In Defense of the “Forgotten Man”: The Sustained Legacy of the Southern Strategy on the Post-Reagan Era Presidency

by

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family. I could not have reached my goals and dared to dream if my parents, Oscar and Marilyn Williams, did not fight for my education and nurture my love of learning. My parents stood up to everyone who said I was not smart and could not learn. They never allowed me to give into the “mean girls,” “queen bees,” playground bullies, or adults who did their best to isolate me as I worked as hard to achieve my goals. I am a lifelong learner because of my parents. My parents also helped me to turn a fresh new chapter in life after I was diagnosed with Lupus. Through the ups and down of my health challenges, my days are brighter than I could have ever imagined. I am grateful for the love and support of my sisters Leslie, Shelly, and Tracy, my nephew Jordan, and my nieces Sidney and Madison.

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“Ever since the birth of our nation, White America has had a schizophrenic personality on the question of race. She has been torn between two selves – a self in which she proudly professed the great principles of democracy and a self in which she sadly practices the antithesis of democracy. This tragic duality has produced a strange indecisiveness and ambivalence toward the Negro, causing America to take a step backward simultaneously with every step forward on the question of racial justice, to be attracted to the Negro and repelled by him, to love and to hate him. There has never been a solid, unified and determined thrust to make justice a reality for Afro-Americans. The step backward has a new name today. It is called ‘White backlash,’ But this White backlash is nothing new. It is the surfacing of old prejudices, hostilities and ambivalences that have always been there.”

Martin Luther King, “Where do We go from Here: Chaos or Community?” 1967

“The past is not dead. In fact, it’s not even past.”

William Faulkner, Requiem for a Nun, 1951

“As William Faulkner once wrote, ‘The past isn’t dead and buried. In fact, it isn’t even past.’ We do not need to recite here the history of racial injustice in this country. But we do need to remind ourselves that so many of the disparities that exist in the African-American community today can be directly traced to inequalities passed on from an earlier generation that suffered under the brutal legacy of slavery and Jim Crow.”

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ABSTRACT

Political and historical literature largely attributes the political development of the Southern Strategy to the 1964 Barry Goldwater and 1968 Richard Nixon presidential campaigns. The Southern Strategy is commonly explained as the Republican Party’s 1964 campaign decision to abandon Black voters in the North to expand its national political base of support by seeking White voters outside of the South who were angry with the political advancements of the Civil Rights Movement (Aistrup 1996, 5; Bass and DeVries 1976, 27). Discussions of Ronald Reagan’s role in the development of the Southern Strategy describe him more as a beneficiary rather than a significant influence in the Republican Party’s efforts to nationalize Southern racial politics (Aistrup 1996, 12; Black and Black 2002, 4). However, his speeches equated social spending with racial stigmas and pathological behavior. The fusion of economic issues and racial stereotypes has influenced future presidential politics since 1964 with Reagan’s “A Time for Choosing” speech (Reagan 1964). The racialized language used by Reagan in his speech has influenced the rhetorical frame of the Southern Strategy in the last six decades.

This qualitative study utilizes content analysis to examine the impact of racially coded language of Democratic and Republican presidents, from Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama, when they argue the legitimacy of the social safety net. The study seeks to expand the knowledge of the prevalence of the politics of pathology, which is defined as the belief that social spending encourages individuals to engage in immoral behavior and is used by presidents to mitigate or cultivate racial resentment.
PREFACE

The Grievance of the “Forgotten Man”: One Black, One White, But Never Equal

Introduction: Racial Resentment in America

This study examines the sustained legacy of the Southern Strategy and its influence on the use of racially coded rhetoric for Democratic and Republican presidents. More specifically, it addresses how presidents insert racial code words into their speeches to identify which Americans deserve to benefit from public spending that builds middle class wealth. At the center of this discussion is the “forgotten man,” a commonly used term to describe the American ideal of the man who works hard, plays by the rules, pays more than his fair share of taxes, and is still unable to get ahead. His hard work is not enough for him to provide his family with the comforts and economic stability of middle class life in America (Keller and Sumner 2011, 337).

The racialized language used to target the “forgotten man” reflects the deep racial divisions that have influenced American politics since the end of the Civil War. Our history and contemporary politics consistently demonstrate that the label of the “forgotten man” can only be designated to White men. This moniker is not only intended to convey the virtues of the working class White man, but also to describe the underlying resentment and, at times, the rage of White men and women who fundamentally believe African Americans and other people of color do not have a right to social and economic equality. Therefore, the grievances of non-White men are illegitimate and have no justification to seek redress within our government or social structures. As a result, the fight for the Black “forgotten man” continues well into the 21st century. This fight has been a multi-generational battle against laws and practices that have perpetuated systems of inequality between Blacks and Whites since the 17th century (Higginbotham
1978, 27-28). The unwillingness to consider or acknowledge the plight of the forgotten Black man continues to impact our national and presidential politics. The division becomes evident when Blacks use their First Amendment right of free speech to challenge racial injustice, such as police brutality. The controversy surrounding the Black players in the National Football League (NFL) who choose to take a knee instead of standing for the Star Spangled Banner has revealed the strength and pervasiveness of White resentment.

In 2016, Colin Kaepernick, an NFL athlete, decided not to stand for the national anthem before the start of each game to protest the lack of legal accountability for police officers who killed unarmed Black men and women. The concern for Kaepernick and other NFL players has been that many victims of police violence were never given their right to due process under the law. The purpose of the protests was to bring attention to the injustice of the criminal justice system that allows police to behave as judge, jury, and executioner without the sanction of a legal process. Victims were killed by police actions for petty offenses and racial profiling. The police often justified the killing of unarmed Black people by saying they, armed police officers, feared for their lives. Some examples of extrajudicial killings by police officers include the following: illegal sales of music compact discs (CDs) on a public sidewalk; the illegal sale of individual cigarettes; driving with a broken tail light; playing alone in a park with a toy gun (a 12 year old boy); sitting in a car while waiting to pick up their child from school; running away from a police officer; and being shot while holding empty hands in the air to surrender to the police (Lowery 2016, 203; Newkirk 2017; Zirin 2017).

Eric Reid, a fellow African American NFL player who kneels during the national anthem, wrote in a New York Times op-ed:

I approached Colin the Saturday before our next game to discuss how I could get involved with the cause, but also how we could make a more powerful and positive impact on the social justice movement. We spoke at length about the many issues that face our community, including the systematic oppression of people of color, police brutality and the criminal justice system. We also discussed how we could use our platform, provided to us by being professional athletes in the NFL, to speak for those who are voiceless (Reid 2017).
Such demonstrations show Reid and his colleagues are part of an increasingly racially diverse electorate that refuses to allow efforts to perpetuate White supremacy in America to go unchallenged.

In spite of the broad publicity of police officers killing Blacks and the controversy regarding lack of accountability, opponents of the protest focus their debate solely on the belief that taking a knee is disrespectful to the American flag and military. The victims who died at the hands of police are ignored and marginalized. Yet, the police are provided the right to defend their right to kill without due process. Because of these factors, it seems clear White opposition to the protests are influenced by racial resentment. Many NFL fans focus on the notion that because Black athletes have multi-million dollar contracts, they have lost their right to criticize. The players counter this argument by stating they live in a world where their lives are shaped by White backlash. Though they have multi-million dollar contracts, championships, and celebrity status, they are not immune to police brutality. Nor are they treated as Americans with rights equal to Whites. Their status on the football field does not erase the experiences they have with the police when off the football field. Their celebrity status and wealth do not protect them from police brutality. The athletes are aware their lives may be extinguished without cause or any promise justice will be served (Reid 2017; Williams 2017).

