most telling. Six commentaries argued that the world of sports is simply not the appropriate place for Limbaugh to be raising his controversial views. These writers felt that people watch and read about sports specifically to escape having to confront difficult social issues. Hartmann offers this example from a West Virginia-based sportswriter: “That’s why many skip to the sports page—to avoid the mindless jibber-jabber of political positioning and redundant self-promotion that plagues most of the article’s other sections” (qtd. in Hartmann 53). That

is to say, these critics did not so much take issue with the content of Limbaugh's opinion as they disapproved of giving any sort of opinion at all on race in sports.

Hartmann's final category is the biggest. In 23 out of the 44 commentaries in the sample, the authors also argued that Limbaugh had no business bringing race into the world of sports, but not because sports should remain apolitical and off-limits to tough social issues. Instead, these sportswriters argued that there is no racism in sports, that sports is a model of ideal race relations, a city upon a hill for the rest of society to try to emulate. As the *Washington Post's* Thomas Boswell put it, "Despite its violence, the NFL does possess a purity. Merit is honored. Race, religion, and origin are, largely, ignored" (qtd in Hartmann 54). The NFL, argued Boswell and others, is unassailable for its treatment of race because it only rewards an individual's merit, while ignoring religion, race, and ethnicity (Hartmann 53-54).

Before getting into the responses to McNabb, it may be useful to provide a little more background. First, it's important to note that the entire Limbaugh incident represents a case of a black quarterback, McNabb, being subjected to criticism that is unique to black quarterbacks. What's more, it was not an isolated comment flung by a random fan in the stands or scrawled in an anonymous letter, incidents that some might find easy to dismiss as representative of only a very small, irrelevant segment of society. The criticism came from an employee of ESPN, the self-declared Worldwide Leader in Sports, and even if Limbaugh was forced out soon after, he remains one of the most commercially successful talk show hosts in the country, meaning that he has a significant population of followers who, at the very least, share a similar worldview. Unfortunately

for McNabb, the far-right perspective has not cornered the market on race-based criticisms of the Eagles quarterback. Former teammate Owens, the elite wide receiver who left the team after a public spat with McNabb and Eagles management, in 2005 accused McNabb of being too close to the team's (white) owners (Czarnecki). That same year, the head of the Philadelphia chapter of the NAACP, J. Whyatt Mondesire, accused McNabb of betraying his race by trying to play like a white quarterback ("Mondesire," 2005).

These are arguably the three most famous criticisms ever directed at McNabb; the comments from Mondesire and Limbaugh are undeniably tied to race, and the "too close to management" criticism from Owens is of the kind that, as Tony Kornheiser of the *Washington Post* and ESPN's *Pardon the Interruption* notes, is not ever leveled at white athletes. In light of this, it seems rather difficult to find fault with McNabb's claim that he has to deal with criticism that by its very nature would never be directed at a white quarterback. That said, of greater consequence than the validity of McNabb's claim are the ideological overtones of the responses to him and the assumptions and attitudes that they reflect and reinforce.

To select the sample for this study, I conducted a Lexis-Nexis search for the dates of September 19, 2007 to September 23, 2007, using the search terms "'McNabb' AND ('black' OR 'African American')." That span of five days begins with the day after the airing of the HBO Sports feature in which McNabb told an interviewer that black quarterbacks face more criticism than their white counterparts. The span ends with the day he played his next game, after which writers would have been responding as much to

his performance in that game as to his earlier comments. From the returning results, I selected only those articles which appeared in the sports section of a newspaper, dealt with the McNabb incident in at least some depth (one- or two-sentence blurbs were excluded), and were clearly presenting the opinion of the author, as opposed to “hard news” pieces. Articles with quotes presenting only the opinions of people other than the author were considered news pieces and excluded.

The resulting sample included 20 opinion columns, a seemingly modest number, but several of them were syndicated and appeared in several newspapers across the country. Nineteen of the 20 commentaries could easily be classified into one of four groups, and one took a unique slant that made it impossible to categorize. This one, written by John Harris and published in the *Pittsburgh Tribune Review*, begins by saying that McNabb “got it all wrong” and that nobody wants to hear the complaints of somebody who makes so many millions of dollars. However, rather than trying to silence the race discourse, Harris points out that very few of the backup quarterbacks in the NFL are black, and that McNabb missed an opportunity to advocate for those at the lower end of the food chain. This is one of the more thoughtful pieces in the sample and one of the very few that actually complicated the issue and sought to generate more productive dialogue rather than just giving McNabb a thumbs up or down.

The smallest group, with just two articles, expresses opinions that accuse McNabb of reverse-racism either explicitly, as with Andrew Linker of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania’s *Patriot News*, or implicitly, as with the *Philadelphia Daily News*’ Paul Domowitch, who suggests that “white people all look the same to McNabb. We all look like Rush

Limbaugh.” Ironically, while Domowitch clearly expects his readers to take as a given the fact that he is not like Limbaugh, these two pieces represent the least subtle expressions in the sample of the same worldview that governs Limbaugh’s opinions on race and race discourse. Both pieces argue that McNabb receives only as much criticism as the quality of his play merits, ignoring the three famous race-based criticisms described earlier, even while paradoxically alluding to one of them in the case of Domowitch.

The next-smallest group, with four commentaries, is characterized by the sentiment that, while racism in the NFL was certainly a real problem in the past, those days are now behind us. Jim Litke of the Associated Press, for instance, asserts as a given that people who are extra-critical of black quarterbacks are only “a disgruntled few,” and Phil Mushnick of the *New York Post* seems to want some sort of prize because “For two consecutive generations, the ‘N-word’ never was heard in my household.” Phil Sheridan of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* is more measured in his tone but perhaps more troubling in his content:

When I criticized Limbaugh in 2003, one of my points was that the media and fans in Philadelphia were not nearly as obsessed with race as he made us out to be. [Black quarterbacks] Randall Cunningham, Rodney Peete and McNabb have started the vast majority of Eagles games since 1986. There are yahoos everywhere, but most of us are capable of critiquing athletes based on their play, regardless of their background. That logic holds whether it’s Limbaugh or McNabb saying race is a major factor in all of this.

Many scholars of race theory would describe the articles in this category as attempts to minimize racism, which Eduardo Bonilla-Silva regards as one of the textual markers of racism in the post-Civil Rights era (29). I will discuss all of these sportswriters' reactions from the perspective of critical race theorists in the next section, but for the time being it's worth noting that Sheridan explicitly places racist discourse and antiracist discourse on the same moral level by applying the same counterarguments to both Limbaugh and McNabb.

The largest of the four groups, which includes seven commentaries, was the easiest to categorize. These articles all assert that criticism is part of the job of playing the most high-profile position (quarterback) in a high-profile sport, and they condemn McNabb for claiming that black quarterbacks receive more criticism than white quarterbacks do. As primary evidence most of these authors point to several white quarterbacks who have also been hit with heavy criticism. The most common subject for comparison is Rex Grossman, the Chicago Bears quarterback who played woefully poorly in the Super Bowl from the 2006 season and continued that poor play into the 2007 season. Jay Mariotti of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, for example, points out that McNabb has never had to suffer the indignity that Grossman experienced when he was called a "retarded vagina." Greg A. Bedard of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, meanwhile, notes that Grossman, Jake Plummer of the Denver Broncos, Eli Manning of the New York Giants, and Chad Pennington of the New York Jets have all been criticized at least as heavily as McNabb has ("Winning Super Bowl Would Help"). Neither Bedard nor any of the other authors in this group acknowledge that none of those other

quarterbacks mentioned had achieved anything similar to McNabb's success, either in terms of passing statistics or games won (although Eli Manning would later go on to win the Super Bowl at the end of that season). While many of these authors are happy to explain why McNabb's criticism is a function of athletic merit (again, while ignoring the most famous criticisms that were clearly about race), those same authors mysteriously omit any mention of those white quarterbacks having earned their criticism through inferior play.

The final group of commentaries is perhaps the most difficult to interpret. These six all agree with McNabb. Some, like Michael Wilbon of the *Washington Post* and David Aldridge of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, not only voice agreement but also vigorously defend McNabb's right to talk about race. They also expressly identify significant inequalities due to race: "Things are better, but not all the way better," says Aldridge. And Wilbon notes,

Anybody who doubts McNabb needs only to walk around one of the upper-concourse areas of Lincoln Financial Field late in a game when, as several white friends have told me, the frequent use of the word "nigger" preceding McNabb's name during a losing performance is so casual it sickens them.

These commentaries represent the most progressive responses to McNabb, but even the articles in this group are not without their ideological complexities. Dana Pennet O'Neil of the *Philadelphia Daily News* discusses how she can relate to McNabb as a woman in the male-dominated profession of sports writing. Yet, O'Neil still reflects a worldview that, if it doesn't deny difference, at least idealizes the notion of denying difference: "I

like to think people may forget I'm a woman and just say I'm a sportswriter. Some may call that naïve. I prefer optimistic." Perhaps the most revealing thing here is the temptation to conflate *inclusion* with the *denial of difference*, as such a conflation carries implications for how O'Neil's sense of nationalism balances inclusivity with stability. When we deny the existence of difference, we are relieved of the burden of having to explicitly include those who are different. Therefore, when we are reminded of difference or when we are faced with a new kind of difference that we have not yet agreed to deny (homosexuality or Islamic faith, for instance), the question of inclusion has to be raised all over again.

Ideological Readings of Sportswriters' Reactions

Governing philosophies that are explicitly articulated as either liberal or conservative have very little to say about print-media reaction to comments concerning race in the context of popular sports. That is, Goldwater, with his insistence on a strictly limited role for government in American life, would likely see the two McNabb episodes described in this chapter as existing outside the scope of government, and therefore Goldwater's governing philosophy would have little else to say about the matter. Similarly, Krugman's ideal of a government that collects tax revenue from its citizens in order to fund public investments and the maintenance of social safety-net institutions (Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid) has little to say about how sportswriters react to high-profile comments about race in sports. This is to be expected, as I selected these two media events specifically because they do not carry any explicit bearing on national

governance. However, if we look at political allegiances and divisions—that is, ideological choice—as being based on attitudes toward inclusion and difference, as I suggest in chapters 1 and 2, we can see both how those attitudes are being negotiated and how those negotiations can have bearing on political allegiances, even though the context of those negotiations have seemingly little or nothing to do with matters of government. The points of consensus at which sports writers arrive represent perspectives that diverge from both Limbaugh’s denunciation of inclusivity and McNabb’s call for even greater inclusivity. Articulating and circulating those representative perspectives in newspapers reinforces those viewpoints among the newspapers’ readers, and the attitudes toward inclusion reflected in those viewpoints tell us a great deal about where a sportswriter sits on the left-middle-right ideological spectrum.

Toward that end, I will next submit analyses of the two McNabb episodes through the readings of three different ideological lenses: conservative counterintelligentsia theory as articulated by Simon, critical race theory, and the national formation theory I described in chapter 2. Counterintelligentsia and race theories each concludes, paradoxically, that its perspective is largely left out of the mainstream media’s conversation on race in sports. By contrast, the third way that I propose, national formation theory, reveals how these sportswriters are in fact negotiating and defining the moderate position on inclusion.

As discussed briefly in chapter 2, Goldberg deploys the term *racial Americanization* to refer to spatio-historical conditions and expressions that have shaped and continue to shape modern American views on race, which, he argues, have an

extraordinary impact on both domestic and foreign policy. Goldberg's concept highlights the connection between material conditions of minorities and the ideological expressions that shape and are shaped by those conditions. He begins his chronicling of racial Americanization with "classic racism," expressions that formed and were formed by European expansionism and pursuit of new sources of wealth (89). In the generations that followed, oppressed groups developed new ideological expressions in efforts to change the formal structures (such as slavery, disenfranchisement, state-sponsored segregation) and informal structures (such as "glass ceilings," privatized de facto segregation) that created and perpetuated inequitable conditions. Meanwhile, the beneficiaries of those oppressive structures developed their own ideological expressions to maintain as much of the existing advantages as possible.

Omi and Winant turn to the Gramscian view of hegemony to explain this relationship between ideologies and structures. According to Antonio Gramsci, a lasting hegemony requires that the dominant group account for some of the interests of subordinated groups, but only enough to maintain dominance. In order to acquire the consent of the governed while avoiding having to relinquish all advantages, the dominant group develops a popular system of "common sense" ideas and practices to perpetuate existing structures. That is to say, the dominant group gives up only as much as is necessary to minimize the need for coercive control while using tools such as education, the media, religion, and folk wisdom to explain away the rest. As the subordinated groups demand more and more, the dominant group adjusts its ideological expressions in order to minimize how much material advantage they surrender (Boggs 46-54).

Within the context of American racism, the switch from what Omi and Winant call “racial dictatorship” to the origins of hegemony can be seen in slaves’ adoption of the religion and philosophy of whites for use against the oppressors (130-31). From this point onward, as Goldberg explains, oppressed groups developed new ideological expressions to effect change to existing structures, and for every accommodation, the dominant group developed new structures and expressions for pushing back. For Goldberg, the structures were primarily a function of space: slavery was replaced by state-sponsored segregation in the public sphere, which was replaced by publicly subsidized segregation in the private sphere. These changes were paralleled by an ideological shift from assimilation to pluralism, with its nominal commitment to “live and let live” individualism (95-96). As Goldberg explains,

In the absence of the Civil Rights spirit, and now in its active undoing, accordingly, the present period *conserves* (and deepens) the hold of racial preference schemes historically produced *as if they were the nature of things*. So racial Americanization is produced by a mix of doing nothing special, nothing beyond being guided by the presumptive laws of the market, the determinations of the majority’s personal preferences, and the silencing of all racial reference. . . . This silencing fails to distinguish between exclusionary racist designs and practices, on the one hand, and redressive or ameliorative racial interventions, on the other, reducing the latter to the former as the only contemporary racist expressions worth worrying about. (96; emphasis in the original)

In other words, what Omi and Winant refer to as contemporary racial formations are reproduced in the United States by an ideology that refuses to acknowledge the existence of those same racial formations.

Confronting that ideology, then, must be at the heart of successful antiracist reform in the post-Civil Rights era. Bonilla-Silva gives a name to this ideology: *colorblindness* or *colorblind racism*. He defines it as the racial ideology that explains modern racial inequality as the product of nonracial dynamics, thus relieving whites of any responsibility for the status of minorities (2). The worldview that permits people to “do nothing special,” as Goldberg puts it, is what Bonilla-Silva refers to when he describes an ideology in which “whites rationalize minorities’ contemporary status as the product of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and blacks’ imputed cultural limitations” (2). Colorblindness, then, functions as the “ideological armor for a covert and institutionalized system in the post-Civil Rights era” (3). It seems fair to say that this system is what Goldberg calls racial Americanization.

Goldberg and Bonilla-Silva identify some of the same key driving elements to post-Civil Rights racial inequality; the ones most relevant to this study are a nominal commitment to individualism and a willingness to deny the existence of racism in the contemporary United States. Bonilla-Silva explains how each of these notions is deployed rhetorically, and holds them as being among the central interpretative frames of colorblindness. He refers to these frames as *abstract liberalism* and *minimization of racism*. Opponents of affirmative action policies activate the abstract liberalism frame when they denounce those policies as violations of equal-opportunity principles while

ignoring severely unequal representation of minorities in top jobs and universities. Meanwhile, this willingness to ignore these inequities and argue that racism is a thing of the past is characteristic of the minimization of racism frame. Ultimately, by adopting the language of liberalism and applying it abstractly and without regard for existing inequities, it becomes possible to oppose virtually any approach to dealing with racial inequality while appearing reasonable and even virtuous (Bonilla-Silva 28-29). St. Louis calls the space in which this kind of obfuscating adoption happens a “zone of ambiguity” and suggests that operating in this space makes it harder to analyze discourse through the classic racism vs. anti-racism binary (32-33). Although St. Louis talks about a number of different ways in which this kind of ambiguity becomes manifest, it’s easy to see how what Bonilla-Silva identifies as abstract liberalism helps create the ambiguity. By taking liberal language and applying it abstractly—and ultimately confusing all race discourse with racism—that language serves a decidedly nonprogressive end, the perpetuation of existing racial inequity.

Keeping in mind the role that ideology plays in reproducing social structures and the rhetorical tropes that are indicative of colorblindness, our next important step is to consider the places in which those tropes are deployed and the way in which the ideology is spread. Philomena Essed discusses how ideologies (and therefore existing social structures) are reproduced through “everyday” experiences. Everyday life, she explains, relates to a person’s immediate environment. Everyday experiences are different among different individuals, though similar environments create similar everyday experiences. As Essed, explains, “Everyday life is the direct reproduction of the person embedded in

social relations. . . . Everyday life is not only reproductive of persons but also of the positions of persons in social relations and of social relations themselves” (186). In the context of this study then, we can see how even the seemingly innocent act of reading the sports page can reproduce social relations, which work with other social relations to reproduce existing social structures. And as Omi and Winant explain, those social structures then feed back into the ideology that informs what is printed in that sports page.