The White resentment and anger that erupted during the NFL protests are not new. Nor were they new phenomena when Whites left the Democratic Party during the three decades between the Lyndon Johnson and Bill Clinton Administrations. The shift resulted from White backlash to the civil rights gains of African Americans after 1965. Clearly, it is a byproduct of a country whose fundamental documents state this nation stands for equal rights for all. Yet, the actions of the government often have contradicted the words of the documents that established the legitimacy of the country. The Declaration of Independence states the following: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by the creator with certain with unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

The same government that embraces the words in the Declaration of Independence and its call for freedom has also embraced an ideology that supports the right to believe racial inequality and White
supremacy constitute a legitimate political ideology. Supreme Court Justice Roger Taney articulated the right to embrace White supremacy in the *Dred Scott vs. Sanford* (1857) decision when he declared regarding Black people “that the US Constitution did not grant any rights that the White man is bound to respect” (Scott 1857; Simon 2006, 115). Taney’s decision is considered an anathema to the values of freedom expressed in the nation’s founding documents. While it is considered one of the most notorious decisions in the history of the Supreme Court, the assertion that Whites have a right to deny African Americans constitutional rights has been shared by many White Americans since then. The negative reaction of Whites to the protests of NFL athletes demonstrates how Taney’s beliefs have not faded with the passage of time, and the progress made to extend equal rights since the end of slavery is still in jeopardy. The backlash also shows that the deference our nation gives to the “forgotten man” does not include Black and other non-White Americans. The controversy illuminates the fact that when non-Whites make the claim that they too are “forgotten,” they are essentially told to “shut up.” They are expected to accept the violence, abuse, and inequality without complaint.

**Double Standards for First Amendment Rights**

What if the protests did not remind the police and the public that Black lives matter? Suppose Colin Kaepernick and other NFL players had taken a knee to protest that the government supported multinational trade agreements that led to the loss of millions of jobs for Whites and Blacks in America when those jobs were sent to developing nations abroad. Would these same Americans call the athletes disrespectful and un-American? If the players took a knee to protest the fact that our soldiers are often subjected to five or six deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan only to return to the United States with severe mental health problems that often lead to suicide, would these same Americans be angry? If that was the case, would these same people embrace the words of the President of the United States when he calls for the NFL owners to “get that son of a bitch off the field right now,” because he took a knee (Newkirk 2017)? Is it fair to question whether these same Americans are angry because their unconscious racism masks their motivation to demand respect for the American flag?
Although the Star Spangled Banner speaks of “the land of the free and the home of the brave,” many Americans still believe in White supremacy even when the social norms of the nation prevent them from openly articulating this belief. Further, these same Americans believe that since America has ended Jim Crow, extended voting rights, and twice elected an African American to the presidency, Blacks are no longer entitled to challenge the institutional barriers that remain in place. Perhaps the overarching question is: “Do they accept the idea that racism exists and racial equality is a human right?”

In 2016, the Washington Post analyzed public opinion polls from the 1960s and found civil rights protests viewed favorably today had high disapproval rates by the majority of White Americans at that time. These voters strongly opposed the March on Washington, the Freedom Riders, and mass demonstrations; they did not think these demonstrations were helpful to furthering the cause of freedom for Black Americans. The majority of Whites believed the civil right protests were disrespectful while the protesters were impolite and engaged in bad behavior (Izadi 2016).

The current racial divide in Americans’ views regarding the NFL protests is similar to the 1960s polls. A 2016 poll conducted by Reuters found that 70% of White respondents considered Colin Kaepernick’s protests to be unpatriotic. However, the disapproval rate dropped to 40% among racial minorities (Tennery 2016). A 2017 poll conducted by CNN found that 49% of Americans disagree with the protests. Yet, when the poll breaks down the respondents by race, 59% of Whites believed the players were wrong to protest while 82% of Blacks believe the players were correct (Agiesta 2017). Even though 50 years separate the civil rights protests from the NFL protests, White opponents in both eras considered the political protests of African Americans to be disrespectful.

The opinion polls show that whether the discussion pertains to the civil rights struggles of the 1960s or the anti-police brutality protests of today, racial resentment is a persistent, significant component of American presidential politics. First, the negative reaction to the protests in both eras demonstrates the majority of Whites generally do not support civil rights protests. Second, there is a lack of empathy for, or a belief in, the legitimacy of the issues at the center of the protest. That Black Americans do not have the right to question, let alone challenge, the authority of the government seems fundamental to the beliefs
of many White Americans. Further, those against the protests focus on contrasting the moral superiority of their values and interests with the alleged immoral behavior of the protesters. Ultimately, this focus places the interests of the White voters as morally superior and, therefore, the priority of the American government. This explanation is essential to understanding the political strength and longevity of the Southern Strategy and policy advocacy because many Whites are consistently unsupportive of Black protests.

**An Alternative View of the Southern Strategy**

This study contributes to the literature on the Southern Strategy and demonstrates that it is much broader than an electoral strategy. I argue that presidents have been aware of their ability to incite racial resentment and have used it to assure White voters that they will support their “morally superior” values. This research examines the confluence of White resentment and the impact of racialized language in presidential speeches, especially as it pertains to social welfare programs. Political and historical literature largely attributes the political development of the Southern Strategy to the 1964 Barry Goldwater and 1968 Richard Nixon presidential campaigns (Aistrup 1996, 12; Black and Black 2002, 4). The Southern Strategy is commonly explained as the Republican Party’s 1964 campaign decision to abandon voters in the North to expand their national political base of support by seeking White voters in the Southern, Western, and Mid-Western states who were angry with the political advancements of the Civil Rights Movement (Aistrup 1996, 5; Bass and DeVries 1976, 27).

Discussions of Ronald Reagan’s role in the development of the Southern Strategy typically describe him more as a beneficiary than a significant influence in the Republican Party’s efforts to nationalize Southern racial politics. As the rhetorical leader of Movement Conservatism, Reagan was central to convincing White voters in the Democratic and Republican parties to reject government investments in the social safety net. Reagan’s speeches equated social spending with racial stigmas and pathological behavior. His influence on Presidential politics began when he delivered his “A Time for Choosing” speech in 1964 on behalf of the Goldwater campaign. The racialized language Reagan used in
This speech has continued to influence the rhetorical frame of the Southern Strategy for the past six decades.

This qualitative study utilizes content analysis to investigate how Reagan’s use of coded language has advanced the politics of pathology and shaped the manner in which Democratic and Republican presidents argue and justify their positions related to the spending and program development for the social safety net. Also, it seeks to expand the knowledge of the prevalence of the politics of pathology, which is defined as the belief that social spending encourages individuals to engage in immoral behavior. The study proposes that coded languages in presidential speeches is used as a tool to mitigate or cultivate racial resentment and political extremism when explaining policy and spending priorities related to poverty and social inequalities.

The Southern Strategy has served as a significant influence in presidential rhetoric related to the social safety net from Ronald Reagan through the Barack Obama administrations. The post Reagan era presidents, regardless of party affiliation, framed their statements to explain their position on government social spending with racially stigmatizing language. They have used racial code words for government spending on anti-poverty programs to imply that African Americans and other racial minorities who use these programs engage in pathological behavior. Inclusion of racial code words in their remarks serves to cultivate White resentment for Republican conservative voters and provide comfort to moderate or independent White voters who Democratic presidents by criticizing Black Americans for socially unacceptable personal behavior and further to advocate for policies that maintain legal and economic restrictions on Black communities.

**Research Hypotheses for this Study:**

The hypotheses for this research are as follows:

**Hypothesis 1:** There is a relationship between a president’s political party and the use of racial code words. Democratic presidents are less likely than Republican president to use racial code words.
Null Hypothesis 1: There is not a relationship between a president’s political party and the use of racial code words.

Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between the president’s race and the use of racial code words.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no relationship between the president’s race and the use of racial code words.

**Study Importance: The Persistence of the Culture Versus Structure Debate**

This study examines the persistence of the culture versus structure debate that occurs when presidents discuss poverty and race. The contemporary political extremism that impacts debates about social policies are directly related to two distinct frames in which American voters view the causations of poverty and social problems. Anthropologist Susan Greenbaum describes the two frames as culture versus structure. The cultural frame explains the problems related to poverty as directly related to the individual habits and values that low-income people adopt to guide their personal decisions. Conversely, the structural frame is defined by labor market conditions as well as economic and social policies that directly impact access to services and opportunities for a middle class life (Greenbaum 2015, 160). Reagan inserted these competing views into the Southern Strategy. This political dichotomy has contributed significantly to the inability of policy makers to address structural barriers.

The culture versus structure dichotomy frames my research by demonstrating two characteristics of racially coded language. First, the use of racially coded language is a consistent component of political and presidential rhetoric. Second, the racially stigmatizing code words have changed over time because most people are generally uncomfortable labeling racial language or sentiments as racist. Therefore, coded phrases and terms were developed to describe racially conservative values and political affiliations without using overtly racist or racial terms. For example, Robert Jones (2016) argues an outgrowth of the Southern Strategy is the “politics of nostalgia.” This label was developed by Christian conservatives to return to a traditional past that placed White Christian values as a guidepost for society. Under the
guidance of the Christian Right, conservatives developed a language that articulates that White Christian morals, and not White supremacist values, embody “true” American values. The “politics of nostalgia” were visible in Trump’s 2016 call to “Make America Great Again.” Jones stated White Christian conservatives embraced Trump’s brand of nostalgia politics in hopes of restoring America to the 1950s, when White Christian conservative values dominated and controlled American society and culture (Jones 2016, 65, 70-74, 189).