Identifying the ideology sportswriters reflect and reproduce in their responses to Limbaugh is the purpose of Hartmann’s study. Drawing on many of the elements of race theory that I have glossed above, Hartmann identifies Limbaugh’s worldview as adopting the nominally liberal notion of individualism to conclude that the only acceptable standard of racial fairness is one in which all individuals are treated exactly the same, to be praised or criticized exclusively on his or her merits and performances. That is to say, Limbaugh applies abstract liberalism to create a zone of ambiguity, and he took advantage of that ambiguity to position himself (probably even in his own mind) as the virtuous one. As Hartmann notes in his astute analysis, “Limbaugh believed his remarks about what he perceived to be the media’s overly sympathetic assessment of McNabb were not only defensible but in fact virtuous—because they emanated from colorblind, individualistic values” (48).

Although it is useful to understand the perspective and ideology that informed Limbaugh’s comments about McNabb being overrated because of his race, Hartmann arrived at some even more interesting insights from his readings of commentaries

published in response to Limbaugh. While they were overwhelmingly critical of the conservative pundit, Hartmann found that they showed signs of being informed by perspectives similar to Limbaugh's. Specifically, Hartmann found that the seemingly race-neutral reactions to Limbaugh tended to reflect a colorblind ideology.

Recall that of 38 commentaries written in response to Limbaugh that declined to condemn his statement as racist, Hartmann delineated them into three categories: 1) those who offered nonracial condemnations of Limbaugh as a poorly informed sports novice, 2) those who condemned Limbaugh for injecting race into professional sports, which those authors regard as an escape from the serious world of politics and social issues, and 3) those who argued that the results-oriented nature of professional sports means that there is no race favoritism in sports, making it an ideal model of race relations.

Hartmann is primarily concerned with commentaries from the latter two categories, which make up 29 out of the total of 44 commentaries that he surveys. The result of placing sports off-limits to any sort of discussion of a controversial nonsport issue, as the commentaries in category #2 advocate, Hartmann says, "is that sport is rendered an irrelevant, if not essentially conservative social institution—one that turns a blind eye to the social status quo, racial or otherwise. In terms of its social effects, the outcome is little different from Limbaugh's privileged, colorblind complacency" (53). As Goldberg argues, silencing all discourse on race without distinguishing between racist and antiracist discourse is one of the key elements in the production of racial Americanization (96).

Commentaries from the final category, which regard professional sports as above criticism in matters of race, drew the harshest treatment from Hartmann. Even if we set aside the absurdity of praising as a model a league in which all 32 team owners and the vast majority of head coaches are white, it doesn't take an extraordinary insight to see how these sportswriters are using notions of abstract liberalism to hold the league up as being above criticism. That is to say, they selectively identify the individual attributes associated with success in professional sports while ignoring the disproportionate advantages enjoyed by whites, such as opportunities at youth levels, support from academic institutions, and overrepresentation in the business side of sports (organizational management, marketing, agents). In other words, according to Hartmann, commentaries from this category reflect a worldview that is similar to Limbaugh's. Now, Hartmann might go a little too far when he sums up his analysis of this group of commentaries: "The only difference between Limbaugh and the sporting establishment on this front is that Limbaugh believed these ideals were being violated by the media, whereas his critics believed they were being upheld" (54). I believe that Limbaugh's comment carried a mean-spiritedness that has to account for some difference, but ultimately Hartmann's basic point is consistent with the arguments advanced by leading race theorists—by seeking to silence race discourse through misapplied ideas about individualism, these sportswriters authorized and reinforced commonly held colorblind notions about race and how we talk about it.

To summarize, in response to Limbaugh's comments sportswriters arrived at a convenient paradox: sport is simultaneously a model of racial virtue and off limits to any

discourse on race. Having come this far, Hartmann concludes that the response that would have been reflective of the most progressive values is the response that nobody wrote—there is nothing wrong with wanting to see black quarterbacks succeed in the NFL (At least, if such a sentiment was published in the sports section of a newspaper somewhere, it does not seem to have made its way into Hartmann’s sample). Of course it’s a good thing to see a black athlete succeed at a position from which blacks were historically excluded. Not wanting this would be the same as not wanting the conditions of minorities in this country to improve. Race consciousness and political commitment are essential to effecting meaningful change to existing inequities, and efforts to suppress that consciousness and commitment are effectively working to suppress change. As Hartmann puts it, “The net result is that the ideologies and discourses of the sports world cause its adherents to misunderstand the problems of race in the United States and, even worse, to accept and endorse the legitimacy of the racial status quo and its associated white dominance” (55). That is to say, sportswriters expressed the same ideology that has produced existing racial formations, and by making these ideological expressions in everyday contexts, they play an important role in reproducing those racial formations.

While this is also true of many of the responses to McNabb’s 2007 comments, McNabb’s strong ethos in the sports community seems to have resulted in slightly less ideological ambiguity among sportswriters’ responses. Recall that only a small fraction (two out of 20) of the responses to McNabb in 2007 raised the specter of “reverse racism”; four responses dismissed racism in football as a thing of the past; seven indicated that the criticism McNabb received was appropriate and defended that claim by

referencing criticism that had been leveled at several white quarterbacks but declining to note that those players had accomplished significantly less in the NFL than McNabb had; and six responses defended McNabb's claim that black quarterbacks receive more criticism than white quarterbacks do.

Those commentaries reflect two elements that were absent in the responses to Limbaugh in 2003. First, several of the 2007 responses—like those of Wilbon, Aldridge, and O'Neil—refused to engage in racism minimization, and the explicit awareness of racial inequities is critical to the disruption of colorblindness. Second, authors working from a colorblind worldview did not have the luxury of positioning themselves to the progressive side of an extraordinarily nonprogressive figure like Limbaugh. Instead of being able to look inclusive as they shouted down Limbaugh, colorblind sportswriters were put in the difficult position of silencing a popular and likable black athlete. That's not to say that they were forced to rethink their ideology, but it reduces one of the problems that St. Louis identifies with zones of ambiguity, that they make it difficult to identify and sustain a point of departure for political critique (33). The identification of such a point of departure presents the opportunity to confront the ideology behind existing racial formations—and perhaps ultimately disrupt the reproduction of those racial formations.

McNabb's comments and the resulting responses from sportswriters, then, had the effect of drawing clearer ideological lines, which ultimately results in a potentially productive starting point for discourse on race. Yet, even with racial ideologies more clearly defined, the majority of sportswriters still reflected colorblind values by either

minimizing racism or by abstractly applying liberal notions of individualism while ignoring significant differences in individual merit (specifically, by pointing at the criticism leveled at white players who had accomplished significantly less than McNabb had). That is, regardless of who initiated the discourse about race in sports, in both cases most of the media responders sought to silence the discourse by applying colorblind values.

In *A Time for Truth* William E. Simon sees a need for a coordinated conservative counterintelligentsia to counter what he believes to be attitudes among the country's intellectual, political, and media elites that Simon regards as permissive toward encroachment on individual liberties. He frames the state of US politics in the second half of the 20th century as a binary struggle with proponents of freedom and liberty on one side and the agents of collectivist totalitarianism on the other. It should come as no surprise that Simon's positions on public policy are consistent with the principles outlined in Goldwater's *The Conscience of a Conservative*, but Simon extends the conversation further to situate the conservative movement within the context of what he regards as elite-driven public discourse. It is this contextualization with which I am concerned here: how would the worldview that Simon articulates interpret the reactions of sportswriters to the two McNabb episodes? In order to try to answer this question, I will begin by glossing Simon's situation of the conservative movement in relation to the public discourse.

Simon's orientation toward the public discourse is based on two key postulates. The first, as I discussed briefly in chapter 1, is the idea that freedom is "strangely

ephemeral” and “difficult to understand because it isn’t a *presence* but an *absence*—an absence of governmental constraint” (19, emphasis in the original). He defends this claim in part by quoting from the writings of John Locke and Adam Smith and associating their economic and political philosophies with those of the American Founding Fathers (20-22). From here, Simon concludes that economic freedom allows countless individuals to vote with dollars and hold “untold countless” elections, making the free market “nothing but the sum of these interacting individual decisions” (23).

According to Simon, there are two extremes to political-economic organization:

at one extreme, a free, unplanned, individualist market in a free individualist society which creates a powerful and inventive economic system and produces wealth; at the other, totalitarian-collectivist planning which destroys both the political and economic freedom of the individual and produces collective poverty and starvation. (31)

Simon holds that any attempt to mix these two extremes, as in a welfare state, is essentially an attempt to inject government coercion into the lives of individuals (32).

Of greater concern to our readings of the reactions to the McNabb episodes is Simon’s second key postulate, which holds that Simon and other defenders of the free market are silenced from the elite-driven public discourse. That is, Simon believes that a small number of intellectual and political leaders control the public discourse, that the well-meaning intellectuals suffer from the impossible task of trying to reconcile the mutually exclusive ideals of both individualism and collectivism, and that the not-so-well-meaning elites intentionally use an altruistic mask to hide a real agenda of

expanding government control. In other words, Simon saw the media as being controlled by out-of-touch ivory-tower intellectuals and malicious communists. From this perspective, it is easy to see how Simon could honestly believe himself to be engaged in nothing less than a fight against “the gradual disintegration of our free society” (11).

Simon expresses his distaste for academic intellectualism throughout the text. For instance, in his brief summary of Locke’s philosophy on governance, Simon proudly notes that he only recently discovered the old British philosopher because “I was no scholar in college” (20). Yet, he does not limit himself to merely implicit condemnations of American intellectuals. He asserts that intellectuals from societies with mixed economic systems like the American welfare state “share the illusion that a comparative handful of individuals can substitute their judgment for the billions and trillions of decisions that go in a free marketplace” (31). He later argues that the United States is suffering from “an apparently permanent case of intellectual confusion” as a result of attempts to reconcile liberty from government coercion with government control over individual life (42).

Simon holds the poor judgment of well-meaning intellectuals as falling victim to the deceptions of those who would seek to take dictatorial control over the private affairs of individuals. Simon warns against “clean-shaven gentlemen . . . who are seeking dictatorial powers over the American people in the name of the ‘public interest’” (181). Intellectuals, with their inadequate capacity for judgment, are fooled by the “Public Interest movement,” which dishonestly claims to advocate for “the well-being of ‘consumers,’ ‘environment,’ and ‘minorities’” (193). As Simon explains,

[i]n practice, the target of the ‘consumer’ movement is *business*, the target of the ‘environmentalists’ is *business*, and the target of the ‘minorities,’ at least where employment is concerned, is *business*. In sum, the Public Interest movement is a lobby, not for the People, but for the expanding police powers of the state over American producers. (193)

In other words, Simon sees media elites as complicit with the false branding of a far-reaching anti-business movement, which has been successful in seducing academic intellectuals.

Simon identifies the group that makes up the Public Interest movement using a name first coined by Irving Kristol: the “new class.” In order to define this demographic, Simon quotes Kristol at length:

We are talking about scientists, teachers and educational administrators, journalists, and others in the communications industries, psychologists, social workers, those lawyers and doctors who make their careers in the expanding public sector, city planners, the staffs of larger foundations, the upper levels of the government bureaucracy, etc., etc Members of the ‘new class’ do not ‘control’ the media, they *are* the media. (Kristol, qtd. in Simon 194)

As one would expect by this point, Simon is not gentle in his moral and intellectual critique of the “new class”: “It combines a morbid economic ignorance with a driving power lust, and it combines hostility to democracy with the illusion that it speaks for the People” (195). What’s more, far too much ground has already been lost in the battle

against this “new class,” as he notes that “the reigning anti-free enterprise philosophy” is “now the dominant economic philosophy of our age” (198).

As far as Simon is concerned then, “the media” is in the hands of the morbidly ignorant and the power hungry, meaning that only a conservative counterintelligentsia movement can protect the American people from being stripped of their economic and individual freedoms. Under this lens, then, the very fact of being criticized by people in the media is a sign of virtue, as he proudly notes that the press deemed him a “‘controversial’ Secretary of the Treasury for one reason: I had resolved to fight for the free enterprise system” (87). Simon brushes off the suggestion that such broad media criticism constitutes an undemocratic attempt to silence dissent by revisiting his marketplace-as-election-booth metaphor: “it is the economics and the philosophy of capitalism which represent ‘dissent’—dissent from a dominant socialist-statist-collectivist orthodoxy which prevails in much of the media [and] in our large universities” (230). In sum, then, the conservative counterintelligentsia movement as articulated by Simon sees its mission as pushing back against media and academic intellectuals who have been ruthlessly imposing state controls on American individuals.

From the perspective of the conservative counterintelligentsia, then, Limbaugh was the unjustly maligned hero of the 2003 episode. He articulates two core principles of the conservative counterintelligentsia. First, he takes issue with the idea of “social concern” in the NFL (qtd. in Hartmann 46), which operates as a synonym for the Public Interest Movement that Simon finds so misguided. Second, Limbaugh positions himself as opposed to “the media,” that group which Simon deplors as being driven by

ignorance and power lust. Limbaugh, therefore, stands bravely against the media monster that seeks to impose its collective will on individuals in the name of social concern and public interest. Limbaugh is not willing to sit quietly and be told what is right, and the very fact that he was so heavily criticized by the media is further evidence that he was the virtuous one in the exchange.

The 2007 episode is not quite as clear cut from the conservative counterintelligentsia perspective, though the conclusions are similar. Some respondents (a significant minority) explicitly sided with McNabb in response to his 2007 comments, as opposed to the respondents in 2003, none of whom sided with Limbaugh. This contrast might be taken as evidence of the media's tendency to sympathize with liberal arguments and protagonists and to oppose conservative arguments and protagonists. What's more, even the responses that disagree with McNabb's argument in 2007 didn't condemn McNabb's character and credibility the way many did for Limbaugh in 2003. No one, for instance, accused McNabb of being an uninformed novice as many did with Limbaugh. From the perspective of the conservative counterintelligentsia, the same media that gently corrected McNabb ruthlessly ousted Limbaugh from ESPN, removing his voice from the discourse and maintaining the anticonservative media hegemony.

National Formation Defines the Middle Ground

Readings from the perspective of the conservative counterintelligentsia and of critical race theorists arrive at an interesting paradox: the ideology associated with the right wing of American politics and the ideology associated with the left wing of

American politics each concludes that the media is against them. Or, at least, proponents of each ideology believe that the mainstream media overwhelmingly sympathizes with that ideology's adversaries. In contrast, a reading based on national formation theory—the view that a person's choice of political ideologies is influenced heavily by attitudes toward inclusion and difference—gives us a means of articulating a viewpoint that is at home in neither wing of the ideological spectrum. From a national formation perspective, two key themes come up repeatedly in the responses to Limbaugh in 2003 and to McNabb in 2007: the first is the idealization of the idea of inclusivity, and the second is a reluctance to revisit inclusivity issues believed to have been resolved in the past.

The idealization of inclusivity comes up in even many responses that race theorists might condemn for exhibiting colorblindness. For instance, more than half of the commentaries from the 2003 episode and more than a third from the 2007 episode hail sports as the perfect example of racial and ethnic inclusivity because athletes are measured strictly by their competitive accomplishments. Former McNabb teammate and Eagles defensive tackle Corey Simon states this position in no uncertain terms: “The athletic arena is the one thing that unites us. It takes away racial and religious affiliation. To bring [Limbaugh] out of the political arena into the purity of football I think is uncalled for. . . . It kind of sickens you” (qtd. in Hartmann 54). For Simon, among others, sports is the ultimate meritocracy, with a “purity” that is to be revered and protected. Along similar lines, Buck Harvey of the *San Antonio Express-News* declined to explicitly agree with McNabb's 2007 comment about criticism of black quarterbacks,

but Harvey still made sure to show reverence for past black quarterbacks who broke down barriers to inclusion, admonishing Vince Young, then the black quarterback of the Tennessee Titans, that he “would do well to acknowledge those [black quarterbacks] who came before him.”

The flip side of that reverence for past accomplishments in the area of inclusivity is a reluctance to revisit what many seemed to deem a settled issue. Jim Litke of the Associated Press, for instance, offered this statement as part of his response to McNabb in 2007: “Whatever opinions the rest of us harbored about the topic [black quarterbacks in the NFL] were pretty much exhausted a decade or so ago, around the time black quarterbacks became commonplace in the NFL.” Litke is so eager to show his distaste for the conversation that he applies a rather generous definition of “commonplace”—only five black quarterbacks started more than ten games in 2010, out of 32 teams playing a 16-game season. Litke’s thoughts echo Boswell’s sentiment from his 2003 response to Limbaugh in which Boswell asserted that the race of quarterbacks was a “dead horse, a forgotten issue” (qtd. in Hartmann 53). Similarly, in response to McNabb in 2007 Steve Serby of the *New York Post* declared that the Eagles quarterback was “dead McWrong on this one” even though “McNabb would have been right 20 years ago.” Phil Mushnick of the *New York Post* is less subtle about his reluctance to revisit issues of inclusion, equating McNabb’s 2007 comment with a blanket indictment against whites: “Frankly, I’m tired of being told all white people should be fully suspected of being racists.”