Conversely, journalists, political analysts, and political scientists are increasing their use of non-specific terms such as “nativism.” Often, this term was used to describe Trump’s policies and rhetoric (Dionne, Ornstein, and Mann 2017, 15; Frank 2016, 221; Sykes 2017, 16). If the rhetoric Trump used on the campaign was designed to appeal to nativism, this term can be interpreted as another term for anti-immigrant sentiments and policies. However, since the ethnic groups addressed in his speeches are people of color, i.e. Muslims from African, Middle Eastern, and central Asian countries, Mexicans, and Haitians, then the term also can be interpreted as a descriptive word for racial bigotry. Even though Trump’s campaign slogan, “Make America Great Again,” was ambiguous on the surface, it was embraced by those vocalizing “ethno-nationalism” anger during the Obama presidency and who supported Trump’s candidacy to reestablish White power as the governing racial order of America.

Moreover, it is important to understand how the use of racial frames and terminology change over time. The successful manipulation of the culture versus structure frame demonstrates how the Southern Strategy has consequences beyond the electoral process. This comparison provides the opportunity to expand explanations related to the roots of political extremism. Also, it examines limitations imposed on the presidency to govern when attempting to expand the social safety net or debate the idea of establishing more equitable social policies for citizens of all races. Arguably, presidents use a culture frame that focuses on individual responsibility; they are sensitive to the reliability of conservative backlash to policies that expand social programs and spending regardless that poverty and economic hardship impact diverse segments of the population (Dionne 2012, 90; Dionne 2016, 8; Kabeservice 2011, 395-396). Yet, the stigmatization of the culture frame encourages voters to remain opposed to anti-
poverty programs, even when they need the benefits for their families. Research suggests the personal experiences of those impacted by the economic downturn did not create a significant shift in support for government programs that would create economic opportunity and support the needs of low income individuals (Sherman 2013, 411). Therefore, it appears the successful use of the racial stigmatizing language of the Southern Strategy is a significant motivation for intentional political extremism that influences presidential politics and policy making.

The opposition to policy changes by conservative White voters, who have been harmed by policies that reduce pathways to the middle class, explains how the Southern Strategy expands beyond electoral politics by forming the foundation for the perpetual use of racially stigmatizing language. Culture continues to provide legitimacy for opposition to economic development benefiting racial minorities. This frame causes the focus of debate to be less about the politics of individual self-interest, and more about efforts to “reset” the definition of American democracy to ensure that the interests of White Americans come before the needs of non-White Americans. In other words, the backlash is viewed in political history as conservative efforts to re-establish the frame for governing with the philosophy that American exceptionalism justifies the continuation of systemic racism in all American institutions.

Feagin and Rucker explain Reaganism was sustained long after Reagan’s tenure. Mainly, this continuation was due to the success his administration experienced by inserting the values of American exceptionalism through racial code words. Consequently, conservative White voters were left with expectations that their government would maintain the racial order of White superiority. For example, the call for “rugged individualism” places the reasons for an individual’s successes or failures as the responsibility of individual effort. This term replaces overtly racist code words that are no longer publicly accepted. This explanation does not acknowledge that American exceptionalism was developed as a political ideology to justify the social and economic systems of stratified racism. The inequalities Blacks have faced for generations are not discussed (Feagin 2012, 123-125; Rucker 2013, 148-151). Instead, there is an assumption that African Americans are not on equal economic footing because they
choose not to pull themselves up by their individual efforts in ways comparable to Whites (Rucker 2013, 147).

If the Southern Strategy is seen as an extension of American exceptionalism, then it can be examined as a sustained expression of the political interests of White Americans who see the maintenance of the status quo as an inherent benefit to Whites. This research adds to the body of literature by examining how presidents, regardless of party affiliation, are aware the content of their discourse is developed and evaluated by their ability to ensure they are willing to maintain the status quo of the White American social structure. Therefore, limitations restrict discussions of the social safety net due to the expectation of American voters. Those who value American exceptionalism are conservative and intend to protect the social and economic interests of White Americans and those viewed as earning their way in American society. This reasoning allows the plight of the conservative “forgotten man” to fuel the continuation of the Southern Strategy in post-Reagan era American presidency.

Dissertation Outline

This study is organized to explain why studies about the existence and influence of the Southern strategy are incomplete if the explanation does not include Ronald Reagan’s role in cultivating the political environment that had allowed Richard Nixon to be successful in his 1968 and 1972 campaigns. Also, the Southern Strategy did not end in 1992 with Bill Clinton’s election to the presidency. The chapters discuss how the politics of resentment that form the basis of the Southern Strategy have evolved from the end of the Civil War through the election of Donald Trump. Chapter One describes why the classic definition of the Southern Strategy should be reconsidered. The history of Movement Conservatism and Ronald Reagan’s speech, “A Time for Choosing,” are discussed to explain how the Southern Strategy is much broader than an electoral strategy. Rather, it is part of a long term political evolution of the political values of White voters from holding favorable views on the social safety net for the poor and public spending programs to build the middle class in the New Deal era to unfavorable views beginning after the passage of the civil and voting rights laws in the 1960s. The chapter shows how racial
coding and stigmatizing have evolved as a strategy to shape public opinion against domestic spending programs.

Chapter Two discusses the history of White backlash from the post-Civil War years through the Reagan Administration. Throughout history, politicians have manipulated civil rights history to distort the impact of racial discrimination, which has perpetuated social and economic inequality for Blacks for generations. This chapter also examines historical patterns to show how the impact of the passage of civil rights laws, as well as the occurrence of economic and social progress by African Americans, have caused eruptions of racial resentment and violence from White citizens. Additionally, the discussion provides a historical account of how the actions of civil rights activists and racial conservatives influenced the political behavior of United States presidents.

Chapter Three is a review of the literature on the development of the Southern Strategy from its foundation in the New Deal era through the Obama era. This chapter is developed in two parts. First, the chapter discusses the development of the conservative coalition of southern Democrats and Republican conservatives who encouraged Whites to vote Republican by making White supremacy a politically acceptable political ideology. Additionally, the chapter demonstrates this conversion began during the New Deal era, two decades before President Johnson passed the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Finally, the chapter discusses how presidents in the Republican and Democratic Parties managed racial politics and policies from 1968 through Donald Trump’s first year in office. The Republican Party discussion includes Presidents Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, George W. Bush, and Donald Trump. The Democratic Party discussion includes Presidents Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama.

Chapter Four is the methodology chapter and discusses the use of content analysis as the research method to measure the patterns and presence of racially stigmatizing rhetoric in presidential speeches from Presidents Reagan through Obama. This analysis demonstrates how Reagan’s pattern of racially stigmatizing rhetoric influenced post-Reagan era presidential speeches on the social safety net. Content analysis provides a method to examine the presence of what Desmond and King have defined as “the
Reagan Effect,” a term describing the occurrence of Reagan’s racially based frame that appealed to the plight of “the forgotten man,” and evoked racial resentment of White voters on civil rights and social spending policies (King and Smith 2011, 134-137). The examination of presidential speeches through content analysis will provide a basis for determining if the Southern Strategy continues to influence presidential rhetoric. Reagan’s racialized rhetorical frame of the politics of pathology continues to appeal to voters in the post-Reagan era. And, is there evidence that non-White presidents, specifically the first African American President, Barack Obama, will use racially stigmatizing frames in ways similar to White presidents.

Chapter Five concludes the study and discusses the findings related to the “Reagan Effect.” Also, it reviews the results of the content analysis of presidential speeches and demonstrates the impact racially stigmatizing language has on social spending. Further, it considers how the impact of the racialized policies implemented in the years following the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 imposed significant impediments to the citizenship of African Americans. Finally, in spite of the fact that the United States has become a more diverse and multicultural nation, race remains an overarching issue that seriously impacts our nation from making sustainable progress on the issues of poverty and social welfare.