It may seem to be a case of shouting the obvious to conclude that the moderate position is essentially an endorsement of the status quo—aversion to walking back past

accomplishments in the area of inclusivity coupled with reluctance to revisit the discourse that led to those accomplishments. Yet, this reading based on societal attitudes toward inclusivity arrives at significantly more precise conclusions regarding the ideological assumptions of sportswriters in the two samples (from 2003 and 2007) than do either of the readings based on critical race theory or on conservative counterintelligentsia theory. Whereas analyses through these latter two ideological lenses arrive at the conclusion that the majority of sportswriters in the samples represented adversarial views to the ideology in question, the analysis based on national formation theory allows us to see where the moderate view strikes the balance between left and right. Based on the samples included in this study, that balance would seem to be defined as a firm refusal to return to the exclusivity of the past coupled with a nearly-as-firm refusal to revisit the battles that are believed to have corrected that exclusivity.

The purpose of this chapter has been to demonstrate the usefulness of national formation theory as a lens for rhetorical analysis. This theory, which holds that US national identity is a product of a series of efforts to define complete membership in the nation, provides us with a means of defining the ideologically moderate stance on inclusivity. The ability to articulate a moderate position is of particular usefulness because proponents of each wing of the ideological spectrum argue that the majority of voices in the public sphere are arrayed against them. That is, neither side grants agency to the moderate viewpoint. For Simon and those who subscribe to his conservative counterintelligentsia theory, the mainstream public discourse is controlled by the far left. For race theorists, mainstream public discourse is infused with many of the core

assumptions that they associate with the far right. Moderates, meanwhile, lack the institutions—political parties, think tanks, and ideologically infused media outlets in the form of a Fox News or MSNBC—required to articulate a position that differentiates moderate viewpoints from ideologically extreme viewpoints. On the other hand, an analysis based on national formation theory—that is, based on attitudes toward inclusion—provides a means of arriving at specific conclusions about an audience that should be extremely useful to a political rhetor.

CHAPTER 4: VALUES VOTING AS NATION FORMING

In Chapter 2 I outlined my theory of US national formation which holds that political ideologies in the United States are largely a function of competing conceptions of the national identity, conceptions which differ based on attitudes toward privilege and inclusivity. Chapter 3 then demonstrated how these competing attitudes are contested in public media that is seemingly apolitical. Now in this chapter, I will turn to speech that is explicitly political. Specifically, I will examine two of the most noteworthy speeches of the current political era: Barack Obama's Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention and Sarah Palin's speech accepting the vice presidential nomination at the 2008 Republican National Convention. I've selected these speeches for analysis because each speaker entered the stage with little in the way of national notoriety and left the stage carrying the hopes of an entire ideology. Although the orators had done little to establish a national ethos before the respective conventions, both speeches were received with overwhelmingly positive enthusiasm by the ideological base of the speaker's party. That is, liberals fell over themselves in praise of Obama in 2004, just as conservatives did in praise of Palin in 2008.

For all the criticism that media personalities and institutions get for being out of touch with common Americans, pundits and newspapers wasted no time recognizing the place of Obama's speech in the pantheon of American political rhetoric. The day after the speech, *The Chicago Tribune* ran an editorial with the headline "The Phenom" in which the newspaper described Obama as a "can't-miss kid," using sports language to

predict that Obama was at the beginning of a very successful political career. In an op-ed under the headline “A Star is Born,” *The Christian Science Monitor*’s Jeremy Dauber declared, “[H]earing Obama tell it, you realize how the greats . . . take the same sentiments, and they make it new. They make you feel like you're hearing it and watching it for the first time. They get you excited.” Even the conservative *Washington Times* editorialized that Obama’s speech “had a freshness and a realness” that was absent from the convention speech of John Edwards, the Democratic vice presidential candidate of 2004 (“Stale Tragedy”). Television pundits also rushed to heap praise on Obama’s keynote speech. Immediately after it ended, Chris Mathews of the liberal MSNBC cable news network declared, “I have to tell you, a little chill in my legs right now. That is an amazing moment in history right there. It is surely an amazing moment. A keynoter like I have never heard.” CNN’s Jeff Greenfield struck a similar chord, calling the speech “one of the really great keynote speeches of the last quarter-century” (qtd. in Bianco).

The snap judgments of media analysts in the wake of the speech seemed to be confirmed by the electoral outcomes that followed. Obama, just an Illinois state senator at the time of the 2004 Democratic National Convention, easily won his bid to be a United States Senator from Illinois, routing Republican rival Alan Keyes by a stunning 70% – 27% margin, with Obama winning 94% of Democratic voters and 74% of independent voters (“CNN.com Election 2004”). Four years later, Obama was elected president, defeating John McCain 52.9% – 45.7% in the popular vote and 365 – 173 in the Electoral College (United States). Granted, Obama delivered any number of other speeches between his keynote convention address and the election victories that followed,

but it seems fair to say that none was as noteworthy as the famous 2004 speech. Obama's campaigns also benefitted from events that had absolutely nothing to do with rhetoric—his US Senate victory was virtually guaranteed when the first Republican nominee, Jack Ryan, withdrew from the race after embarrassing divorce proceedings were made public (Chase and Ford), and Obama's presidential campaign benefitted from the historic financial collapse that many associated with the political party of his predecessor, George W. Bush. Those other factors, however, do not explain Obama's upset of Hillary Clinton, the former First Lady and then-US Senator from New York, in the race for the Democratic nomination. Those factors also do not explain how Obama rose to national prominence without completing so much as a single term as a US Senator. Even in light of the unraveling of Jack Ryan's campaign and the historic financial collapse of 2007, it stands to reason that Obama would never have been able to win the Democratic nomination for president—and thus put himself in position to benefit from the negative economic outcomes of the George W. Bush administration—if not for the convention speech that put him on the national map in 2004.

The national political media had similar reactions to Palin's speech in 2008. Shortly after the speech, NBC's Chuck Todd, who frequently appears on the left-leaning MSNBC network, declared, "Conservatives have found their Obama" (qtd. in Calderone). Right-wing radio host and author Laura Ingraham emphatically agreed, saying that it was the "night conservatives have been waiting for," adding, "It's one of the best political speeches I have heard—ever!" (qtd. in Calderone). Fox's Brit Hume offered similar sentiments, though with a more sober tone, noting that Palin had "served the cause of

uniting this convention quite ably” (qtd. in Calderone). Fellow Fox News personality Chris Wallace said that “a star was born tonight,” a sentiment that was echoed by CNN’s Wolf Blitzer: “Clearly, a star has been born here in the United States” (qtd. in Calderone). Over at MSNBC, Keith Olbermann recognized that Palin’s speech would appeal to conservative voters, grudgingly acknowledging that “people who like this sort of thing will find this the sort of thing they like” (qtd. in Calderone). In print, Noemie Emery of the right-wing *Weekly Standard* wrote at length about Palin’s value to the conservative movement. Emery described McCain’s selection of Palin as “one of the few transformational choices in modern political history.” Emery added, “[Palin’s selection] rebranded the party and fused it together, focused a light on the new generation, and was McCain’s make-up nod to the base of his party.” The consensus among the political commentators, then, was not just that Palin’s speech was particularly inspiring or insightful but that it was extremely effective at rallying and uniting the conservative ideological base.

The judgments of the media personalities were supported by the quantitative data. The McCain campaign raised some \$7 million in the wake of Palin’s nomination (Mosk). The polling agency Rasmussen found that the speech immediately catapulted Palin from a largely unknown figure to someone who is widely recognized and favorably viewed. As the agency notes in its summary of the poll’s findings, “A week ago, most Americans had never heard of Alaska Governor Sarah Palin. Now, following a Vice Presidential acceptance speech viewed live by more than 40 million people, Palin is viewed favorably by 58% of American voters” (“Palin Power”). Pollster John Zogby found that the

McCain/Palin ticket received a 2.6% bump after the convention, with Palin helping in several key demographics, including several that are associated with the conservative base. “Clearly, Palin is helping the McCain ticket,” Zogby wrote in his analysis of the poll data. Digging deeper into the numbers, Zogby found that McCain had pulled ahead of Obama among Catholics by more than 10% and added, “Palin is also helping among men, conservatives, notably with suburban and rural voters, and with frequent Wal-Mart shoppers, who tend to be ‘values’ voters who also like a good value for their money” (“Zogby Poll”). What’s more, Palin’s popularity enjoyed an impressive degree of endurance. Even after McCain and Palin lost the election and news reports began to indicate that some of McCain’s campaign staffers deemed Palin to have been a liability, a Rasmussen poll found that 69% of Republican voters said that Palin’s selection helped McCain’s presidential bid (“69% of GOP Voters”). In other words, although the “Team of Mavericks” that included a war hero and a self-proclaimed hockey mom was soundly defeated in the general election by a Democratic ticket that, in the view of many conservatives, included a liberal upstart and a career Washington insider, Palin and her straight-talking-hockey-mom persona even in defeat maintained strong popularity among her base.

In light of the objective evidence and the consensus among political analysts, it seems fair to judge Obama’s 2004 Keynote Address and Palin’s 2008 acceptance speech as among the premier examples of American political rhetoric from the past decade. What’s more, it also seems fair to say that each speech was extremely effective at drawing firm support from the speaker’s ideological base. It is for these reasons that I

have chosen these speeches for analysis in this chapter, and the analysis will demonstrate that the success of each speech depended largely on the ability of the rhetor to create a sense of nationalistic identification with the audience, with Palin evoking a privileged and exclusive national identity and Obama evoking an inclusive one.

Narrating Nationalism

As I discussed in chapter 2, nationalism scholars disagree over precisely how we should define the terms *nation* and *nationalism*, but Anderson, Gellner, and Smith all agree that a nationalism requires some mechanism of communication for it to spread throughout the region encompassed by a nation's political borders. For Gellner, this mechanism is literacy and public education (9), and while Smith sees the importance of civic mechanisms like laws and education, he also emphasizes the importance of what he calls "ethnic components"—shared myths, memories, and symbols (44). If literacy is the *medium* through which these myths, memories, and symbols are distributed, then narrative can be seen as the *mode* of distribution. That is, nationalistic myths, memories, and symbols are stored and transmitted through narratives, meaning that we can associate a given set of narratives with a given nationalistic ideology. We can, in other words, make determinations about the core values of an ideology based on the values reflected in the narratives that store and transmit that ideology. Narrative analyses of the Palin and Obama speeches, therefore, can prove effective at revealing the values of the conservative base that Palin was so adept at appealing to and the values of the liberal base to which Obama effectively appealed.

Walter R. Fisher's theory of narration as a paradigm for human communication treats "narration" as "symbolic action—words and/or deeds—that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them" (58). His paradigm implies that communication among human beings should be viewed as both historical and situational, as stories that compete with each other. Audiences determine which accounts seem "rational" to them based on their subjective sense of how well the stories "satisfy the demands of narrative probability and narrative fidelity" (58). "Narrative probability" and "narrative fidelity," in the most basic sense, refer to the audiences' inherent awareness of "whether or not the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives" (64). In other words, audiences tend to assess the validity of an argument based on how well that argument fits into the stories that they have come to believe in and that they have experienced in their lives.

Fisher's purpose here is to separate rationality, or "good reasons" as he puts it, from the subjective labeling. This might, in the most general sense, be described as an attempt to take the old adage of "a good man speaking well" and apply an objective method not of how we define "a good man" but of how a given audience arrives at assessments of "good" and "well." In a more specific and contemporary context, Fisher cites Karl Wallace and Wayne Booth's definitions of good reason as too-narrowly circular and subjective. Both of these authors, according to Fisher, define both "good values" and "good reasons" in terms of each other. Fisher summarizes Wallace's view on "good reasons" like so: "a reason is good if it is tied to a value, and a value is reasonable if it is tied to a reason" (107). Fisher offers Booth similar treatment,

describing Booth as seeming to say “that good reasons are what good people affirm and that reasonable people know what is good” (107). Whether or not Fisher is being entirely fair to Wallace and Booth is a matter that I will not try to settle here, but it’s worth noting that Fisher claims to not be taking issue with the circularity of their definitions. Fisher’s purpose, he says, “is to increase the diameter of the circle that contains good reasons” (106). Perhaps another way of putting it is that Fisher’s intent is to draw the circle based on the practical effects and applications of an audience’s values rather than a subjective and moralistic assessment of those values. According to Fisher, the usefulness of being able to define and understand a value is “not because it is tied to a reason or is expressed by a reasonable person per se, but because *it makes a pragmatic difference in one’s life and in one’s community*” (111; emphasis in the original).

Fisher, then, defines “good reasons” as “those elements that provide warrants for accepting or adhering to the advice fostered by any form of communication that can be considered rhetorical” (107). By “warrants,” Fisher is referring to that which authorizes or justifies a particular set of actions or beliefs. In other words, Fisher proposes that we determine how “good” a “reason” is based not on either notions of morality or rationality, but rather, based on how well the justification of an assertion compares to the justifications that the audience has witnessed either first-hand through lived experiences or second-hand through narrative. With this in mind, we can look at how different audiences respond to different speeches and make determinations regarding the audiences’ different lived experiences and allegiances to different narratives. Specifically, the analyses that follow will demonstrate that Obama’s speech appeals to

audience members who feel allegiance to nationalistic narratives about newcomers earning included status among other Americans, while Palin's speech appeals to audience members who feel allegiance to nationalistic narratives about a narrowly defined group of Americans carrying a heavy burden on behalf of outsiders.

Obama in 2004

Rowland and Jones, in their 2007 article "Recasting the American Dream and American Politics: Barack Obama's Keynote Address to the 2004 Democratic National Convention," make the case that Obama sought to recast the American Dream in terms of a balance between individual and communal responsibilities. They see the American Dream as a narrative in which the central conflict is between "narrative themes emphasizing personal versus societal responsibility for success" (431). For Rowland and Jones, then, stories that are seen as enactments of the American Dream from a liberal perspective tend to emphasize societal values while the conservative perspective tends to emphasize individual values. And, in the view of Rowland and Jones, the success of Obama's 2004 speech was due to his attempt to subtly inch the pendulum slightly away from individualistic values and toward a focus on societal responsibility.

This is certainly true from the perspective of traditional syllogisms; there is no question that the speech makes explicit arguments asserting the communal responsibilities of individuals. We might paraphrase traditional conservative arguments about government like this:

- *Major premise:* Big government makes people dependent and restricts individual freedoms.
 - *Minor premise:* The primary job of government is to protect individual freedoms.
 - *Conclusion:* The only effective government is a small government.

The congruent liberal syllogism would go like this:

- *Major premise:* Government has certain societal responsibilities.
 - *Minor premise:* Government needs resources in order to meet those societal responsibilities.
 - *Conclusion:* An effective government is one that accepts its responsibilities and has enough resources to meet them.

As Rowland and Jones note, the syllogism underlying Obama's speech seems to split the difference:

- *Major premise:* Both government and individuals have responsibilities.
 - *Minor premise:* Individuals have been meeting their responsibilities but government has not been meeting its responsibilities.
 - *Conclusion:* Government should have the resources necessary to meet its responsibilities without relieving individuals of their responsibilities.

This syllogism is representative of what Rowland and Jones refer to in their assertion that the success of the speech depended on "maintaining a precise balance between individual and communal responsibilities" (444). However, as Roland and Jones themselves note,

Obama's references to the responsibilities of all Americans to work to create a better community have a lot in common with the speeches of liberal icons from past generations, including Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, John Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson (433). Obama's argument is also very similar to those of Mario Cuomo's 1984 convention speech and Bill Clinton's 1992 speech accepting the Democratic nomination for president. Rowland and Jones argue that what distinguishes Obama's "Audacity of Hope" is that while Clinton, Cuomo, and their predecessors emphasized communal responsibility over individual responsibility, Obama emphasized a balance between the two.

It is true that Obama did place explicit emphasis on this balance, and I agree with Rowland and Jones' basic premise that Obama sought to recast the American Dream in a way that would appeal to liberals. However, Rowland and Jones seem to fall into the trap of assuming that adherents to political ideologies—people who identify themselves as either conservative or liberal—arrive at their ideological allegiances via the traditional syllogisms about policy preference given by ideological intellectuals. More specifically, Rowland and Jones assume that conservatives are conservative because they believe in individualism and liberals are liberal because they believe in government. Yet Rowland and Jones begin by noting, as I noted in chapter 1, that extensive polling data indicate that Americans are much more sympathetic toward liberal policies than they are toward the liberal label (426-27). That is, the polling data suggests that Americans believe in government a lot more than conservatives claim that they do. Ultimately, the appeal of the syllogisms cannot sustain separation from the label; or put another way, the identity

implied by the label carries far greater rhetorical force than the ostensible policy preferences associated with the label. Even after explicitly identifying this conundrum, Rowland and Jones paradoxically conclude that the positive response to Obama was primarily a function of his balancing the syllogism of liberalism with the syllogism of conservatism, and they contrast this with Cuomo and Clinton giving little or no acknowledgement of the virtues of conservative individualism.