As we begin Chapter One, Barack Obama asks Americans in his “A More Perfect Union” speech to consider how the persistence of racial divisions impacts our ability as a nation to resolve the problems of inequality and human decency. He states:

But race is an issue that I believe this nation cannot afford to ignore right now. We would be making the same mistake that Reverend Wright made in his offending sermons about America - to simplify and stereotype and amplify the negative to the point that it distorts reality. The fact is that the comments that have been made and the issues that have surfaced over the last few weeks reflect the complexities of race in this country that we've never really worked through - a part of our union that we have yet to perfect. And if we walk away now, if we simply retreat into our respective corners, we will never be able to come together and solve challenges like health care, or education, or the need to find good jobs for every American (Obama 2008).
Chapter One:

The Limitations of the Classic Definition of the Southern Strategy

Introduction

This chapter discusses why the time frame of the classic definition of the Southern Strategy should be reconsidered. The current explanation does not include Ronald Reagan’s influence in the development of the Southern Strategy in the years before Richard Nixon launched his 1968 and 1972 presidential campaigns. Nor does the classic definition explain how the Southern Strategy has endured well past Bill Clinton’s 1992 election to the presidency. The conventional time frame mischaracterizes Nixon as the first Republican leader to integrate and nationalize racially coded language into the political discourse. Additionally, the classic time frame also fails to account for how the Southern Strategy has influenced the American presidency into the 21st century. A review of Reagan’s history as the rhetorical leadership of Movement Conservatism is included. This review also consists of an analysis of his role in transforming the political interests of the Black “forgotten man” established by President Franklin Roosevelt. As a citizen, Reagan supported the broad government spending policies of Roosevelt that led to increasing the White middle class, but later transformed into one who vigorously supported the elimination of government spending. The forgotten man of the Reagan era associated government spending with excess and unfair policies that benefited Blacks and other minorities at the expense of White working class males.

The Sustained Impact of the Southern Strategy

Even after Barack Obama’s two successful presidential elections, it is clear that America has not made permanent racial progress. Anyone who believed America had entered a post-racial era miscalculated the depth and political power racism has in shaping American presidential politics. Racism
fueled his successor’s (Donald Trump) ascension to the White House. The racial tropes he used to justify his intentions to exclude Mexicans and Muslims from the United States did not discourage White voters. Trump won nearly 63 million votes, or 46.1 percent of the electorate, even though his statements had strong overtones associated with White supremacy (Roper 2017). His call to “Make America Great Again” clearly repudiated President Obama’s administration and policies that supported multiculturalism and the liberalization of social norms. Although most presidential candidates traditionally have campaigned for a brighter future, Trump’s mantra to “make America great again” was accompanied by assertions that Mexican immigrants were murderers and rapists, and Muslims should be banned from entering the country (Trump 2015). The overtly racist response to Trump’s campaign matched the racial animosity and tone of the opposition Obama faced during his administration. While many Americans supported the goal of having a non-White as commander in chief, a vocal minority never accepted Obama as a legitimate president. During Obama’s entire presidency, most White Christian conservatives also refused to accept him as a legitimate Christian. Many stood by the “birtherism” mythology that he was not an American citizen and secretly embraced the Muslim faith (Jones 2016, 64).

Donald Trump’s election was the product of White backlash. Ta-Nehisi Coates noted that journalists often argue Trump does not have a political ideology, and his political beliefs do not fit within the traditional ideological structures of the Democratic or Republican parties. Instead, Coates described Trump’s ideology as clearly White supremacy. Trump’s rhetoric intentionally appealed to White voters by targeting Muslims and Latino immigrants and making insinuating statements that they commit violent crimes against Americans. His assertion that Mexicans are rapists is reminiscent of claims made by White supremacists that Black men are dangerous because of their alleged proclivity to rape White women. The racial sentiments Trump espoused in campaign rallies were consistent with the racial sentiments he expressed in the years before he campaigned for the presidency.

Coates discussed Trump’s past, including well-known racially based controversies, such as his refusal to rent apartments to Blacks in Trump-owned buildings or employ Blacks in his businesses. His most egregious racial appeals came from his public accusations that Black and Latino teenagers, also
known as the Central Park Five, had committed a brutal gang rape, in spite of lacking proof. More specifically, Trump took out a full page ad in the New York Times calling for the death penalty for five teenage boys who would later be fully exonerated by DNA evidence in 2002. Regardless, he continued to claim these men were guilty during the 2016 campaign, 14 years after they were exonerated, and two years after New York City settled their case for $41 million (Burns 2016; Sarlin 2016). Most notoriously, he accused Barack Obama of fabricating his birth certificate to mislead the American people about his eligibility to serve as the President of the United States. Trump later admitted that Obama is a U.S. citizen (Coates 2017, 313-315).

Trump’s past racial controversies did little, if anything, to deter Whites from supporting his candidacy. The electoral support Trump received in 2016 demonstrates that racial conservatism has strong support among White voters across the economic spectrum. Whites with a college degree voted for Trump over Clinton, 49 percent to 45 percent (Tyson and Maniam, 2016). The prevailing view is that the White working class supported and elected Trump because he appealed to discontented voters who were victims of deindustrialization and an increasing mechanized workforce. The political analysts have concluded his victory directly resulted from his ability to encourage large numbers of working class White workers from rural and economically depressed areas to support his campaign (Cohn 2016; Lemiere 2017; Coates 2017, 318). They also concluded Trump voters believed he empathized with the plight of White blue collar workers who were left behind by the global economy and political elites of the Washington establishment (Dionne, Ornstein, and Mann 2017, 26).

Yet, post-election research suggests White working class and low income voters were one part of a broader coalition of White voters. In fact, the Trump coalition was composed of a broad range of demographics. In particular, 20 percent of voters without a college degree lived in households with incomes over $100,000. Research also found Trump voters were often college educated and lived in affluent, suburban areas. Additionally, White married women supported Trump at higher rates than Hillary Clinton. These factors suggest Trump’s platforms and rhetoric also appealed as strongly to White
voters living comfortably in cities and states where the economy was strong as those voters struggling in economically depressed areas (Carnes and Lupu 2017; Coates 2017, 318; Henley 2016; Sasson 2016).

Trump’s electoral success could have been predicted by examining the historical patterns of White resentment and rage that occur in periods after Black Americans achieve political and economic success. Trump’s supporters expressed their resentment and rage at the ballot box. The changing racial demographics and liberalization of social and economic policies seemingly challenged and posed a threat to the assumption that conservative White middle class values would no longer be considered the norm. Robert Jones, a scholar of Christian conservatism, argues the “Make America Great Again” slogan was a call to those voters, signaling that the 2016 election was the “last chance” to fight and return to the cultural and economic norms of White Christian America (Jones 2016). Trump’s election demonstrated that when Black Americans make significant progress to end discrimination, White resentment becomes more visible. A thorough understanding of how racial backlash operates in American presidential politics would suggest the election of Barack Obama served as the impetus for a candidate such as Trump to take advantage of White resentment and racism present in American society. The United States made significant progress with the Obama presidency. Yet, it is clear that racial political conservatism and White resentment are major components of American presidential politics. A clear knowledge of the role and influence of Movement Conservatism in the second half of the 20th century is central to understanding how White resentment has influenced presidential politics and rhetoric.

**The Influence of Movement Conservatism**

The increased influence of Movement Conservative activists in the Republican Party coincided with the passage of the 1964 and 1965 Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights Act, and the Great Society programs developed under Lyndon Johnson’s administration. Reagan was the rhetorical leader of Movement Conservatism. The movement is known for its ideology, based on socially conservative values, that espouses a strict interpretation of the Constitution, reinstatement of State’s Rights, decentralized federal government, and opposition to policies that focus on the redistribution of wealth.
Knowledge of the influence of Movement Conservatives is critical to understanding how the opposition to the Civil Rights movement spread across the nation in the mid-1960s. Historically, Movement Conservatives were against the New Deal and any distribution of tax dollars directed to African American communities. As the Civil Rights Movement developed in the Southern states, Movement Conservative Republicans from the North and Midwest found common ground with White Southern Democrats in their opposition to desegregation and thus formed the modern Republican Party base (Cox Richardson 2014, 244, 264). These activists fundamentally transformed the Republican Party from a centrist party that believed in compromise to a predominantly right-wing party that forbids compromise.

Therefore, the social changes that fueled the growth of the Modern Conservative movement in the 1964 election are more significant than the 1968 election cycle. The 1964 Goldwater campaign firmly established the Republican Party as the anti-civil rights party (Lowndes 2008, 110). Designating the 1964 campaign as the start of the Southern Strategy changes the focus from Nixon’s 1968 electoral success as a reliable starting point for studying this subject. Kevin Phillips (2014) is the political strategist credited with implementing the Southern Strategy for the Nixon campaign and author of *The Emerging Republican Majority*. He explains how the party’s gains in the South and the West in 1964 were part of a broader, gradual political revolution that impacted the Republican and Democratic parties with the breakdown of the Democratic Party’s New Deal Coalition (Phillips 2014, 31).

In fact, the Republican Party’s anti-civil rights ideology developed concurrently with the changing views of low-income Whites who adopted anti-government views in reaction to the desegregation policies enacted by the Federal government and Supreme Court. These voters previously accepted and benefited from economic development programs. Whites came to associate programs for low-income populations with social engineering that unfairly and unnecessarily benefited Blacks at the expense of Whites. As a result, their support for Republican conservatism began to solidify across the South (Phillips 2014, 173-174). Notably, Goldwater’s 1964 political messaging in the South combined anti-civil rights ideology with anti-collectivist rhetoric, portraying welfare as an attack on individual
freedoms (Aistrup 1996, 31; Goldwater 2013, 21). This study will show that speeches presidents make to discuss the government’s response to poverty reflect an understanding that voters are strongly opposed to social spending. Presidents use speeches to convey that they are sympathetic to the political preferences of White voters. In other words, the economic interests of White voters are prioritized over the same interests of non-White voters. Therefore, the classic definition limits an accurate understanding of how White backlash and resentment remains as a central component of the Southern Strategy, how it has shaped presidential rhetoric, and how this perspective on social policy has existed well beyond the period between the 1968 to 1992 time frame.

Central Theme: The Classic Definition of the Southern Strategy

This expansion of the timeline related to the development of the Southern Strategy is a departure from the classic definition used by political scientists and historians. The Southern Strategy has impacted presidential politics well beyond the traditional time frame of 1968 and 1992. The racially coded language associated with this phenomenon appears in presidential speeches from Ronald Reagan through Barack Obama. In particular, it is used to describe their support for or against social welfare programs, such as food assistance, public housing, and urban policy. Also, it employs the language of the Southern Strategy by stating their defense of the “forgotten man.” Therefore, contemporary scholarship is needed to expand the classic narrative of the Southern Strategy and to show how presidents from both major parties have similar rhetorical patterns when they discuss policies to manage and mitigate poverty.

Scholars of Southern politics often attribute the origins of the Southern Strategy to the Republican Party’s 1964 campaign decision to abandon efforts in the North to gain Black voters and to “go hunting where the ducks are” by seeking White voters in the South, West, and Mid-Western states (Aistrup 1996, 5; Bass and DeVries 1976, 27). The classic definition states that in 1968, the Republicans nationalized a conservative agenda to appeal specifically to Whites who opposed desegregation and voting rights. They used racially coded messages that appealed to White supremacy ideology and the anxieties of White
voters who did not approve of the changing social order brought by the Civil Rights Movement (Bass and DeVries 1976, 27 – 32; Lowndes 2008, 93). This framework allows scholars to credit the successful use of the Southern Strategy to the Republican Party’s electoral dominance in the South by converting Democratic voters to the Republican Party. In the decades ahead, the Republican Party would continue its success as it implemented a conservative national agenda that also mirrored Southern segregationist racial policies.

The classic narrative overemphasizes the start of the Southern Strategy as beginning with Richard Nixon because of his successful 1968 and 1972 presidential campaigns. However, Ronald Reagan made several national speeches prior to 1968 and his election as president in 1980 that were instrumental in cultivating the racial resentments of Whites, both within and beyond Southern states. For example, his speeches included passages that equated social spending for welfare, public housing, and the use of busing to integrate public schools, as failed policies and racially misguided attempts to achieve social equality (Reagan 2011, 168-171). The social issues he addressed reflected deep racial divisions surfacing across the nation at the time. Reagan’s national appeal supports historians Matthew Lassiter’s and Joseph Crespino’s view that the classic narratives of the Civil Rights Movement and the Southern Strategy are overly dependent on a region specific framework used to explain the racial problems of the United States as an exclusively Southern problem. The regional emphasis limits the ability to have a broader knowledge beyond the view that the Republican realignment evolved solely as an outcome of the 1960s White Southern backlash against Black political progress (Lassiter and Crespino 2010, 6-7).

The geographical emphasis on the former Confederate states discourages scholars from studying how social unrest impacted states in the North, West, and East. For example, the riots that occurred in the Watts section of Los Angeles are often considered unrelated to the civil rights events in the South. However, there are parallel events in the struggle for racial equality in states outside of the South including California, Ohio, Massachusetts, and Illinois (Delmont 2016; Lassiter and Crespin 15).

As the governor of California, Ronald Reagan was a significant historical figure in the development of conservatism in the West. His use of covert, racially stigmatizing language in his 1966
gubernatorial campaign foreshadowed his racialized rhetoric to expand the Southern Strategy and use it to his advantage as a presidential candidate in 1976 and 1980. For example, he would not provide his opinion on Southern politics and policies, such as racial segregation or the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision. Yet, he used law-and-order issues to negatively frame “Negro unrest” while he simultaneously denied he was appealing to White backlash. Reagan described urban streets as “jungles that are riddled with crime” at campaign stops across California (Dalke 2000, 227). His campaign and subsequent inaugural address focused on ending welfare under the guise of promoting dignity, self-reliance, and self-respect, which he called “the very substance of moral fiber” (Cannon 2009, 219). He separated the “deserving” from the “undeserving” by stating he would not promote the perpetuation of poverty by permitting those who can work to continue to receive benefits. Reagan’s success was clearly connected to his ability to provide the means for Western and Northern conservatives to articulate their negative feelings on race, poverty, and social unrest without using racially explosive language commonly associated with the South. Reagan’s ability to speak forcefully, without expressing outright racism or use of racial epithets, is essential to understanding how he was uniquely positioned to be the candidate who successfully nationalized the Southern Strategy.

**The Impact of Ronald Reagan’s Southern Strategy**

Ronald Reagan was uniquely situated to develop the Southern Strategy as a presidential candidate and later as president. He inserted the concept of the politics of pathology in three specific ways that have continued to influence the presidency since he left office in 1989. First, Reagan was a driving force in racial politics well before his first presidential campaign in 1976. His influence as one of the strongest racial conservatives in the Republican Party was so significant in the 1960s that Nixon actively sought to placate Reagan, Strom Thurmond, and other racial conservatives when he selected Spiro Agnew as his vice presidential running mate. Agnew was considered a “racial backlash hero” to White conservatives who opposed civil rights (Lassiter 2006, 233).
Peter Levy and Joel Olson consider Spiro Agnew to be an underappreciated historical figure who became popular among conservatives because he spoke the language of White resentment. Agnew was an ally of Reagan and Movement Conservatism because he symbolized the transformation of White northern moderate voters who would become labeled as racial conservatives in the late 1960s. When he ran for the governor of Maryland in 1966, he was considered a racial moderate. Agnew received the endorsement of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and maintained their support early in his term. In the spring of 1968, Agnew gave a speech that gave him national recognition among racial conservatives. He falsely criticized moderate Black civic leaders for not standing up to the rioters and Black radical college students. Agnew did not discuss the time and effort that these same leaders made to calm protesters and looters during the civil unrest. Instead, he told his audience that Black leaders lacked the courage to challenge the inflammatory remarks of Black radicals before rioting had taken place. Agnew also stated that while he would work to end discrimination, he disputed the findings of the Kerner Report (Levy 2013, 710-712; Olson 2008, 710-712; Rothstein 2017, 79-83).

The Kerner Report was commissioned by President Lyndon to examine the urban riots that broke out across the nation during the summer of 1967. The Kerner Commission, formally called The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, was chaired by the former governor of Illinois, Otto Kerner (D). The commission was tasked with answering three critical questions:

1. What happened?
2. Why did it happen? and,
3. What can be done to prevent it from happening again?

The report concluded that the root causes of the rioting were based in the legal and economic inequalities that were caused by systematic racism (Zellzer 2016, 79-83).