I submit that the positive reactions to Obama's 2004 keynote speech were due much more to his language of inclusion than to any appeasement of conservative syllogisms. The extent to which Obama was successful in recasting the American Dream in liberal terms was not the extent to which he associated societal responsibilities with the American Dream narrative; it is, in fact, the extent to which he assigned the privilege of being part of the Dream narrative to all Americans, including people who identify with groups that have been traditionally excluded from the American Dream. The success of Obama's speech was much less a function of logos than it was a function of ethos, less a product of his ability to get people to agree with his ideas about government policy than it was a product of his ability to get people to agree with his sense of how we define a "good American."

The challenge for Obama's 2004 speech, then, was to spin a narrative of the American Dream that would induce identification both from members of the audience who believed enthusiastically in the American Dream and from audience members who felt marginalized by it. Obama's solution was to glorify the ideals of American exceptionalism while explicitly defining its heights in terms of overcoming American

marginalization. The then-Illinois state senator presented himself as the product of the Dream narrative and invited all members of his audience to identify with him, thus making his achievements the achievements of his audience members. He did this by balancing, on one side, the tropes of traditional one-people nationalism with, on the other side, explicit emphasis on inclusivity and invoking his personal image as the embodiment of inclusivity. That is, he adopts many of the frames associated with assimilationist nationalism and applies them toward inclusive ends, thus bringing together under a single tent those who identify with the legacy of American exceptionalism and those who identify with the legacy of the oppressed.

As Desmond King explains, ever since the Civil War the rhetoric of American nationalism has relied heavily on descriptions of Americans as being “one people,” even though membership in that one people was not extended to many who resided inside of the country’s political boundaries (5). Contrary to the expectation implied by one-people rhetoric, group distinctions have not been supplanted by individualism; they have, in fact, continued to “loom large in American nationhood,” as King puts it (4). What has fluctuated historically is not the presence of distinct groups within the United States or the distinctions among those groups, but rather the terms of membership in the “one people.” As a result, an inevitable tension arises from the comingling of, on the one hand, nationalistic rhetoric that either denies group distinctions or dismisses them as something that will naturally wither on the vine and, on the other hand, the permanence of group distinctions that continue to inform individual identities decades after the end of the Civil Rights movement. This tension pushes members of some groups to either reject

the narrative of inclusion in the “one people” or accept a marginalized status outside of the “one people” (King 138). Put in the context of the American Dream, members of many groups of Americans reject the Dream’s basic premise—that the path to success in America is open to anybody who is willing to work for it. In their view, either the path to success is blocked or whatever success they do achieve would be considered a success of the marginalized—as opposed to an *American* success—because the protagonist of the narrative is not a full member of the “one people.”

Implicit in Obama’s speech is the acceptance of a paradox associated with the inclusion into the “one people” of those who are different. The very acknowledgement of the status as different implies a certain degree of exclusion, thus making any narrative about including the Other at least as much a glorification of the includers as it is a glorification of the protagonist Other. A narrative in which an outsider proves him or herself to those who had excluded the outsider is a story about the transformation of the excluders into includers. The status of the protagonist may change, but the character of the protagonist outsider-turned-accepted need not be transformed, only displayed. Obama shows an implicit awareness of this paradox by acknowledging how unlikely it is for somebody who bears the markers of being an outsider to rise to national political prominence. “Let’s face it,” he remarks at the start of his speech, “my presence on this stage is pretty unlikely.” The things that made it unlikely are the very things that made him an outsider: “My father was a foreign student, born and raised in a small village in Kenya. He grew up herding goats, went to school in a tin-roof shack. His father—my grandfather—was a cook, a domestic servant to the British.” Yet just after

acknowledging that his status as outsider made his success less likely, he asserts that his parents did not share that assumption: “They would give me an African name, Barack, or ‘blessed,’ believing that in a tolerant America your name is no barrier to success.” In the same breath Obama explicitly identifies the reality of the limits of the American Dream and celebrates the virtue of denying that reality. He then takes the next step of identifying his story as representative of the broader American narrative and celebrating the paradox as *the* great American virtue: “I stand here knowing that my story is part of the larger American story, that I owe a debt to all of those who came before me, and that in no other country on earth is my story even possible.” This is second half of a two-part instance of anaphora—the first of several uses of anaphora in the speech—in which Obama begins consecutive sentences with “I stand.” The anaphora creates a crescendo that marks the end of the personal-narrative portion of the speech with an overwhelmingly patriotic spin on the assertion that Obama’s obvious status as an outsider did not prevent him from becoming part of the “one people”—only in America could he have a chance to overcome American prejudices against him. Obama’s play on this paradox allows him to appeal to both competing notions of nationalism by defining American exceptionalism (Americans are *great* . . .) in terms of American inclusions (. . . because *anybody* can become a great American), and the move leads him smoothly into the next section of the speech, which is devoted to “affirm[ing] the greatness of our nation.”

After accepting the paradox of the “one people” rhetoric of assimilationist nationalism, Obama does not hesitate to adopt the “one people” rhetoric toward his own

ends. The most easily quantifiable evidence of this is his repetition of the words *America* and *American*, which appear 31 times in the transcript of his 2,336-word speech, a rate of once every 75.4 words. By comparison, Zell Miller's Keynote Address at the Republican National Convention of that same year repeated *America* and *American* only 14 times over 3,332 total words, a rate of once every 238 words. Obama also lauds John Kerry, the Democratic presidential nominee of 2004, for his understanding of "another ingredient in the American saga, that we are all connected as one people." Obama claims that belief in this connection is what allows Americans to "come together as one American family." He goes on to quote the Latin dictum on the Seal of the United States: "*E pluribus unum*: 'Out of many, one.'" This leads him to what might be the most memorable passage in the speech: "there is not a liberal America and a conservative America—there is the United States of America. There is not a Black America and a White America and Latino America and Asian America—there's the United States of America." In this last sentence, Obama applies his repetition of *America* through the use of a polysyndeton (the repetition of the coordinating conjunction *and* in close succession) in order to slow down the pace of the speech and induce reflection. He follows with an assertion of common values among people in red (predominantly conservative) states and blue (predominantly liberal) states, and he closes the stanza with another reference to the "one people": "We are one people, all of us pledging allegiance to the Stars and Stripes, all of us defending the United States of America." In this passage, Obama uses anaphora by repeating the phrase "all of us" to introduce neighboring participial phrases in order to emphasize his theme of unity. These appropriations of the "one people" rhetorical

feature that King sees as central to assimilationist nationalism constitutes an attempt to induce identification from members of the audience who believe in the premise that no one is denied access to the American Dream.

In addition to Obama's deployment of "one people" rhetoric, he also evokes the golden age myth that can be associated with traditional American nationalism. As I discussed in chapter 2, the widespread adoption of a new communications technology—television—during the 1950s resulted in the distribution of a golden age myth that has become a key feature of assimilationist American nationalism. Just as reading and writing have traditionally been crucial to the distribution of a national culture, television viewership developed into a new kind of literacy that proved even more effective at distributing a national culture. And the culture that it distributed was that of 1950s American cultural elites who were still flush with the afterglow of military success overseas and unprecedented economic optimism at home. Excluded from this cultural distribution were the perspectives of racial and ethnic minorities, women, and (to a lesser extent) non-Protestant whites.

As Obama does with the "one people" theme, he begins by anchoring the golden age imagery within his own personal narrative. He does this by painting a picture of his maternal grandparents in a way that fits perfectly into the myth of an American golden age that saw the defeat of fascism and the establishment of a suburban paradise:

The day after Pearl Harbor my grandfather signed up for duty, joined Patton's army, marched across Europe. Back home, my grandmother raised a baby and went to work on a bomber assembly line. After the war, they studied on the G.I.

Bill, bought a house through F.H.A., and later moved west all the way to Hawaii in search of opportunity.

The opening sentence of this passage includes an asyndeton—a list that omits any conjunctions—in order to keep increase the pace of the speech and imply that all the actions took place in short succession. Obama then contrasts the images of his grandparents’ contributions to the war effort with imagery of the American everyman after the end of the golden age. He expresses sympathy with workers “who are losing their union jobs at the Maytag plant that’s moving to Mexico,” as well as a father who lost his job and is wondering how he will pay “for the drugs his son needs without the health benefits that he counted on,” and a “young woman in East St. Louis . . . who has the grades, has the drive, has the will, but doesn’t have the money to go to college.”

Once again Obama drives home his theme of unity through the use of anaphora, introducing each everyman with “We have more work to do for . . . more to do for . . . more to do for.” Obama makes no reference to the obvious complications of the golden age myth—that the racism and sexism of the 40s and 50s make the nostalgia for the period inaccessible to many women and minorities. In fact, his only reference to race in this section of the speech is to tension *within* the black community: “children can’t achieve unless we raise their expectations and turn off the television sets and eradicate the slander that says a black youth with a book is acting white.” Here Obama again employs a polysyndeton to add emphasis, this time to the point that he is willing to hold all Americans to the standards of exceptionalism, including those who rarely play the role of protagonist in American exceptionalist narratives. As is the case with the one-people

rhetoric, Obama's use of golden age imagery contrasting with fall-from-grace imagery is intended to appeal to those who already feel included as full members of the American nation, those who represent that to which new members must assimilate. By comparison, that contrast of imagery would hold no purchase with audience members who feel excluded from the golden age narrative.

One of the ways that Obama balances the "one people" and golden age frames of assimilationist nationalism is with explicit references to inclusion. At times this coincides, perhaps predictably, with the "one people" framing, as is the case with the famous passage: "There is not a Black America and a White America and Latino America and Asian America —there is the United States of America." But weaved into that framing are more references to the basic "Americanness" of members of groups that have been traditionally excluded from full membership in the nation. One of the more effective instances of this is when he pairs homosexuality on level footing with little league baseball, which is rivaled perhaps only by apple pie for status as the most American of American icons: "We coach Little League in the Blue States and yes, we've got some gay friends in the Red States." He later repeats this device of pairing traditional American icons with references to traditionally marginalized peoples, this time grouping the legacy of slaves and immigrants on an equal footing with military service and Midwestern industrial workers, applying emphasis and effecting identification with an extended instance of anaphora that repeats "the hope": "It's the hope of slaves sitting around a fire singing freedom songs; the hope of immigrants setting out for distant shores; the hope of a young naval lieutenant bravely patrolling the Mekong Delta; the

hope of a millworker's son who dares to defy the odds." Elsewhere in the speech, Obama makes an inclusive reference that places the civil liberties of Arab Americans on the same moral level as education for children and healthcare for seniors. In this passage, Obama asserts his communal responsibility—and by implication the communal responsibilities of all Americans—to care about seniors who can't afford their medicine and children who can't read: "that matters to me" even if they are not his grandparent or his child. He then follows with a line emphasizing inclusion of a group whose status as Americans was being widely questioned in the years following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001: "If there's an Arab American family being rounded up without benefit of an attorney or due process, that threatens my civil liberties." This sentence receives particular emphasis by virtue of being the last of a three-part instance of anaphora in which Obama begins three consecutive sentences with "if there." In addition to explicitly advancing Obama's theme of inclusion, this line is undoubtedly also an allusion to the famous Martin Luther King quote from "Letter from Birmingham Jail": "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." It seems unlikely that the majority of Obama's audience would have picked up on this connection, but it would probably appeal to audience members who were most likely to be turned off by Obama's assimilationist framing—minority intellectuals, race scholars, and veterans of the Civil Rights movement. That is, audience members who see Obama's assimilationist framing as distasteful appeasement of white privilege are the same audience members who are most likely to identify with Dr. King and the spirit of civil disobedience that

characterized the Civil Rights movement and therefore also most likely to recognize Obama's allusion to "Birmingham Jail."

While these explicit references to inclusion are surely effective at advancing the inclusive theme needed to balance against the assimilationist framing, perhaps even more effective is Obama's ability to present himself as the embodiment of American inclusiveness. Similar to how Goldwater was able to create the founding cadre of the conservative movement by eliciting identification with his personal image as a rugged, God-fearing individualist (as Hammerback explains and as I discussed in chapter 1), Obama is able to elicit identification from an audience with disparate concerns by presenting himself as the embodiment of the synthesis of American exceptionalism with American inclusion. Just as the other rhetorical devices that Obama employs overlap each other, this one overlaps with the "one people" framing, the golden age evocations, and the explicit references to inclusion. This begins with some of the language that I've already mentioned, namely the descriptions of his foreign paternal line and all-American maternal line. He then goes on to say that he is "grateful for the diversity of my heritage" specifically because it represents "part of the larger American story." He reinforces this image later in the speech when he follows the references to the legacies of slavery, immigration, military service, and Midwestern industry with a not-so-subtle reference to himself: "the hope of a skinny kid with a funny name who believes that America has a place for him, too." This is the final part of the previously mentioned anaphora that repeats "the hope," and the positioning at the end of this extended repetition allows Obama to both reemphasize his embodiment of the American Dream and lighten the

mood as he transitions into the concluding section of the speech. These verbal references are, of course, set against the backdrop of a powerful visual: a tall, handsome black man who is confident, successful, and *admired* by a diverse audience of Americans. For people in the audience who do not feel included as full members of the American nation, this image of a member of a traditionally marginalized group celebrating American greatness on his terms implies that inclusivity is at the heart of American exceptionalism.

In the end, it was Obama's ability to project reverence for both American inclusivity and American exceptionalism—rather than any explicit arguments regarding individuals and communal responsibility—that made his 2004 convention speech so effective at drawing the support of liberals and independents. He accomplished this by applying the themes of one-people nationalism and golden-age myths toward inclusive ends and by presenting himself as the embodiment of the exceptional outsider who has earned inclusion. All of this came through with a rhythm and emphasis that depended heavily on skillful use of anaphora and the unconventional application or omission of conjunctions. Next, I will look at how Palin's 2008 speech found success by similarly focusing on an image of the American national identity that appealed to her conservative base.

Palin in 2008

Just as Obama was very effective at appealing to the liberal base, Palin was extremely effective at inducing support from the conservative base. Whereas Obama connected with his base by presenting traditional nationalistic narratives in a newly

inclusive light, Palin drew her support by evoking an exclusive definition of the American identity and playing to her audience's sense of marginalization and threatened status. That is, Palin painted a picture of America that fit into narratives of American icons—pioneers, cowboys, colonial revolutionaries—as being burdened by the weak and threatened by outsiders. The result was that she induced identification from those in the audience who felt that they represented Palin's version of the American identity, that they had become marginalized by major American institutions, and that they were threatened by foreign ones.

The McCain/Palin campaign's slogan of "Country First" isn't terribly subtle in its attempt to position its candidates as having a greater claim to American nationhood than their political rivals had. Compare this slogan to that of the Obama/Biden campaign: "Change You Can Believe In." This statement was clearly meant to draw a distinction between the Democratic ticket and the Republican ticket, with the implication being that electing the Republican nominees would result in the continuation of the same policies as their unpopular predecessor. If "Country First" is meant to draw a similar contrast, one can only conclude that in the eyes of the McCain/Palin campaign, their political rival does not put his country first, and Palin gives extra emphasis to this point by placing the slogan at the end of a paired couplet in the fifth stanza: "there's a time for politics and a time for leadership, a time to campaign and a time to put our country first." Palin advances this theme from the outset of her speech. Even before she trots out evidence of her and McCain's commitment to America by mentioning McCain's 22 years of service in uniform and her own son's imminent deployment to Iraq, Palin begins by describing

her running mate's character in broad terms as someone who "has come through much harder missions, and met far graver challenges, and knows how tough fights are won." Like Obama, Palin makes frequent use of polysyndetons like this one in order to add emphasis and induce identification. Palin further distinguishes the Republican presidential nominee as someone who "would rather lose an election than see his country lose a war," a line perhaps meant to recall the famous quote from American Revolutionary Nathan Hale (indeed, the quote is probably more famous than Hale himself): "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country." The implication, of course, is that their electoral rival, Obama, would never make a grand sacrifice for the sake of his country, whether it be losing an election, as Palin professes McCain is willing to do, or losing his life, as Hale was willing to do. The subtext suggests that Obama could never play the role of a Hale-like protagonist in a patriotic myth because Obama is not American enough to share the national wartime *esprit de corps*.