Agnew disputed the argument that the riots that occurred across the nation in the mid-1960s were a product of White racism. Agnew’s actions and rhetoric synced with Reagan’s method of shifting the causes for the rioting and unrest to the behavior of Blacks. He simultaneously claimed that White voters
were not racist, but their complaints about welfare and crime that were deliberately linked to riots in Black communities were justified. Most importantly, Agnew and Reagan articulated a conservatism that claimed to support legal equality while they were morally opposed to policies and programs that addressed inequality that resulted from government policies and systemic racism (Levy 2013, 710-712; Olson 2008, 710-712; Rothstein 2016, p. 16).

Reagan’s rhetoric gave voice to this group of racial conservatives. He linked race and poverty to pathological behavioral problems. He also nationalized the belief that government spending for programs that benefited the low-income were morally and politically unacceptable to White voters, even though low-income Whites disproportionately benefited from and used these programs (Katzenelson 2005, 61; Quagdano 1996, 15). Finally, nationalizing the Southern Strategy under Reagan’s model has divided American politics so severely that the economic crisis of 2008, the worst since the Great Depression, demonstrated how extreme partisanship interfered with the government’s ability to proactively manage the economy and prevent widespread poverty and social inequality (Mann and Ornstein 2012, 11; Edwards 2012, 13).

Ronald Reagan’s anti-New Deal and anti-civil rights rhetoric helps to explain how nationalizing the Southern Strategy made the government programs and anti-poverty politically unpopular issues when they had experienced broad support among White voters prior to the Civil Rights Movement. The opposition to the New Deal appeared long before Reagan became a national figure. Conservatives never accepted the New Deal as a legitimate government policy, although New Deal programs were accepted widely among voters and politicians in both parties (Lowndes 2008, 13). Many of those who opposed the programs believed the New Deal was designed to undermine the rights of states to enforce segregation. The framework for the political opposition was influenced by the writings of Charles Wallace Collins and his book, *Wither Solid South: A Study in Politics and Race Relations*. Collins wrote the book to develop a new conservative party that consisted of Republicans and conservative Democrats to form a voting block to ensure that Negros would always remain second-class citizens (Collins 1947). In other words, their citizenship rights would not be subordinate to Whites.
As Reagan rose to prominence in the early 1960s, he was able to take advantage of a changing political landscape. Issues of race and the legitimacy of a social safety net formed the foundation for political extremism not just between the two major parties, but also between Black and White Americans. Carmine and Stimson describe the convergence of social welfare issues in their book, *Issues Evolution* (1989). They explain how the issue of race began to produce extreme partisanship when discussing economic policy. From the 1950s until the mid-1960s, social issues and racial policies were considered completely distinct issues. Although there were policies related to race, White voters often viewed the New Deal and racial segregation as unrelated issues. However, starting in the mid-1960s, the Democratic Party gradually became associated with policies that eliminated legally sanctioned racial segregation. The Republican Party expressed opposition to all programs that promoted federal government policies to reduce the harmful impacts of government sanctioned racism. These positions were identified and used to define the values and goals of Democratic liberalism and Republican conservatism on several policies issues that were associated with social welfare and economic development (Carmines and Stinson 1989, 11-12).

Carmines and Stinson also explain that this phenomenon is broader than providing a pro-civil right and an anti-civil rights label to the Democratic and Republican parties. The significance of the 1964 presidential election is that a transformation of the political belief systems of Americans made race a constraining issue. In other words, social issues were defined by the racial perspectives of the voters in each party. These issues include welfare for Whites, welfare for Blacks, integration, and the Cold War. Carmines and Stinson argue these issues moved from being peripheral to becoming the center of domestic policy debates. Eventually, this shift led to ideological constraints and realignment of voters who were responding to the insertion of racial issues into the domestic policy discussions. The voters’ positions on race influenced the way they viewed other political issues that were part of their belief systems (Carmines and Stinson 1989, 117-119). Therefore, the influence of race is so significant that it provides the foundation for their beliefs and all other policy positions.
Spillover of Racialization

Carmine and Stinson’s discussion about issue constraint helps to provide additional explanations for how Reagan’s 1964 racialized views on social spending continued to be accepted as the prevailing ideological frame within the Republican Party. This issue constraint explains how partisan extremism has evolved over the past five decades and is attributable to what is described as the “spillover of racialization.” In other words, issues that impact Americans of all races have been associated with Blacks to evoke racialized opinions when none should exist. This term explains the use of racial code words, such as “welfare” and “crime,” to build support for policies that should not be associated with a racial group because the policies impact individuals of all races (Sears and Tessler 2010, 79). For example, issues that impact voters in spite of their race, such as health care, affordable housing, and increasing the minimum wage, are unnecessarily racialized. The perception that these issues unfairly benefit African Americans discourages voters from considering their common political interests. As a result, it is not possible for legislators to find areas to collaborate and compromise. This problem is compounded because the Republican Party has taken staunchly anti-civil rights positions, making it impossible to find a middle ground on any issue perceived to benefit people of color (Anderson 2016, 117; Feagin 2012, 127).

The overall discussion of this study’s problem statement demonstrates that the phenomenon of the “spillover of racialization” continues to inform contemporary presidential politics. Further, Ronald Reagan’s implementation of the Southern Strategy provided the foundation for future presidents to frame the plight of the forgotten man as a racial political issue. This framework appears in policy debates where race should not be the primary focus. The presence of the “spillover of racialization” occurred during the Obama Administration. Racial conservatives attacked Obama’s economic stimulus package by falsely stating that the legislation included reparations for African Americans and used racially charged language by claiming that Obama was expanding the welfare state (Rucker 2013, 155). This phenomenon is important because President Obama won two presidential elections, and it is likely another non-White male president will be elected in the future and will face the same level of hostility.
The erosion of the bipartisanship that provided Lyndon Johnson with the votes he needed to pass civil rights legislation is also due to the intentional development of highly partisan Congressional districts. Since the 1980s, Movement Conservatism has oriented the Republican Party’s ideology so far to the right that moderates and liberal Republicans, who had previously collaborated with Democrats to find consensus on a wide range of social and civil rights issues, are no longer elected to public office (Kabeservice 2011, 423; Ornstein and Mann 2012, 48). Clearly, many causes have contributed to the breakdown of bipartisan collaboration and the elimination of moderates in Congress. Sean Theriault attributes the problem of extreme partisanship to the redistricting of Congressional seats that have grouped voters into either very conservative or very liberal districts (Theriault 2013, 23). Other scholars propose the conversion of conservative Democrats into Republicans and the elimination of moderate Republicans through primary elections. In turn, party competition would be eliminated in the Southern and upper midwestern states (Cox-Richardson 2014, 288).

While these causes are significant contributing factors, the continued insertion of racial politics has successfully promoted an open warfare on moderate members who, in past years, could have bridged party interests. Ornstein and Mann attribute the cause to the loss of regular order or traditional legislative processes and procedures that, in the past, allowed both Democrats and Republicans to have input on important legislative matters (Ornstein and Mann 2006, 24). The loss of order means hearings and votes are no longer scheduled to consider legislation, judicial, or federal nominations for agency leadership positions. Because these processes no longer occur, presidents are unable to implement their political goals and agenda. The lack of regular order and the insertion of racially charged politics makes it difficult, if not impossible, for Americans to recognize they have common political interests.

The persistence of partisan extremism also demonstrates how Reagan’s rhetoric has transformed American politics. Reagan’s most significant domestic policy legacy may be that White Americans have largely rejected programs that provided their parents and grandparents the foundation needed for building a middle class life. Many White voters, even those who are low-income and working class, have rejected the anti-poverty programs from the New Deal and Great Society eras (Katznelson 2005, 167).
Concurrently, post-Reagan presidents are cognizant of these changing views and believe it necessary to use wording that promotes the separation of economic interests based on race instead of promoting collective solutions for common interests. A reexamination of the Southern Strategy will show that presidents from both major parties are more likely to emphasize race and personal behavior instead of economic barriers and structures that contribute to economic inequality. These trends are firmly established in the 1964 presidential campaign and traceable to Reagan’s elevation as the rhetorical leader of Movement Conservatism. The next section explains how Reagan’s 1964 speech nationalized racially stigmatizing coded language.