With this distinction clearly drawn, Palin dedicates the next portion of her speech to inducing cultural identification from her audience. She begins by describing her family as typically atypical: "You know, from the inside, no family ever seems typical and that's how it is with us." She uses another polysyndeton to linger on the image of her "strong and kind-hearted daughters Bristol, and Willow, and Piper." Palin uses anaphora, beginning each item in a three-part series with the word *same*, in order to induce identification with her family as representative of typical American families: "Our family has the same ups and downs as any other, the same challenges, and the same joys." She then returns to the polysyndeton to present her husband as a blue-collar everyman: "He's

a lifelong commercial fisherman, and a production operator in the oil fields of Alaska's North Slope, and a proud member of the United Steel Workers' Union, and Todd is a world champion snow machine racer.” She tells the audience that her parents “worked at the elementary school in our small town,” which leads to one of the very few references to inclusivity in the entire speech, a note that her parents taught her the simple lesson that “this is America, and every woman can walk through every door of opportunity.” This note of inclusivity is sandwiched by an extensive and loud celebration of Palin’s own culture. This culture is characterized by moms who say an “extra prayer” for “their sons and daughters going into harm’s way,” by your “average hockey mom” who joins the PTA, and by people who can “muddle through” without a personal chef and for whom a luxury jet is “over the top.” Most of all, this culture is characterized by small towns, which she makes clear by quoting the mid-20th Century journalist James Westbrook Pegler: “We grow good people in our small towns, with honesty, sincerity, and dignity.” Palin explicitly identifies this as both the culture from which she comes and the culture that is at the heart of American exceptionalism: “I grew up with those people. They’re the ones who do some of the hardest work in America, who grow our food, and run our factories, and fight our wars. They love their country, in good times and bad, and they’re always proud of America.” Again, Palin is evoking archetypes of traditional American patriotic mythology, and again she uses a polysyndeton to allow the image to linger in the minds of the audience members. “Grow our food” evokes the image of Jonny Appleseed and the pioneer family in the tradition of Laura Ingalls Wilder’s *Little House on the Prairie*. “Run our factories” brings to mind the images of iconic Midwestern auto and

steel industrial workers. And “fight our wars,” the most obvious of these nationalistic reference, calls out the classic image of the American GI defending freedom on foreign soil. All of these character types, of course, fit into the narratives of traditional American nationalism. The message here is that the small-town culture with which Palin identifies herself has a greater claim to American exceptionalism and nationhood than do other cultures that reside within the political boundaries of the United States. The rhetorical function of this message is that audience members who intensely identify with this image of small-town American culture transfer that identification to Palin. This allows the audience, as Kenneth Burke says, to “exult” in Palin’s assertion because they are given a sense of having participated in the formation of those assertions (Burke 58). Or, put in Fisher’s terms, the narrative of small-town American as hero-protagonist satisfies the narrative expectations of audience members who were raised on the stories that shaped the myths of the 1950s golden age.

Once Palin has clearly defined the population that is most deserving of representation in the White House, she shifts her focus to those who do not qualify for membership, most notably those who seek to marginalize Palin and her culture. She accomplishes this by evoking two of the core features of Simon’s Conservative Counterintelligentsia theory: Washington elites as malicious government bureaucrats and media criticism as evidence of virtue on the part of the subject being criticized. She repeatedly references Washington as the nexus of efforts to marginalize her and people like her: the “experts in Washington” were foolish for counting McCain out early in the race for the Republican nomination; she’s not a “member in good standing of the

Washington elite”; she’s going to Washington “for the right reason, not just to mingle with the right people”; Obama wants to “give you more orders from Washington”; Palin and McCain don’t “run with the Washington herd.” For Palin and many in her audience, “Washington” represents the base from which small-town America is attacked. That is, the nation’s seat of political power is the place from which small-town Americans—those with the strongest claim to full membership in the American nation—are unjustly oppressed by people who are not entitled to full membership in the American nation. These oppressors in Washington are everything that small-town Americans are not: secular bureaucrats who have never worked with their hands or sacrificed for their country. For Palin, then, representing herself as opposed to “Washington” is the same as representing herself as a defender of small-town American culture’s privileged position in the American nation.

The other institution residing within the political borders of the United States from which Palin’s supporters need defending is “the media.” I put the term in quotation marks here because of the nebulous meaning that it carries in this context. Rather than referring to a particular collection of diverse individuals and organizations, Palin seems to use the term to refer to a collection of voices that lack small-town American values. For those audience members whom Palin has induced into identifying with her, any opposition to Palin is received as opposition to the culture with which Palin and those audience members identify, and ultimately opposition to those audience members themselves. The result, as is the case with Simon and his *Time for Truth*, is that the very act of disagreeing with Palin is evidence of outsider status, of ineligibility for full

membership in American nationhood. Similar to the way Franklin Roosevelt, an elite Easterner if ever there was one, famously positioned himself as a populist by explicitly welcoming the hate of bankers during the Great Depression, Palin welcomes the disapproval of members of the media: “Here’s a little news flash for those reporters and commentators: I’m not going to Washington to seek their good opinion.” McCain, similarly, also benefits from the doubt with which some pundits regarded his candidacy, and Palin again uses a polysyndeton to emphasize the point: “The pollsters and pundits, they overlooked just one thing when they wrote [McCain] off . . . the determination, and resolve, and the sheer guts of Senator John McCain.” Both this passage and the “news flash” line were greeted with thunderous applause from the Republican National Convention audience, which would seem to confirm the audience’s hostility to “the media” and support for anybody who takes up the struggle against “the media.” Palin does not “seek their good opinion” because their opinion is inherently bad. The pundits overlooked McCain’s “sheer guts” because they are too out of touch with the true nature of the country to recognize the character of a great American. The passages demonstrate that Palin recognizes that for a conservative audience, “the media,” like “Washington,” represents a faceless entity made up of outsiders that are seeking to oppress Americans—people with a legitimate claim to full membership in the American nation—and that those Americans need a champion to assert their voice and defend them from the faceless quasi-Americans.

With American exceptionalism having been narrowly defined as applying only to those who share Palin’s cultural background, and with Palin having positioned herself as

confronted by her audience's domestic enemies, Washington and the media, she shifts her focus to the third primary theme of her speech—threats from foreign enemies. Palin touches on this point early in the speech by highlighting the service records of McCain and her family members, and she repeatedly invokes foreign-born dangers during the second half of her 44-minute speech. She denounces Obama as “a man who can give an entire speech about the wars America is fighting, and never use the word ‘victory’ except when he's talking about his own campaign” and someone who would “reduce the strength of America in a dangerous world.” She piles onto this point at length using a periodic style that gradually unfolds as it builds up to the final implication that Obama is in league with terrorists:

Victory in Iraq is finally in sight and [Obama] wants to forfeit. Terrorist states are seeking nuclear weapons without delay; he wants to meet them without preconditions. Al Qaeda terrorists still plot to inflict catastrophic harm on America, and he's worried that someone won't read 'em their rights.

Palin contrasts this image of Obama against an image of McCain as someone whom “we've always been able to count on to serve and defend America.” Such a president is necessary because “This world of threats and dangers, it's not just a community.” McCain can be trusted to lead in such a world because “he has fought for you in places where winning means survival and defeat means death” and is “the kind of fellow whose name you will find on war memorials in small towns across this great country.” McCain carries “the special confidence of those who have seen evil and have seen how evil is overcome.” All of this is to say that McCain can play the role of any John Wayne or

Steve McQueen character, that McCain is the prototypical protagonist in traditional American nationalist mythology. In Fisher's language, a McCain-as-president would satisfy the conservative audience's need for narrative fidelity; he fits their expectations for what the leader of the nation should be based on their lived experiences and shared mythology. By contrast, Palin's depiction of Obama fits only into the role of a craven sidekick of questionable loyalty, more likely to turn tail and beseech his feet not to fail him than face an enemy head-on.

Now, Palin supporters who identify themselves as small-government, anti-tax conservatives might take issue with my interpretation of her speech by pointing to her explicit opposition to big government and higher taxes. Indeed, she dedicates consecutive stanzas to this theme in the middle of her speech. She begins the first of these stanzas by asserting, "Government is too big. [Obama] wants to grow it. Congress spends too much money. He promises more. Taxes are too high, and he wants to raise them." Palin then follows with the following summation of Obama's policy plans, and she again makes use of a polysyndeton for extra emphasis:

The Democratic nominee for President supports plans to raise income taxes, and raise payroll taxes, and raise investment income taxes, and raise the death tax, and raise business taxes, and increase the tax burden on the American people by hundreds of billions of dollars.

These two stanzas clearly make a direct argument that is in line with the traditional conservative syllogism about government and taxes, and in addition to the repeated conjunction, this last sentence draws particular attention by breaking the rhythm of the

speech, running for 44 words, more than twice the speech's average of 19.8 words per sentence. However, these stanzas are hardly representative of the primary themes of the speech. They account for only 87 words in a speech comprised of 3,155 words in total. Outside of these two stanzas, the words *tax* and *taxpayers* appear only four times in the entire speech, and the word *government* only appears twice outside of these two stanzas. So it seems appropriate to conclude that while Palin does clearly position herself as squarely behind the traditional conservative syllogism regarding taxes and government, the low-taxes, small-government theme is hardly the center point of this speech that drew such strong conservative support. What's more, this allegiance to the traditional conservative syllogism does very little to distinguish Palin's speech from any of the other less-noteworthy speeches delivered at the 2008 Republican National Convention. Consider the following lines from McCain's acceptance speech: "I will keep taxes low and cut them where I can. My opponent will raise them. . . . My tax cuts will create jobs; [Obama's] tax increases will eliminate them." The word *tax* appears eight times in McCain's speech, and *government* appears 13 times, as in these lines: "I will cut government spending. [Obama] will increase it. . . . His plan will force small businesses to cut jobs, reduce wages, and force families into a government-run health care system." Similarly, Michelle Bachmann gave a 493-word speech in which she mentioned *government* seven times. She, for instance, deplored "growing dependency on government-issued checks" and "a bloated government [that] crowds out personal freedom." Yet neither McCain's nor Bachmann's speech drew the same kind of exuberant reception that Palin's speech received. Under the circumstances, there seems

to be very little evidence to indicate that the success of Palin's speech was due to her allegiance to traditional conservative ideas about tax policy and the size of government. So just as Obama makes some explicit arguments for societal responsibilities in his 2004 speech, Palin makes some explicit arguments for small government and low taxes. But just as the positive reaction to Obama's speech had little to do with direct arguments about policy, the textual evidence seems to indicate that the positive reaction to Palin's speech was much more a result of her ability to project a particular image of America than a result of any explicit policy arguments.

Taken together, the three primary themes of Palin's speech—an exclusive definition of "Americanness," confrontation with domestic enemies, and protection from foreign enemies—arrive at an argument that proves to be particularly powerful for her conservative audience: Real Americans can't trust pseudo-Americans to protect them from foreign enemies. This is because those pseudo-Americans—that is, people who don't share Palin's claim to American nationhood—lack the intestinal fortitude to stand up to those enemies and are likely to care at least as much about the foreign enemies as they do about those who share Palin's sense of the US national identity.

Competing National Narratives

The most noteworthy conclusion of these analyses of Palin's 2008 speech and Obama's 2004 speech is that the ability of those speakers to appeal to their ideological bases had much more to do with their ability to appeal to the respective base's sense of the national identity than with any assertions regarding policy preference. In other

words, conservatives responded positively to Palin's speech because they identified with the image of America that she evoked, an image characterized by small-town folk who had become marginalized by major American institutions and were being threatened by foreign ones. Similarly, liberals and moderates responded well to Obama's speech because of his ability to recast American exceptionalism—a ubiquitous theme in American nationalist myths—in terms of American inclusivity. Popular reception to these speeches was much more a function of these competing images of the American national identity than a response to any explicit arguments about the size of government or the role of the American military around the world.

These speeches were widely regarded by political analysts as representing the elite heights of American political rhetoric, and the speeches coincided with the launching of previously obscure politicians to national relevance, turning Palin into a leading voice of the conservative movement and helping to propel Obama all the way to the Whitehouse. In other words, they represent examples of extremely successful instances of political rhetoric in the contemporary era. If we accept my conclusion that each speech owes its success to its ability to represent a particular sense of the national identity—a privileged and exclusive sense on the right hand, and an inclusive sense on the left—then we can attribute some significant validity to my theory of US political ideology being largely a function of national identity, which I described in detail in chapter 2.

CHAPTER 5: REVERSING THE AMBIGUITY

As I've argued in the first four chapters of this dissertation, the contesting of the national identity—the ways in which a given image of the United States is privileged over other images of the nation—is central to the contemporary ideological divisions of the United States. The left-center-right political spectrum can be seen as a spectrum based on competing and sometimes overlapping nationalist ideologies, with opposing groups competing for control of the state agencies that help define what it means to be American. According to this view, individuals choose their positions in the ideological spectrum based on which ideology they culturally identify with, and practitioners of political rhetoric would benefit from identifying the culture of their ideology with the American “mainstream.” Of course, the idea that there is such a thing as an easily definable American “mainstream” is something of a fiction. It is an idea that Gellner might regard as “invented,” Smith as “embellished,” and Anderson as “imagined,” and whether or not we regard this invention/embellishment/imagining as virtuous, nationalism scholars tend to agree that for a nation to sustain itself, its citizens must come to regard itself as one people. As Desmond King has argued and as I discussed at length in chapter 2, full membership in this “one people” has not always been available to all Americans, with the result that many contemporary citizens tend to regard themselves as “more American” than other citizens. Groups regarded as not fully American are aware of their marginalized status, and that awareness has only fostered deeper divisions (King 22). The political empowerment of these marginalized groups has turned American

politics into a contest between exclusive nationalists on the right and inclusive nationalists on the left.

This final chapter will identify political arguments that are effective at appealing to both an inclusive image of the nation and an exclusive one. The basic strategy behind these arguments relies on ambiguity, on using language that audiences tend to associate with one ideology in order to advance the cause of the opposing ideology. As I will argue in this chapter, the American political right has already been making use of this strategy for some time, and opportunities are available for the American political left to do the same. Specifically, the right has adopted several traditionally liberal ideas and appropriated them toward their own arguments. These appropriations include appeals to modernization, practicality, technological innovation, individual liberty, national defense, national unity, and the American founding tradition. The American political left, meanwhile, has thus far missed opportunities to appropriate traditionally conservative arguments associated with the intrusion of government into the lives of free individuals, the promotion of innovation, bias in the news media, and the branding of political opponents as “radical” and “outside the mainstream.”

Ideological Arguments in “The Zone of Ambiguity”

“Zone of ambiguity,” a term that Brett St. Louis attributes to French philosopher Pierre-Andre Taguieff, refers to a rhetorical space in which right-wing rhetors adopt the language of liberalism and antiracism in order to advance authoritarian and racist ends (St. Louis 32). The objective, as Taguieff explains, is to “appropriate exclusive use of the

adversary's arguments" so as to force ideological opponents into a position of defense while robbing them of the tools that they are most accustomed to using in that defense (208). The example that Taguieff focuses on concerns what he sees as a new kind of cultural racism in France. Specifically, Taguieff refers to a "counteroffensive of antiracism" that he identifies as having begun in the mid-1980s with a move to stigmatize French antiracists as "anti-French, anti-European, anti-Western, or anti-White 'racists'" (206). Critical to the success of this movement, according to Taguieff, has been the right's reappropriation of the "right to be different." Once a phrase used to defend the rights of immigrants and non-Catholics in France, the French New Right has claimed the trope as its own as part of its campaign to marginalize North African immigrants from the body politic and ultimately expel them from French territory altogether (Taguieff 207). The result of this kind of reappropriation is that the once fixed and easily identifiable spectra of progress vs. regression and antiracism vs. racism are now confused as all sides claim affiliation with progress and antiracism.

Where Taguieff is concerned primarily with matters of French culture and politics, St. Louis extends the conversation by examining how zones of ambiguity influence the process of racialization in Western cultures in general. As I've discussed in previous chapters, the term *racial formation* refers to the process by which racial categories are "created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (Omi and Winant 124). The outcome of this process is the product of a countless series of racial projects, which Omi and Winant define as "simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources

along particular racial lines” (125). According to Omi and Winant, only racial projects that seek to reinforce systems of racial dominance can be categorized as racist, while racial projects that seek to disrupt racial dominance can be regarded as antiracist.

For St. Louis, racial formation is a largely deliberate process that need not be based in essentialist biological notions of race. St. Louis contrasts *racial formation* with *racialization*, which he regards as reflecting biologically essentialist notions of race produced by a “deterministic process that is externally enforced and lacks voluntaristic and subversive Gramscian possibilities” (36). That is to say, St. Louis regards racialization as, first, the process by which biological notions of racial superiority acquired wide acceptance in Western cultures and, second, the inevitable product of historical circumstances. Racialization is, therefore, a phenomenon that came before racial formation, which is the product of deliberate choices made to either perpetuate or contest systems of racial dominance. Biological racialization, then, is “the original sin that the actions of racial formation attempt to either redeem or compound” (St. Louis 37). St. Louis acknowledges that his distinction between the labels *racial formation* and *racialization* is not universally accepted among race scholars (36), but we can move forward here simply by noting that there is a mode of racial formation that is produced by racial projects that need not be based in biological essentialism. That is, racial projects that interpret, represent, or explain racial dynamics need not do so in biologically essentialist terms in order to “reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines.” Racialization depends on notions of biological essentialism; racial formation does not.

The transition from what St. Louis regards as racialization to racial formation can therefore be described as the transition from a deterministic process—one that was largely the product of historical circumstances—to a deliberate one—a process heavily influenced by conscious choices made by elite individuals. More importantly for my purposes here, the exigency for that transition resulted from the public contestation of biological notions of racial superiority. The cause of antiracism—the first opportunities to deliberately challenge systems of power produced by biological racialization—got its start when people started publically disputing the idea that one race is biologically superior to others. This foundational legacy of antiracism as being associated with challenges to biological racialization has resulted in a general perception that references to biological difference are inherently racist while challenges to notions of biological difference are inherently antiracist.

This general presumption of associations is what allows for the creation of a zone of ambiguity. In the case of biological racialization, the zone of ambiguity is created when rhetors challenge notions of biological difference to advance racist ends and when belief in those notions of biological difference are applied toward antiracist ends. St. Louis argues that biological racialization can and has been used toward antiracist ends, specifically in cases of what he calls “*volunteristic modes of self-racialization*” (43; emphasis in the original). St. Louis holds it as fundamentally antiracist for an oppressed population to harness the political potency of self-racialization in order to contest their oppression. Awareness of this possibility “allows for a possible dual approach to racialization based on a pragmatic assessment of the propitious or harmful outcomes”

(43). Such a pragmatic assessment requires fellow antiracists to set aside both their foundational notion that race is a socially invented category rather than a biological one and abundant scientific research indicating that genetic population groupings—groups that share similar genetic makeup—do not at all coincide with racial groupings—groups that are categorized based on their outward appearances (St. Louis 39). In other words, being willing to rhetorically operate in a zone of ambiguity creates opportunities for new alliances among antiracists. Of course, being part of such an alliance requires that many antiracists—those whom we might normatively and problematically refer to as “mainstream” antiracists—decline to set some traditional preconditions for entry into the antiracism club, namely allegiances to a foundational legacy and to an empirical epistemology that each refutes biological racialization.

This is, of course, asking quite a bit, yet St. Louis offers a persuasive justification that seems to stand in agreement with Omi and Winant. Both St. Louis and Omi and Winant begin by acknowledging that, despite all of the evidence and arguments persuasively indicating that racial categories are social inventions rather than biological ones, the concept of race continues to play a major role in contemporary social and political dynamics (Omi and Winant 124; St. Louis 30). St. Louis’ explanation for this phenomenon is that people’s acceptance of a “racial fact” is based not only on “its status as a fact but also the extent to which it represents a compelling moral ideal” (30). That is, attempts to debunk biological racialization as an unscientific concept depend on an audience that subscribes to a positivistic ideal of scientific validity. Simply holding the veracity of scientific facts as self-evident does nothing to advance the cause of antiracism

with audiences that steadfastly refuse to accept those scientific facts (45). On the contrary, it creates a didactic ethos that may be rhetorically counterproductive. For St. Louis, a more effective rhetorical approach requires us to accept that audiences' dispositions toward biological notions of race are influenced "in part because of a moral appreciation for its social connotation and implications" (30). The point here is that if the cause of antiracism is paramount, then enlisting allies in that cause and developing alliances are more important than debunking biological notions of race.

To put this point in terms of a traditional syllogism, the first premise is that racial formation is a product a countless series of racial projects, some of which are racist and some of which are antiracist (Omi and Winant 124-25). The condition for defining a racial project as antiracist is that the project work against existing structures of racial dominance (135). St. Louis, then, is imploring antiracists to take advantage of zones of ambiguity that allow for the creation of antiracist racial projects even if the explicit justification of those projects relies on biological racialization. His argument, essentially, is that the ends justify the means in the cause of antiracism. Or rather, the effects of the antiracist project are more important than the epistemology behind the project. In St. Louis' view, where the epistemology can't be changed, we may as well make that epistemology work toward the dismantling of structures of racial dominance.

The obvious counterargument to St. Louis is that his position may be shortsighted. Taking advantage of zones of ambiguity in order to use biological racialization in order to bring down existing structures of racial dominance may be fine in the short term, but it runs the risks of creating new structures of racial dominance and of legitimizing the old-

fashioned kind of biologically based racial projects—the racist kind. The first of these risks, the possibility of creating new structures of racial dominance, seems negligible under current circumstances. It seems extremely unlikely that, say, Australian aborigines will find themselves forcibly relocating Australian whites any time soon. And it seems similarly unlikely that Native Americans will soon find themselves forcing American whites onto reservations, or that African Americans will systematically disenfranchise white Americans, or that South African blacks will institute an apartheid system that denies rights and resources to South African whites. Such role reversals seem so far beyond the realm of possibility that concerns over them do not demand serious consideration.

The second risk, the possibility of legitimizing racist projects, seems a greater concern because zones of ambiguity can be just as useful to racists as they are to antiracist. Indeed, racists have already established an impressive track record of using zones of ambiguity toward racist ends. Taguieff provides a detailed example of this in his illustration of the rhetorical strategies deployed by the New Right in France. Goldberg provides a similar example in an American context in his illustration of how racial Americanization, which I discussed at some length in Chapter 2, embraces a nominal commitment to race neutrality in order to silence all reference to race with the exception of racial profiling associated with combating crime and terror. The result is a failure to distinguish between exclusionary racist practices on the one hand and ameliorative racial projects on the other, thus “reducing the latter to the former as the only contemporary racist expressions worth worrying about” (96). So while using

biological racialization toward ostensibly antiracists ends does run the risk of ceding some ideological ground, racism seems to be doing a fine job of using zones of ambiguity to extend its ideological reach as things stand.

Under the circumstances, appropriating zones of ambiguity toward antiracists ends seems more a case of adopting the tools of the oppressor than a case of legitimizing the oppressor's authority. The risks require that antiracists, as St. Louis suggests, "examine and interrogate the different political motivations for biological racialization on a case-by-case basis" (47), but such a historically and culturally specific examination would be required for any successful antiracist project. In any event, my purpose here is not to endorse St. Louis' argument in favor of using zones of ambiguity in order to create seemingly unlikely allies in the cause of antiracism. My purpose, instead, is to demonstrate the opportunities that zones of ambiguity offer for persuasive ideological argument, and I will illustrate this in the context of American nationalist ideologies in the next section.

Making Use of Zones of Ambiguity in American Political Rhetoric

In Taguieff's account of how the New Right in France creates zones of ambiguity in order to pursue racist ends, he identifies seven items in a "series of ideological appropriation of values regarded as positive" (208). All seven of these appropriations—some slightly modified for an American context—can be seen in the standard rhetoric of the political right in the United States. Now, advancing the ideology of American conservatism is not strictly the same as advancing an ideology of racism, but both the

French New Right and American conservatism appropriate these arguments in order to advance exclusivist national identities. Here are the seven appropriations that Taguieff identifies along with examples of how they are deployed in American ideological rhetoric:

1. A call for “social *modernization* where the modern is reduced to economics and technological innovation and linked to individualist, productivist, and managerial values” (Taguieff 208; emphasis in the original). This appropriation takes the traditionally positively received concept of progress and defines it strictly in terms of the private sector. The implied assumption is that only private enterprises are responsible for innovating new technologies and distributing them to the public, thus dismissing the role that government has played in, for instance, developing satellite-based telecommunications products or the energy and transportation infrastructure that facilitated the growth of suburban life that has come to characterize the American middle class. According to *The Washington Post*, Republican presidential candidates used the word *innovation* no fewer than seven times during a debate in October of 2011. Former Utah governor John Huntsman, for instance, emphasized “a strong commitment to innovation entrepreneurship” and the need for a “marketplace . . . where you can translate those innovations into products” (qtd. in Kolawole). Mitt Romney, a Republican presidential candidate in 2008 and 2012, is particularly notable for his emphasis on economics and managerial experience, telling *Fox News* in 2011, “[I]t would be helpful if at least one of the people

who's running in the Republican field had extensive experience in the private sector, in small business, in big business, working with the economy" (qtd. in Allen). Julia Beckett, in an essay published in *The American Review of Public Administration*, locates the American origins of the "government should run like a business" mantra in the Reagan administration (186).

2. "Appeal to the 'real' as opposed to the utopian, messianic, and ideological" (Taguieff 208). This appropriation reserves the concept of practicality for the conservative label while projecting naive, unsubstantiated theory onto the liberal label. Perhaps the most common rhetorical appropriation of this value takes the form of references to "common sense," which Lakoff identifies as a trope frequently used to activate the conservative metaphor for government as a strict father (*Moral Politics* 4-7), and which I see as a reflection of nationalist privilege in which the speaker assumes that his sense must be the "common" one because the speaker sees himself as representative of the American identity. In any event, there are so many examples of conservatives deploying the trope that it seems a shame to limit myself to just a few here. Republican presidential candidate Herman Cain—briefly a frontrunner for the nomination before allegations of personal misconduct forced him out of the race—was fond of emphasizing "'common sense solutions' to restore fiscal sanity to government," as he wrote in a September 2011 post on the official website of his political action committee, Herman Cain Pac. There is also an organization called

Americans for Common Sense Solutions that has run television advertisements attacking president Obama. The Republican Leadership Network's website touts "common sense solutions" to environmental policy on its homepage. *Gop.gov*, "The website of the Republican majority in Congress," expresses the need for "common sense, pro-growth policies" in a post titled "The House Republican Plan for America's Job Creators."

3. The "*praise of established roots*, which applies to property and all forms of inheritance, no less than to identities based on origins" (Taguieff 208; emphasis in the original). This appropriation takes the traditionally positive idea of pride in nation and family and spins it in exclusivist terms. Ron Paul, the long-time Republican congressman from Texas who has repeatedly run for president, is perhaps most notable among contemporary politicians for his emphasis on property rights. For instance, during the buildup to the 2012 Republican presidential primary election, Ron Paul told a New Hampshire newspaper that property rights are "really basic to solving our problems" (qtd. in Tracy). Property inheritance has been a focal point of some of the most successful ideological rhetoric of the past couple decades, namely the rebranding of the estate tax—a tax on inheritances above \$3.5 million. It has been rebranded as a *death tax*, as evidenced by the *Wall Street Journal* using the terms interchangeably in a 2009 editorial: "Although that 10-year tax law was to expire in 2011, meaning that the *death tax* rate would go all the way back to

55%, the political expectation was that once the *estate tax* was gone for even one year, it would never return” (“Night of the Living Death Tax”; emphasis added). In a more general sense, undisguised references to established roots can be seen in the names of conservative political organizations like The Heritage Foundation and the Traditional Values Coalition.

4. The “defense of *liberty* in an explicitly *anti-statist* perspective” (Taguieff 208; emphasis in the original). This is typically seen in the United States in tropes that define government as inherently opposed to the traditional American ideals of freedom and liberty. Ronald Reagan’s First Inaugural Address is littered with antigovernment references. Perhaps the most famous, which Sarah Palin quoted in her 2008 speech accepting the Republican vice presidential nomination, was Reagan’s assertion that in the crisis that threatened “this last and greatest bastion of freedom . . . government is not the solution to our problem. Government is the problem.” Some three minutes later, Reagan followed with a suggestion that government had grown too big to maintain consistency with the basic principle of democracy: “It is time to check and reverse the growth of government which shows signs of having grown beyond the consent of the governed.” In a more contemporary example, Paul said in his announcement of his 2008 presidential candidacy, “Personal safety and economic prosperity can only come as the consequence of liberty. They cannot be provided by an authoritarian government.” Paul’s website

CampaignForLiberty.com doubles down on this kind of rhetoric, featuring an article devoted to the American “war between collectivists and individualists” (McKalip).

5. The “*demand for security . . . which translates into greater state authority*” (Taguieff 208; emphasis in the original). This is, of course, not new to the contemporary era of American politics, as even the first generations of Americans demanded protection against native American tribes and European powers. The “Domino Theory”—the idea, most commonly associated with Lyndon Johnson’s justification for continued war in Vietnam, that all of Southeast Asian countries would fall under the sway of communism shortly after any single one did—was first articulated by a US president as early as April 1954 when Dwight Eisenhower did so in a news conference (“Eisenhower Gives Famous”). After a decade and a half or so of public disenchantment with militaristic rhetoric in the wake of Vietnam, Reagan revitalized security rhetoric, most notably with his characterization of the Soviet Union as an “evil empire,” an idea that Reagan first forecast in a 1982 speech to the British House of Commons but which he didn’t articulate in those terms until a 1983 speech to the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida. The collapse of the Soviet Union brought another brief lull in American bellicose rhetoric, which lasted until September 11, 2001, the events of which precipitated two wars on foreign soil and brought about a return of rhetoric that applies a heavy

emphasis on security. The most enduring evidence of this is the establishment of an entirely new federal agency, the Department of Homeland Security. The anecdotal evidence, meanwhile, is extraordinarily abundant. George W. Bush in his 2002 State of the Union Address famously labeled Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as the “axis of evil.” More recently, the trope *cut and run* has been used to negatively characterize reductions in American military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, with former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney deploying the term during a Republican presidential debate as recently as November 2011 (Rutenberg and Zeleny).

6. The “ideal of the *national body* as a categorical imperative of political action” (Taguieff 208; emphasis in the original). Unlike most of the other appropriations on this list, the ideal of the national body did not carry popular appeal during the founding era of the United States. George Washington reflected an understanding of this in his farewell address, which explicitly called for greater loyalty to the national body instead of a region or political party, and the secessionist movement that sparked the Civil War would seem to serve as overwhelming evidence that the national body was not widely accepted as the appropriate mechanism for political action. Yet, backlash against the secessionist movement and the national mobilization for two World Wars seems to have widely distributed the appeal of national political action in American culture. In a contemporary American context, perhaps the most noteworthy

single assertion in this category is Reagan's famous "shining city on a hill" line from his speech accepting the 1984 Republican presidential nomination.

George W. Bush continued along a similar vein during his ultimately victorious 2000 presidential campaign when he proclaimed in a speech to B'nai B'rith, a Jewish service organization, that the United States "is chosen by God and commissioned by history to be a model to the world" (qtd. in Greenberg).

Contemporary politics often sees this rhetorical tradition carried forward more succinctly—if less poetically—in assertions regarding "American exceptionalism." In 2011 Texas Governor Rick Perry, then still a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, declared at the Values Voters Summit, "I still believe in the exceptionalism of America. America is still the last best hope for mankind" (qtd. in Lengell). During a presidential debate that same month, Romney attacked Obama for not being adequately devoted to the belief that the United States carries an inherent greatness: "We have a president right now who thinks America's just another nation. America is an exceptional nation" (qtd. in Stevenson). This type of language is not unique to politicians on the campaign trail. In September of 2011, Shelby Steele of *The Wall Street Journal* went as far as to dedicate an entire op-ed column to defining Obama's position as an "adversary of American exceptionalism" rooted in "a bubble of post-60s liberalism that conditioned him."

7. The “exclusive anchoring in the *republican tradition*” (Taguieff 2009; emphasis in the original). In the French context, the *republican tradition* refers, of course, to the principles and values associated with the French Revolution and the establishment of the First French Republic. This can be translated into an American context as referring to the extremely popular principles and icons associated with the founding of the nation: the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Founding Fathers. In a speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in February of 2012, Romney explicitly connected conservatism with the Constitution, asserting that conservatives are “proud to cling to our Constitution” (qtd. in Memoli). Michele Bachmann, briefly the frontrunner in the race for the 2012 Republican nomination, makes an obviously deliberate attempt to associate herself with constitutional principles. The 77-word “About Michele” bio on her campaign website deploys the phrase “constitutional conservative” twice and denounces “Obamacare [the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act] and its unconstitutional mandates” (*Michele Bachmann for President*). Even the rhetoric of conservative jurisprudence asserts a greater connection to founding principles by claiming that only conservative interpretations of the Constitution are in line with the “original intent” of the authors of the document. As the Heritage Foundation’s David Forte writes, “originalism comports with the understanding of what our Constitution was to be by the people who formed and ratified that document.” The obvious implication here is that those whose interpretations of the

Constitution differ from conservative interpretations must have no regard for the founding principles espoused in the Constitution.

The accuracy of the claims made under the umbrella of these seven appropriations is not so much my concern here as the claims' rhetorical effectiveness and the values that they imply. As I've discussed in previous chapters, the principal value that these conservative arguments imply is a privileged claim to American status. Each of these claims can be characterized by what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva calls "abstract liberalism." Bonilla-Silva uses this term to describe the use of "ideas associated with political liberalism (e.g., 'equal opportunity,' the idea that force should not be used to achieve social policy) and economic liberalism (e.g., choice, individualism) in an *abstract* manner to explain racial matters" (28; emphasis in the original). Among the examples that he gives is the adoption of the language of the Civil Rights movement in order to oppose affirmative action programs. Colorblind racists invoke the principle of equal opportunity in order to oppose what they regard as preferential treatment for minorities while ignoring abundant evidence of preferential treatment for whites—that is, the severe underrepresentation of minorities in most good jobs, schools, and universities (28).

I trust that Bonilla-Silva will forgive me for strategically appropriating *abstract liberalism* to apply to a context not defined strictly by race. The seven conservative appropriations that Taguieff identifies represent the use of ideas associated with political and economic liberalism in an abstract manner in order to assert exclusive nationalist privilege. For instance, the first appropriation that Taguieff identifies, which regards

modernization as strictly a product of market forces, requires us to ignore the role nonmarket (government) forces have played in the development of modern innovations like the Internet and satellite technologies. The second appropriation—an appeal to the “real” as opposed to idealistic or utopian—expects audiences to set aside the actual growth in GDP, rise in living standards, and fall in poverty rates that followed the expansive government reforms of the mid-20th century that conservative intellectuals claim to want to undo. The other appropriations, similarly, require audiences to forget that Americans who don’t identify themselves as conservative have just as much claim to common sense, established roots, the national body, and the founding tradition, and just as much right to liberty and security. The willingness to set aside congruent rights and claims of other individuals who hold equal legal claims to American status is what characterizes these appropriations as exclusive nationalist applications of abstract liberalism.