**The Significance of Ronald Reagan’s “A Time for Choosing” Speech**

When Americans consider the political speeches that best represent the racial politics of the 1960s, Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” and George Wallace’s “Segregation Forever” speeches come to mind. However, one of the most significant speeches of the decade was given by Ronald Reagan. On October 27, 1964, Reagan delivered the “A Time for Choosing” speech on behalf of Barry Goldwater’s presidential campaign (Darman 2014, 214; Kabaservice 2011, 919). Conservative scholars and Reagan specialists generally place his start as a transformational figure of the conservative movement with these remarks (Davenport and Lloyd 2013, 55; Edwards 1999, 154-155; Nash 2013, 111; Philpot 2007, 51; Skinner 2007, 40). Yet, minimal discussion exists in political science of how this speech relates to the efficacy of the Southern Strategy and its continued influence in presidential politics.

“A Time for Choosing” established the framework in which the Republican party has since shaped its rhetoric and presidential policy goals in support of the conservative view of the forgotten man. This view is based on the rejection of “big government” and the premise that anti-poverty programs are wasteful and against the moral and economic interests of the White middle class. In the speech, Reagan stated the role of government was to eliminate poverty programs and spending. He described government funding for social programs as a “perversion” and a direct violation of people’s individual rights and freedoms. The statements in this speech continue to resonate among American voters who believe the
government suppresses individualism and supports the welfare state by promoting dependency for the undeserving to the detriment of the taxpayers. Therefore, the speech has a sustaining influence on the Southern Strategy and on the political argument that defines the political interests of the forgotten man (Reagan 1964).

Although Reagan’s “A Time for Choosing” speech is not the central focus of this dissertation, historians, Republican activists, and scholars based in conservative think tanks consider it central to understanding Reagan’s rise to power (Davenport and Lloyd 2013, 55; Edwards, 1999, 154-155; Nash 2013, 111; Philpot 2007, 51; Skinner 2007, 40). However, political scientists have not fully examined how Reagan used the language of racial resentment in this speech to define and defend conservative views of the forgotten man and broaden the political efficacy of the Southern Strategy in a way Nixon was unable to do. If we continue to view the Southern Strategy as beginning in 1968, then we fail to understand the importance of Reagan’s ability to establish the values of Movement Conservatism as the ideology for governing the nation as early as 1964 and through the 21st century.

Reagan’s speech provides political science the opportunity to situate Reagan in the development of color-blind presidential rhetoric, which is the use of words to depict negative behaviors, stereotypes, and social problems of racial minorities without mentioning the name of a racial group (Bonilla-Silva 2013, 18). “A Time for Choosing” was the culmination of Reagan’s tours of the South that coincided with political changes resulting from the Civil Rights Movement. From 1954 to 1962, Reagan served as the spokesman and goodwill ambassador for General Electric Company (GE); speaking in front of audiences of business executives and plant workers in Southern states, such as Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. His role with GE provided him the opportunity to develop a populist rhetoric with citizens who were disenchanted with the federal government’s involvement in liberalizing racial policies (Ritter 2009, p. 335). Reagan’s appeal to White conservative audiences did not rely on the overtly racist language George Wallace used in his speeches. He cultivated White resentment by tempering his speeches with more covert, socially palatable wording.
Instead, he alluded to the changing racial orders that Southerners and non-Southern conservatives believed were forced on them by the Civil Rights Movement (Mayer 2015, 76-79).

Reagan’s rise to national prominence as a user of color blind language and opponent of programs for the “undeserving low-income” came at a time when White resentment increased across the nation. The resentment was due to the successes of the Civil Rights Movement as well as the expansion of social programs under the Great Society legislation. Although Reagan consistently denied he was a racist and did not engage in deliberate efforts to cultivate White political resentment, he was considered a highly influential racial conservative in the 1960s (Crespino 2006, 233; Reagan 1990, 415). In fact, Richard Nixon’s presidential campaign sought to appease him and segregationist Southern Republicans, such as Senator Strom Thurmond (SC), by promising to minimize federal enforcement on issues such as school desegregation (Kabaservice 2011, 233; Lassiter 2006, 233; Reagan 1990, 414). Racial conservatives have a long history of opposing federal oversight and regulations that provide non-Whites with legal protections to prevent or correct private and public entities from imposing discriminatory policies and practices (Higginbotham 2013, 161; Rothstein 2017, 65).

Federal programs, such as spending for education, housing development, and poverty prevention from the Great Depression through the 1960s, provided low-income and working class Whites with opportunities to find pathways for economic mobility, mainly through college access, social security insurance, union and employee centered labor regulations, and home ownership. However, the same pathways that cultivated wealth for Whites excluded Blacks from engaging in the same opportunities through political deal making with pro-segregationist Democrats and Republicans in Congress (Katznelson 2005, 21; Lowndes 2008, 14). Yet, the dialogue Reagan used to build his conservative base in the 1950s and 1960s, including his wording in the “A Time for Choosing” speech, was central to changing the historical memory of Whites who benefited from the New Deal.

Reagan constructed and articulated an alternative view of history that failed to explain how the disparities impacted the economic development of Blacks at a lower level than Whites. He separated the “truly needy” from those individuals described in coded language as the “undeserving recipients,” who
were inner-city racial minorities. Furthermore, minorities were characterized as being harmed by social spending, unwilling to engage in honorable work, negligent for failing to develop proper savings, and incapable of spending their money responsibly (Reagan 1964). As the 1970s and 1980s progressed, Reagan and other conservatives spoke of government dependency as a pathology that involved government fraud and criminal activity (Chappell 2011, 216-220). Reagan’s legacy and electoral success among White voters have provided the parameters for how post-Reagan presidents address issues related to poverty.

Presidents have emulated Reagan’s rhetorical style, but not Nixon’s. Political scientists and historians point to 1968 as the beginning of the strategic use that forms the basis for the Southern Strategy with Richard Nixon’s 1968 and 1972 presidential campaigns (Cox-Richardson 2014, 227; Lamis 1990, 30; Philpot 2007, 45-46). However, Reagan’s speech demonstrates that the Southern Strategy was transforming presidential rhetoric as early as 1964. He accomplished this transformation by simultaneously cultivating Northern White resistance to social spending and the New Deal while linking it to Southern resistance to the expansion of Civil Rights for Blacks (Dionne 2016, p. 64). In addition, the rhetoric in Reagan’s 1964 speech frames the color-blind narrative of post-Reagan presidents and asserts that White supremacy and structural racism are not responsible for the inequalities of Black Americans. Rather, presidents explain the problem of social inequality by using “color-blind” descriptions intended to connect irresponsible and pathological personal behavior to low-income racial minorities.

Because political scientists have not focused on Reagan’s “A Time for Choosing” speech, they have not fully examined how he used the language of racial resentment in this speech to define and defend White conservative views of the forgotten man. Consequently, he broadened the political efficacy of the Southern Strategy in a way Nixon was unable to do. If we continue to focus on 1968 as the start, then we fail to understand the importance of Reagan’s ability to establish the values of Movement Conservatism as a widely accepted ideology for governing with broader implications than a divisive and narrowly focused electoral strategy. An examination of Reagan’s use of rhetoric by inserting racial images without using racist words will show how it transformed White American opinion to accept
conservative demagoguery. It will also show how these images facilitated the rejection of programs established under New Deal and Great Society (Dionne 2016, 64).

In this historical context, political science can expand the view of Reagan as a transformational president whose rhetorical frame has fundamentally altered the way post-Reagan presidents through the Obama-era debate policies related to social spending programs. Specifically, Reagan’s speech articulates the rejection of structural racism by expressing support for individualism and presidential policy goals. His speech also supports the conservative view of the forgotten man, based on the rejection of “big government” policies, and on the premise that anti-poverty programs are wasteful and against the moral and economic interests of the White middle class. He described government policies intended to eliminate poverty as a “perversion,” and he justified his position to eliminate these programs by framing them as threatening to individual rights and freedoms (Reagan 1964).

An examination of the “A Time for Choosing” speech allows political science to establish Reagan’s rhetoric of White resentment and social conservatism of the 1960s as a sustaining political strategy used by presidents in both parties into the 21st century. Specifically, it demonstrates how racialized descriptions of low-income communities promote the belief that the federal government places the interests of the low-income Black communities over the interests of the White middle class. The rhetoric that portrays Whites as disadvantaged has solidified the position of the Republican Party as the champion of the forgotten White man. Reagan’s speeches before and during his presidency conversely articulated his beliefs that government spending for programs established under the New Deal and the Great Society were an affront to conservative, White working class family values. In addition, he inserted stigmatizing racially coded language, both overtly and covertly, into his speeches indicating that those with low-incomes who unfairly benefit from welfare programs at the expense of the forgotten man, were racial minorities. Furthermore, Reagan depicted racial minorities as either dishonest or unwitting victims of government spending. The speech also formed the framework used throughout Reagan’s political career that portrayed the government as a force that undermined individual freedoms and enterprise. Reagan repeatedly stated that the government removed incentives for low-income individuals to join the
workforce by appropriating hard-earned taxpayer dollars for undeserving and unmotivated individuals who do not contribute to the wellbeing of the nation in an honest manner (Reagan 1964; Reagan 1976; Reagan 1980; Reagan 1984). Reagan’s philosophy continues to provide the foundation for the Republican Party’s legislative justification to disinvest in contemporary government social programs (Dallek 2000, 5; Kabaservice 2011, 387; Lee 1999, 259).