Now, strictly from the perspective of a rhetorical analysis, there doesn’t seem to be a lot to gain by simply making judgments about the accuracy of nationalistic claims, as any attempt to analyze the veracity of the claims would undoubtedly be skewed by the subjectivity of the analyzer. That is, conservatives would likely find the claims accurate and justified while liberals would find them to be inaccurate and infused with privilege. The inevitable result of the accumulation of such analyses is one similar to St. Louis’ summary of attempts to arrive at a definitive understanding of the concept of race—an extraordinary amount of scholarship arrives at the conclusion that race does exist and that we should use the concept, but a similar amount of scholarship also concludes that race

does not exist and that we should not use the concept (30). To paraphrase St. Louis in the context of American nationalism, nationalist claims to founding origins and essential American values are/are not legitimate, and we should/should not take them seriously. That one nationalist fact or myth becomes more compelling than another is not solely due to its status as a fact but also to the extent to which it represents a compelling moral idea. Take for instance Bachmann's assertion from June of 2011 that the Founding Fathers "worked tirelessly until slavery was no more in the United States" (qtd. in Kessler). As *The Week* notes, the claim was met with harsh criticism from some quarters and firm support from others ("Did the Founding Fathers"). Henry Blodget of *Business Insider* offered a measured criticism: "The commitment to the status quo (legalized slavery) among the 'southern founders' was particularly strong, and the 'northern founders' didn't challenge this. . . . The fairest characterization of the 'founding fathers' view on slavery seems to be that they tolerated it." On the other hand, Jeffrey Lord, a former aide to Reagan and 1996 Republican vice presidential candidate Jack Kemp, cites quotes from Alexander Hamilton, George Mason, and James Madison in support of Bachmann and concludes, "The historical record, if one looks, is crystal clear. . . . Bachmann was right." I present these opposing quotes as evidence that, just as St. Louis notes that one's disposition toward biological notions of race is based in part on its social implications regardless of the empirical evidence, one either is or is not well disposed to exclusivist notions of American nationalism because of a moral appreciation of its social connotation and implications. For this reason the most effective rhetorical response to the seven

exclusive nationalist appropriations that Taguieff identifies is not to dispute the veracity of those arguments, but to *reappropriate* them toward inclusive ends.

Opportunities for Reversing the Ambiguity

As St. Louis explains, “The discursive complexity of the novel and barely perceptible formations of racism is obscured within the (dis)ingenuous character of zones of ambiguity” (33). That is to say, as I discussed in the opening sections of this chapter, zones of ambiguity make it difficult to differentiate between racist and antiracist discourse. Part of my purpose in this chapter has been to demonstrate that zones of ambiguity can also be effective at obscuring the character of discourse that is not narrowly defined by race. Specifically, zones of ambiguity are also extremely effective at obscuring the character of nationalist discourse. That is, rhetoric designed to advance an inclusive nationalist ideology can be most effective by appropriating the rhetoric traditionally associated with an ideology of exclusive nationalism. As I argued in chapter 4, this kind of appropriation is what made Barack Obama’s 2004 Keynote Address so successful at appealing to both liberals and moderates. And it stands to reason that similar appropriations would be central to rhetorical strategies that are effective at appealing to both liberals and moderates.

Just as, according to St. Louis, zones of ambiguity provide “the discursive field wherein differentialist forms of racialization are constructed and enunciated,” zones of ambiguity also provide discursive fields for articulating forms of nationalism(33). And similar to how zones of ambiguity “produce and regulate racial meaning and

understanding,” they also exert influence over how Americans define and understand the national identity (33). As the space in which nationalistic rhetoric operates becomes increasingly ambiguous and open to manipulations—that is, as nationalistic rhetoric becomes obscured in zones of ambiguity—the successful inclusive nationalist conceptual and rhetorical appropriation of exclusive nationalist rhetoric can dramatically reshape the commonplace political certainties of what constitutes American patriotic discourse. This poses the problem of differentiating between separate and opposed modes of national formation that share similar conceptual frameworks but morally opposed nationalist ideologies. Furthermore, this antagonistic symmetry makes it difficult to sustain the tacit political and moral judgments customarily associated with distinguishing “traditional” American ideals from “radical” ones. This is because appropriating some of the language of exclusive nationalist discourse toward inclusive ends satisfies both the liberal impulse toward inclusion and the moderate impulse toward expressions of American national pride. And articulating nationalistic arguments within a zone of ambiguity—that is, appropriating the language of the opposing nationalist ideology—helps to separate the rhetor’s ideology from his or her political label, thus making accessible audiences that would have been hostile to any arguments associated with the rhetor’s political label. Put simply in the context of American political rhetoric, adopting conservative nationalist frames toward liberal ends can make audiences that identify themselves as moderate or independent more accessible to liberal arguments.

With this in mind, here are some examples of potentially effective appropriations of conservative arguments toward liberal ends:

1. **Negatively characterize undesired policies in terms of government**

intervention and the limiting of individual freedoms. The opportunities for appropriation of this argument are virtually limitless. One obvious example concerns arguments over same-sex marriage, which the American political left has taken to discussing in terms of “marriage equality.” For instance, *The New York Times* ran an editorial titled “Another Victory for Marriage Equality” after a federal appeals court had struck down California’s ban on gay marriage in February of 2012. Similarly, that same month *The Huffington Post* ran an article titled “Dick Cheney Part of Marriage Equality Lobbying Effort in Maryland” (Terkel and Stein). Those headlines could be crafted to appeal to audiences that do not identify themselves as liberal if the publications framed the issue in terms of government intervention. *The Times* headline would then read, “Another Defeat for Government Intervention in the Lives of Gay Americans.” Similarly, the *Huffington* headline might read, “Cheney Part of Fight Against Imposing Big Government on Maryland Marriages.” A similar strategy could be used to denounce members of the Religious Right for “wanting to use government to impose their religion on free Americans.” Faith-based initiatives could be described as “big government evangelism.” Proponents of net neutrality could denounce attempts to “put a government bureaucrat between you and your computer.”

2. Emphasize the association of commonplace technology with iconic

American government programs. A common theme advanced by the American political right concerns the claim that government has only had a negative impact on the American economy. For instance, in April of 2011 *The Washington Times* published an op-ed by Milton R. Wolf titled “Big Government Crushes American Standard of Living.” Two years earlier during the debate over the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009—better known as “The Stimulus”—Michael Steele, then-chairman of the Republican National Committee, asserted, “You and I know that in the history of mankind and womankind, government—federal, state or local—has never created one job. It's destroyed a lot of them” (qtd. in MacGillis and Bacon). When casino magnate Steve Wynn confronted former Michigan governor Jennifer Granholm with a similar statement on Rush Limbaugh’s radio show in 2009, her answer focused on the minimum wage, Medicaid, and Medicare. Limbaugh and his staff found Granholm’s answer so ineffectual that they published the transcript under the title “Steve Wynn Schools Jennifer Granholm on How to Create Jobs.” A stronger answer by Granholm would have emphasized modern technology and industry that would not exist if not for a high-profile government program. She would have done well, for instance, to point out that the mobile phone in the pockets of most listeners would not exist if not for the satellite technology and infrastructure developed by NASA, and the internet upon which the transcript of the show would be posted would not exist if not for

technologies first developed by the Pentagon.

3. **Attack “the media.”** Diatribes against “the mainstream media” have been a staple in conservative discourse for decades. As I discussed in chapter 2, William Simon was crying foul on the media’s treatment of conservatism as far back as the 1970s, and as we saw in chapter 4, Sarah Palin launched herself to national prominence in part by attacking the national media. As recently as the race for the 2012 Republican presidential nomination, Newt Gingrich repeatedly attacked debate moderators in what *The Washington Post* said “can’t be described as anything less than a calculated effort” (Blake). As conservative consultant Brian Donahue noted, “By focusing his attacks on debate moderators . . . Gingrich can appear tough without alienating Republican audiences” (qtd. in Blake). In situations like these, Gingrich and other conservative ideologues are using members of the press as straw men in order to advance their narrative of marginalization, a narrative that Asen discusses at length and that I summarized in chapter 1. Similar opportunities to make claims of marginalization are available to left-leaning rhetors, and these opportunities are not limited to situations involving outwardly right-leaning media outlets like Fox News and *The Wall Street Journal*. For instance, The Center for American Progress, a leftwing think tank, occasionally goes after the mainstream media through its website, ThinkProgress.org, as in a report alleging a male bias in media coverage of the contraception debate of early 2012 (Shakir and Peck). This

kind of media criticism conducted at a higher profile—perhaps even face-to-face confrontations in the Gingrich style—would help create a sense of identification with moderate audiences that feel marginalized by the American political dialogue.

4. Brand the opponent as “radical” and “outside the mainstream” of

American society. This has been a common line of attack from the right dating back to the culture wars of the Civil Rights era. President Richard Nixon’s famous “Silent Majority” speech made expert use of this type of attack, characterizing opponents to the Vietnam War as a “vocal minority, however fervent its cause” whose political victory would create a result where “this Nation has no future as a free society.” More recently, the radical theme has been used to attack Barack Obama, as in 2008 when Palin described the then-presidential candidate as “not a man who sees America as you see it and how I see America. . . . [Obama is] someone who sees America it seems as being so imperfect that he’s palling around with terrorists who would target their own country” (qtd. in Phillips). In 2010 Gingrich asserted that Obama “is so far outside our comprehension that only if you understand Kenyan, anti-colonial behavior, can you begin to piece together [his actions]” (qtd. in Shear). Yet modern conservatism seems at least as susceptible to allegations of radicalism. Policy proposals that the right would frame as “entitlement reform” could be characterized instead as attempts to “destroy Medicare and Social Security.”

Conservative animosity toward Obama could be described as “a radical hatred of the American president.” The race for the Republican presidential nomination could be described from the left as a “contest to see who can say the nastiest things about gays, immigrants, and Muslims.” And conservative proposals to dramatically scale back the size of government to pre-New Deal proportions could be described as “destroying the system of governance that turned us into a middleclass country.”

The purpose behind each of these appropriations is to implicitly assert the same degree of nationalist privilege that is claimed by the opposing ideology. For exclusive nationalists to characterize government as inherently opposed to individual freedom requires the speaker to omit from consideration any number of government programs that receive strong support from conservative voters—Social Security, Medicare, censorship of vulgar language in broadcast television and radio, travel regulations imposed by the Federal Aviation Administration, regulations that either limit or add further burdens to women’s health procedures. The political left can create a zone of ambiguity by similarly privileging desired programs outside the scope of “government intrusion.”

The other three examples ask the rhetor to make similar assertions of nationalist privilege. The second example asks that liberal rhetors place NASA and the Pentagon as parallels to Thomas Edison and Henry Ford in the mythos of American innovation. The appropriation of attacks on the media creates a sense of identification and consubstantiality with members of the audience who feel that the media do not represent the views of typical Americans, and branding political opponents as radical explicitly

privileges the speaker's culture as representing the national culture. The key to each of these examples is that the rhetor must first identify the privilege being asserted by the political opponent, but rather than explicitly identify and refute that privilege, the speaker should simply assume and assert that privilege as his or her own. This assumption that one's own view represents the essential American view is characteristic of both the false consciousness that Gellner associates with all nationalist ideologies (113) and the myths, memories, and symbols that Smith argues must resonate throughout a national territory in order to foster national unity (44).

Conclusion: Not Entirely Local

As I discuss in chapter 1, prevailing research regarding American ideological divisions and rhetoric present some useful insights, but existing scholarship does little to identify why Americans select the ideologies with which they align themselves and even less to identify rhetorical strategies that could be effective at crossing those ideological divisions. The search for an answer to these conundrums must begin with the awareness that the least trustworthy answers will come from the ideologies themselves. As the analyses conducted by Murphy, Asen, and Hammerback demonstrated, we cannot trust political ideologies to accurately articulate themselves because they have self-interest in representing themselves in ways that advance their agendas. John F. Kennedy relied on his personal ethos to present his liberal agenda as both inclusive and rational, and liberalism lost that ethos after it lost Kennedy (Murphy). Goldwater's unification of the conservative coalition similarly relied on his personal ethos, a strategy that Reagan would

later adopt with great success (Hammerback). Simon's argument for a conservative counterintelligentsia relied on claims to both privilege and victimhood that cannot logically coexist (Asen), and Krugman's attempt to define liberalism in terms of the advancement of the middle class has hardly developed into a rallying cry for the liberal rank and file. So it turns out that the least reliable authorities for defining American political ideologies are the ideologues themselves.

Scholarship that has tried to provide an explanation for what leads people to identify as conservative, moderate, or liberal has provided only partial answers. Brock and colleagues set out to explain the policy principles behind each ideology, but they offer no explanation for why voters will frequently support the policies of one ideology while identifying themselves with the opposing ideology. Crowley's epistemological explanation tells us what separates religious fundamentalists from moderates and liberals, but she doesn't offer any explanation for why the religious right makes ready alliances with neoconservatives and fiscal conservatives. Lakoff and White both argue that the differences between conservatives and liberals are largely rooted in competing notions of the family ideal, but this singular focus on values tends to come at the cost of awareness of the importance of extremely powerful societal forces like class, gender, race, ethnicity, and religion.

As I argue in chapter 2, American political ideologies seem most capable of maintaining logical coherence if we conceive of them in terms defined by competing nationalisms. One nationalism, which Desmond Kings calls "assimilationist democracy," seeks to define a specific "traditional American" culture to which all others must

assimilate. The competing nationalism, which King calls “democratic nationalism,” tolerates small group identities within an overarching national identity (6). Like any nationalism, each of these nationalist ideologies relies on what Gellner calls a “pervasive false consciousness” (119), as each relies on invented, or imagined, cultural and communal connections that must be promoted rhetorically in order to perpetuate them. We can therefore characterize American politics as a contest with inclusive nationalism on the left end of the spectrum and exclusive nationalism on the right end, and in between are various degrees of inclusion and exclusion. The rhetoric that seeks to perpetuate each of these competing nationalisms is essentially the rhetoric of the corresponding political ideology.

Popular media that is not explicitly political is in fact extremely adept at negotiating the moderate position between the two ends of the ideological spectrum, as I demonstrate in chapter 3 with sportswriters’ reactions to comments about racial inclusion and exclusion made by conservative pundit Rush Limbaugh and former Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb. In a strictly political context, which I examine closely in chapter 4, the rhetorical success of Sarah Palin’s 2008 speech at the Republican National Convention and of Barack Obama’s speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention tells us a great deal about what makes members of each ideological base align themselves with that ideology. Those speakers’ appeal to their ideological bases had much more to do with their ability to appeal to the respective base’s sense of the national identity than with any assertions regarding policy preference. Conservatives responded positively to Palin’s speech because they identified with her image of

America, a nation characterized by small-town folk who had become marginalized by major American institutions and were being threatened by foreign ones. Similarly, liberals and moderates responded well to Obama's speech because of his ability to recast American exceptionalism in terms of American inclusivity. Popular reception to these speeches tells us that politicians who want to satisfy their political base can do so by promoting the base's image of America—an exclusive image for the right, an inclusive one for the left. If that image can be made to appeal to a large segment of moderates as well, then the speech can be regarded as a great American speech instead of a great conservative or liberal one.

As I've discussed in this final chapter, zones of ambiguity present opportunities for political rhetors to simultaneously satisfy their political base and appeal to moderates. The political right has made ample use of zones of ambiguity by appropriating traditionally liberal arguments regarding progress, practicality, freedom, and the American founding tradition. Opportunities are available for the political left to make similar use of traditionally conservative arguments, including arguments associated with the intrusion of government into the lives of free individuals, the promotion of innovation, bias in the news media, and the branding of political opponents as "radical" and "outside the mainstream." These are, of course, examples of only a few of the opportunities to take advantage of zones of ambiguity that are available to the political left. Other successful appropriations of conservative arguments would be similarly based on assertions of nationalist privilege that are congruent to the nationalist privileges asserted by the political right.

With a respectful tip of the hat to the late Speaker O'Neil, whose "all politics is local" refrain I mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation, American politics has transformed into something that is no longer a strictly local affair after the emergence of new mass communications technologies and a new American nationalism in the wake of the Civil Rights movement. Competing national perspectives carry a greater influence than ever in regard to how Americans select their political ideologies and cast their votes. The successful contemporary political rhetor must be aware of how competing images of the nation influence political allegiances and strategize rhetoric that paints a picture of the nation with which a majority of voting Americans can identify.

WORKS CITED

“24% are Both Fiscal and Social Conservatives, 9% Fiscally and Socially Liberal.”

RasmussenReports.com, Rasmussen Reports. Web. 24 Nov. 2007.

“69% of GOP Voters Say Palin Helped McCain.” *Rasmussen Reports*. 7 Nov. 2008.

Web. 6 Aug. 2011.

Abramowitz, Alan. “Diverging Coalitions: The Transformation of the American

Electorate.” *RasmussenReports.com*, Rasmussen Reports. Web. 9 April 2009.

Allen, Frederick E. “Should We Have an Ex-CEO as President? Romney Thinks So.”

Forbes.com. 2 July 2011. Web. 8 Jan. 2012.

Aldridge, David. “To Appreciate McNabb’s Comments, Examine ENTIRE Picture.”

Philadelphia Inquirer. 20 Sep. 2007. LexisNexis. 14 Nov. 2007.

Andersen, Kurt. “The Madman Theory.” *The New York Times*. 5 Aug. 2011. Web. 7

Aug. 2011.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of*

Nationalism, 2nd ed. London: Verso, 1991.

“Another Win for Marriage Equality.” *The New York Times*. 9 Feb. 2012. Web. 19

Feb. 2012.

Asen, Robert. “Ideology, Materiality, and Counterpublicity: William E. Simon and the

Rise of a Conservative Counterintelligentsia.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 95

(2009): 263-88.

Bachmann, Michele. “Remarks to the 2008 Republican National Convention.”

PresidentialRhetoric.com. 2 Sep. 2008. Web. 30 Jan. 2012.

- Balibar, Etienne. "The Nation Form: History and Ideology." *Race Critical Theories*. Ed. Philomena Essed and David Theo Goldberg. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005. 220-30.
- Bauman, Valerie. "House Race Seen as Referendum." *The Buffalo News*. 19 Oct. 2009. Web. 25 Jan. 2010.
- Beckett, Julia. "The 'Government Should Run Like a Business' Mantra." *The American Review of Public Administration* 30 (2000): 185-204.
- Bedard, Greg A. "Winning Super Bowl Would Help McNabb's Cause." *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. 20 Sep. 2007. LexisNexis. 14 Nov. 2007.
- . "McNabb's Views Fan Flames; Counterparts Don't All Agree." *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. 21 Sep. 2007. LexisNexis. 14 Nov. 2007.
- Bianco, Robert. "What Happened to Conventional Wisdom." *USA Today*. July 28 2004. Web. 8 Aug. 2011.
- Blake, Aaron. "Newt Gingrich's War on Republican Debate Moderators." *The Washington Post*. 10 Nov. 2011. Web. 20 Feb. 2012.
- Blodget, Henry. "Wait—Was Michele Bachmann Actually Right About the Founding Fathers Working to End Slavery?" *Business Insider*. 29 Jun. 2011. Web. 13 Feb. 2012.
- Boggs, Carl. *Gramsci's Marxism*. London: Pluto, 1976.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006.

Brock, Bernard L., Marke E. Huglen, James F. Klumpp, and Sharon Howell. *Making Sense of Political Ideology*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.

Burke, Kenneth. *A Grammar of Motives*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1969.

---. *A Rhetoric of Motives*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1969.

Bush, George W. "2002 State of the Union Address." *AmericanRhetoric.com*. 29 Jan. 2002. Web. 15 Jan. 2012.

Cain, Herman. "Turnaround Artist." *HermanCainPac.com*. 22 Sep 2011. Web. 8 Jan 2012.

Calderone, Michael. "Media Swoon of Palin's Fiery Speech." *Politico.com*. 4 Sep. 2008. Web. 5 Aug. 2011.

Chase, John, and Liam Ford. "Ryan File a Bombshell." *The Chicago Tribune*. 22 Jun. 2004. Web. 30 Jan 2012.

"CNN.com Election 2004." *CNN.com*. 3 Nov. 2004. Web. 7 Aug. 2011.

Crowley, Sharon. *Toward a Civil Discourse*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2006.

Czarnecki, John. "Countdown: Looking at Week 3." *FOXSports.com*. n.d. web. 1 Dec. 2007.

Dauber, Jeffrey. "A Star is Born." *The Christian Science Monitor*. 28 July 2004. Web. 6 August 2011.

"Desegregation of the Armed Forces." *TrumanLibrary.org*. Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, n.d. Web. 7 Sep 2011.

"Did the Founding Fathers *Really* Work 'Tirelessly' to End Slavery?" *The Week*. 30 Jun. 2011. Web. 13 Feb. 2012.

- Domowitch, Paul. (2007, September 19) "McNabb Picks Wrong Time to Play the Race Card." *Philadelphia Daily News*. 19 Sep. 2007. LexisNexis. 14 Nov. 2007.
- "Donovan McNabb." *NFLplayers.com*. The NFL Players Association. n.d. Web. 1 Dec. 2007.
- "Donovan McNabb Statistics." *Pro-Football-Reference.com*. n.d. Web. 1 Dec. 2007.
- Duncan, Jeff. "McNabb's Viewpoint has Merit." *Times Picayune*. 23 Sep. 2007. LexisNexus. Web. 2 Dec. 2007.
- Emery, Noemie. "The Palin Effect." *The Weekly Standard*. 29 Sep. 2008. Web. 6 Aug. 2011.
- "Episode 126." *Real Sports with Bryant Gumble*. HBO. Sep. 18 2007. Television.
- Essed, Philomena. "Everyday Racism: A New Approach to the Study of Racism." *Race Critical Theories*. Ed. Philomena Essed and David Theo Goldberg. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005. 176-94.
- Fisher, Walter R. *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action*. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1987.
- Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1983.
- Goldberg, David Theo. "Racial Americanization." *Racialization*. Ed. Karimn Murji and John Solomos. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. 87-102.
- Goldwater, Barry. *The Conscience of a Conservative*. Shepherdsville, KY: Victor P, 1960.
- Habermas, Jurgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge: MIT P, 1989.

- Hammerback, John C. "Barry Goldwater's Rhetorical Legacy." *The Southern Communication Journal* 64 (1999): 323-32.
- Hartmann, Douglass. "Rush Limbaugh, Donovan McNabb, and 'a Little Social Concern.'" *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 31.1 (2007): 45-60.
- Harvey, Buck. "A Couple of Wrecks: If They fail." *San Antonio Express-News*. 23 Sep. 2007. LexisNexis. 14 Nov. 2007.
- Harris, John. "Eagles' McNabb off the mark with comments." *Pittsburgh Tribune Review*. 23 Sep. 2007. LexisNexis. 14 Nov. 2007.
- Hayward, Stephen. "Nixon Reconsidered." *Ashbrook.org*. Ashbrook Center for Public Affairs at Ashland University, n.d. Web. 7 Aug 2011.
- Hoffman for Congress*. Dough Hoffman for Congress, n.d. Web. 25 Jan. 2011.
- "The House Republican Plan for American's Job Creators." *Gop.gov*, n.d. Web. 8 Jan 2012.
- Jarvis, Sharon E. *The Talk of the Party*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.
- Johnson, Lyndon Bains. "To Fulfill These Rights." Howard University, 4 June 1965. Commencement address.
- Kessler, Glenn. "Bachmann on Slavery and the National Debt." *The Washington Post*. 21 Jun. 2011. Web. 13 Feb. 2012.
- King, Desmond. *The Liberty of Strangers: Making the American Nation*. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005.
- King, Martin Luther, Jr. "Letter from Birmingham Jail." *MLKonline.net*. 16 Apr. 1963. Web. 2 Apr. 2012.

Kolawole, Emi. "The Republican Debate and the Role of Innovation."

TheWashingtonPost.com. 12 Oct. 2011. Web. 8 Jan. 2012.

Krugman, Paul. *The Conscience of a Liberal*. New York: Norton, 2007.

Laclau, Ernesto. *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Marxism, Populism*. London: New Left, 1977.

Lakoff, George. *Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green, 2004.

---. *Moral Politics: How Conservatives and Liberals Think*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002.

Lengell, Sean. "Perry: 'American exceptionalism' not dead." *The Washington Times*. 7 Oct. 2011. Web. 10 Feb. 2012.

Linker, Andrew. "NFL Success Doesn't Have a Color." *Patriot News*. 20 Sep. 2007. LexisNexis. 14 Nov. 2007.

Litke, Jim. "Pulling the Scab off an Old Wound at Wrong Time." The Associated Press. 19 Sep. 2007. LexisNexis. 14 Nov. 2007.

Loraux, Nicole. *The Invention of Athens: The Funeral Oration in the Classical City*. Cambridge: MIT P, 2006.

Lord, Jeffrey. "Levin: Stephanopoulos is Foolish in Lecturing Bachmann." *American Spectator*. 28 Jan. 2011. Web. 13 Feb. 2012.

MacGillis, Alec, and Perry Bacon Jr. "Republicans See Long-Term Victory in Defeat of Stimulus Plan." *The Washington Post*. 9 Feb. 2009. Web. 20 Feb. 2012.

- Mariotti, Jay. "Anatomy of a QB Furor; Whatever Bears Fans Want to Call Rex Grossman, it Probably Wouldn't Apply to Donovan McNabb, Who Might Want to Look into a Friendlier Environment." *Chicago Sun Times*. 20 Sep. 2007. LexisNexis. 14 Nov. 2007.
- Martin, Douglas. "William F. Buckley Jr. Is Dead at 82." *The New York Times*. 27 Feb. 2008. Web. 2 Feb. 2010.
- McCain, John. "John McCain's Acceptance Speech." *The New York Times*. 4 Sep. 2008. Web. 30 Jan 2012.
- McInerney, Jeremy. "The Age of Heroes." *Ancient Greek Civilization*. TTC, n.d. Digital audio.
- McKalip, David. "The 100 Years War: Collectivism vs. Individualism." *CampaignForLiberty.com*. 22 Apr 2010. Web. 15 Jan 2012.
- Memoli, Michael A. "Romney: We Conservatives Are Proud to 'Cling to Our Constitution.'" *Fox Nation*. 10 Feb. 2011. Web. 11 Feb. 2011.
- Michele Bachmann for President*. Bachmann for President. N.d. Web. 11 Feb. 2012.
- Mihoces, Gary. "Santa Snowball Incident Shrouded in Myth." *USA Today* 27 Nov. 2003. Lexis-Nexus. Web. 2 Dec. 2007.
- Miller, Zell. "2004 Republican National Convention Keynote Address." *AmericanRhetoric.com*. 1 Sep. 2004. Web. 2 Apr 2012.
- "Mondesire Stands by Criticism of McNabb." ESPN.com. 15 Dec. 2005. Web. 1 Dec. 2007.

- Mosk, Mathew. "McCain Gets \$7 Million Bounce from Palin Pick." *The Washington Post*. 30 Aug. 2008. Web. 5 Aug 2011.
- Murphy, John M. "The Language of the Liberal Consensus: John F. Kennedy, Technical Reason, and the 'New Economics' at Yale University." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2004): 133-62.
- Mushnick, Phil. "Race Against Time; McNabb's Remarks Seem out of Date." *The New York Post*. 23 Sep. 2007. LexisNexis. 14 Nov. 14, 2007.
- Nagourney, Adam, and Jeremy W. Peters. "G.O.P. Moderate, Pressed by Right, Abandons Race." *The New York Times*. 31 Oct. 2009. Web. 25 Jan. 2010.
- Nixon, Richard M. "The Great Silent Majority." *AmericanRhetoric.com*. 3 Nov. 1969. Web. 20 Feb. 2012.
- Obama, Barack. "2004 Democratic National Convention Keynote Address." *AmericanRhetoric.com*. 27 Jul. 2004. Web. 2 Apr. 2012.
- Omi, Michel, and Howard Winant. "Racial Formation." *Race Critical Theories*. Ed. Philomena Essed and David Theo Goldberg. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005. 123-45.
- O'Neil, Dana Pennet. "A Woman Sportswriter can Relate to McNabb." *Philadelphia Daily News*. 20 Sep. 2007. LexisNexis. 14 Nov. 2007.
- "Palin Power: Fresh Face Now More Popular Than Obama, McCain." *Rasmussen Reports*. 5 Sep. 2008. Web. 6 Aug. 2011.
- Palin, Sarah. "Republican Vice Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech." *AmericanRhetoric.com*. 3 Sep. 2008. Web. 2 Apr. 2012.

Pardon the Interruption. ESPN. 20 Sep. 2007. Television.

Paul, Ron. "Ron Paul Video Address Announcing 2008 Presidential Exploratory Committee." *Blog4President.us*. 19 Feb 2007. Web. 11 Jan 2012.

Pinker, Steve. "Block that Metaphor!" *The New Republic Online*. 2 Oct. 2006. Web. 24 Feb. 2009.

"The Phenom." *The Chicago Tribune*. 28 July 2004. Web. 6 Aug. 2011.

Phillips, Kate. "Palin: Obama is 'Palling Around With Terrorists.'" *The New York Times*. 4 Oct. 2008. Web. 20 Feb. 2012.

Profootballhof.com. The Pro Football Hall of Fame. n.d. Web. 2 Dec. 2007.

"Eisenhower Gives Famous 'Domino Theory' Speech." *History.com*. N.d. Web. 15 Jan. 2012.

"QB Disappointed Others Didn't Respond During Show." ESPN.com. 2 Oct. 2003. Web. 3 Dec. 3 2007.

Reagan, Ronald. "Remarks Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Dallas, Texas." Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. 23 Aug. 1984. Web. 10 Feb. 2012.

---. "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals." *AmericanRhetoric.com*. 8 Mar. 1983. Web. 15 Jan. 2012.

---. "Speech to the House of Commons." *TeachingAmericanHistory.org*. 8 June 1982. Web. 15 Jan. 2012.

RepublicanLeadershipNetwork.com. Republicans For Solutions. n.d. Web. 8 Jan. 2012.

- Rowland, Robert C., and John M. Jones. "Recasting the American Dream and American Politics: Barack Obama's Keynote Address to the 2004 Democratic National Convention." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* (93) 2007: 425-48.
- Rutenberg, Jim, and Jeff Zeleny. "Spirited Foreign Policy Debate Includes a Test of Gingrich's Rise." *The New York Times*. 22 Nov. 2011. Web. 15 Jan. 2012.
- Saad, Lydia. "'Conservatives' Are Single-Largest Ideological Group." Gallup, 15 June 2009. Web. 2 Feb. 2010.
- Shakir, Faiz, and Adam Peck. "Report: By a Nearly Two to One Margin, Cable Networks Call on Men Over Women to Comment on Birth Control." *ThinkProgress.org*. 10 Feb. 2012. Web. 20 Feb. 2012.
- Shear, Michael D. "Gingrich: President Exhibits 'Kenyan, Anticolonial Behavior.'" *The New York Times*. 13 Sep. 2010. Web. 20 Feb. 2012.
- Sheridan, Phil. "Whole lot of talk, little understanding." *Philadelphia Inquirer*. 20 Sep. 2007. LexisNexis. 14 Nov. 2007.
- Simon, William E. *A Time for Truth*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978.
- Smith, Anthony D. *The Antiquity of Nations*. Cambridge: Polity, 2004.
- St. Louis, B. "Racialization in the 'Zone of Ambiguity.'" *Racialization*. Ed. Karimn Murji and John Solomos. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. 29-50.
- "Stale Tragedy of Two Americas." *The Washington Times*. 30 July 2004. Web. 6 Aug. 2011.
- "Steve Wynn Schools Jennifer Granholm in How to Create Jobs." *RushLimbaugh.com*. 12 Oct. 2009. Web. 20 Feb. 2012.

- Stevenson, Richard W. ““Exceptionalism Argument May Prove Potent for Republicans.”” *The New York Times*. 18 Nov. 2011. Web. 10 Feb 2012.
- Taguieff, Pierre-Andre. “The New Cultural Racism in France.” *Racism*. Ed. Martin Bulmer and John Solomos. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999. 206-13.
- Terkel, Amanda, and Sam Stein. “Dick Cheney Part of Marriage Equality Lobbying Effort in Maryland: Report.” *The Huffington Post*. 17 Feb. 2011. Web. 19 Feb. 2011.
- Tracy, Paula. “Paul Stands Up for Property Rights.” *UnionLeader.com*. 12 Oct 2011. Web. 11 Jan 2012.
- United States. The Federal Elections Commission. “2008 Official Presidential General Election Results.” Washington: GPO, 2008. Web. 7 Aug. 2011.
- Vernon, Wes. “The Record of ‘Moderate’ Republicans.” *Newsmax.com*. 26 Jan. 2005. Web. 20 Dec. 2010.
- Wall Street Journal*. “Night of the Living Death Tax.” 31 Mar 2009. Web. 11 Jan 2012.
- Washington, George. “Farewell Address to the People of the United States.” *EarlyAmerica.com*. 26 Sep. 1796. Web. 5 Mar 2012.
- White, John Kenneth. *The Values Divide*. Washington, DC: CQ P, 2003.
- Wilbon, Michael. “McNabb Displays his Accuracy.” *The Washington Post*. 21 Sep. 2007. LexisNexis. 14 Nov. 2007.
- Wolf, Milton R. “Big Government Crushes American Standard of Living.” *The Washington Times*. 6 Apr. 2011. Web. 20 Feb. 2012.

“Zogby Poll: Republicans Hold Small Post-Convention Edge.” *Zogby.com*. 6 Sep. 2008.

Web. 6 Aug. 2011.