Today, the challenge political science faces is how to explain why Reagan’s rhetoric continues to support the Southern Strategy, promote contemporary conservative legislative agendas, and hamper the ability for presidents to implement social programs. Moreover, mainstream political scientists do not specifically view racially coded language as a significant cause of the Congressional gridlock and political extremism of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. For example, recent scholarly works devoted to explaining Congressional gridlock and partisan extremism fail to mention the word racism, even when the discussion relates to President Obama (Gutmann and Thompson 2012, Ornstein and Mann 2006, 2012; Theriault 2013). The absence of race can be attributed to the manner in which scholars discuss American racism and its place in the Civil Rights Movement as distinctly Southern in origin. Historian Joseph Crespino explains that as the racial strife was reported by the press in the 1960s, Americans came to view the racial extremism and cultivation of the closed, racial society as a problem of Southern exceptionalism (Crespino 2010, 111).

The term Southern exceptionalism is attributed to the false belief by non-Southerners that legal segregation and racism are problems unique to the South. In other words, racism is not a significant problem in other regions in America. Because of the belief that people outside of the South are significantly less racist, the rhetoric of “A Time for Choosing” helped White voters deny the existence of racial discrimination or minimize the severity of racial discrimination outside of the South. When Northern racism is acknowledged, it is often described as a past problem created by former governments. Reagan argued voters were not responsible for discrimination caused by Jim Crow and slavery. Therefore, they should not be held responsible for past actions that perpetuated generational poverty in Black communities. The impact of Reagan’s interpretation of the development of economic inequality
appears to be a significant factor in changing American political values and a rejection of programs for the low-income. The popularity of his speech normalized the language of victimization and portrayed Whites as victims of African American advances during the 1960s.

**White Resentment and the Color-blind Rhetoric of Victimage**

The traditional view that White resentment developed as an outgrowth of the Southern Civil Rights Movement distorts the history and actual prevalence of racism in Northern and Western states during the 1950s and 1960s. This distortion ignores the legacy of racial tensions throughout the nation that grew from the demands of Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans for economic and legal equality. Racial minorities have a long and complex history of civil rights activism across the nation in cities such as Los Angeles, Boston, and Detroit. Jeanne Theoharis (2010) contends that White resistance in the North is argued in the frame of “color-blindness.” The coded language of color-blindness describes the causes of the social problems of minority communities with phrases such as “community dysfunction” and “cultural deprivation.” Consequently, opponents of racial integration used the language of covert racism by using terms such as “neighborhood control,” “taxpayer’s rights,” and “forced busing” to prevent non-Whites from accessing the pathways to build a middle class life. Often times, these voters considered the overt racist language of the South to be culturally unacceptable. As a result, coded language was used by Northern Whites who were also opposed to the Civil Rights Movement and desegregation, but wanted to appear less racist and more principled in their political views (Theoharis 2010, 53).

Regardless of voter preference for overt or covert forms of racialized language, they largely accepted the narrative that individuals who use welfare are unnecessarily dependent on the government. They assert that White Americans are harmed by welfare and public housing programs because they are forced to subsidize the living expenses of poor Blacks while they struggle to maintain and provide for their families. Further, these same voters have accepted the view that social spending programs are designed to victimize White working class voters (Chappell 2011, 35; Katzenelson 2005, 16; Lowndes
Jeremy Engels describes this reaction as the “rhetoric of victimhood” and states:

There is, however, a darker side to the rhetoric of victimhood. Rather than promoting deliberation, such rhetoric can coerce publics and manufacture consent by manipulating the vitriolic emotions that often accompany the feeling that one is a victim. When rhetoric cultivate hostility toward the perceived cause of suffering, they become deeply problematic — especially when one is not really a victim, or when one has identified the cause of suffering incorrectly. Such rhetoric of victimage do more than praise or blame, more than assign guilt or innocence. Such rhetoric transform the conversation, making deliberation less about finding consensus and more about achieving expiation, less about giving reasons and more for plotting revenge. (Engels 2010, 304)

I interpret Engels’ use of the word “expiation,” or atonement, to mean that when Whites embrace victimage, they provide justification for supporting past or present policies that penalize racial minorities. Expiation creates a political environment where comprehensive policy discussions and debates are reduced to arguing the validity of stereotypes. In contrast, discussions provide a complex analysis of the historical circumstances that created the need for the policy and the outcomes that are beneficial for created inequalities among segments of the population.

The rhetoric of victimage also help to explain why the concept of color-blind and coded language were successfully used to promote Reagan’s version of the Southern Strategy. Sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva explains that color-blind language is often used by Whites and political conservatives to minimize the importance of racism on policy measures that increase inequality among racial groups. Minimizing racism serves to marginalize current and historical racial practices and structural barriers that contribute to poverty. Advocates of color-blindness argue that inequality is an individual or cultural failure that cannot be addressed through government policies (Bonilla-Silva 2001, 151). The color-blindness frame continues to be used as a justification to oppose government policies intended to serve as a remedy for racial or social inequalities. Bonilla-Silva explains that when Whites take the position that they are color-blind and not responsible or engaged in current racial disparities or actions, they are justified in opposing policies they perceive as unfairly benefiting racial minorities (Bonilla-Silva 2001, 157-158).
Reagan’s success in using implicit racial appeals is also an important part of the discussion. He was successful in masking the historical significance of the removal of structural racism from the political discourse. Reagan’s rise to national prominence as both a user of color-blind language and an opponent of programs for the “undeserving low-income” came when White resentment was increasing across the nation. The resentment was a reaction to the successes of the Civil Rights Movement and the expansion of programs under the Great Society legislation. Reagan’s exposure to the anti-integrationist politics of the 1950s and 1960s during his tenure as the spokesperson for General Electric is often omitted from discussions that explain how he was able to successfully build a national constituency based on White resentment in the 1970s and 1980s. Additionally, the narrative of the Civil Rights era often neglects the significance of Reagan’s pre-presidential role in shaping White conservative values during the mid 20th century (Kabaservice 2011, 145; Lassiter 2006, 233; Reagan 1990, 151). Therefore, he is absent from a narrative that describes the Civil Rights Movement to Americans. Yet, Reagan’s incomplete narrative still resonates among Americans and the Republican Party today. The rhetoric of victimage continues to be effective for many Americans, White voters in particular, because Reagan’s interpretation of the Civil Rights Movement is the only one they know and accept.

How the Lack of Historical Memory Influences the Current Debate

The concept of historical memory is important for understanding two narratives of Reagan’s history. The first narrative by pro-Reagan scholars claims that he was not racist or a racially divisive figure (Cannon 2009, 575; Shirley 2014, 530; Shirley 2015, 1220). The second narrative, which is supported by pro-civil rights and anti-poverty advocates, states that his rhetoric contributed to the loss of White bipartisan support for social safety net programs that existed prior to the 1970s (Gilens 2009, 52; Quagdano 1996, 109, 125). As a result, the reinterpretation of the Civil Rights Movement has changed the opinions of White voters who once held positive perceptions about federal spending for the New Deal and the Great Society programs. This narrative has erased the public historical memory of the benefits that Whites received from government investments. Nor is there any discussion on how Whites benefited
economically from the discriminatory laws that intentionally harmed the economic standing of Black Americans. Political scientist and policy historian Ira Katznelson proposes that the historical description of the first affirmative action programs, the social safety net established by President Franklin Roosevelt, was designated for Whites. However, the historical discussions of affirmative action falsely places its inception in the 1960s and 1970s. This description is incorrect. The programs were initially designed to provide economic relief and upward mobility to Whites during the Depression era. Additionally, the policies were largely successful in providing a pathway for Whites while simultaneously excluding Blacks from most of the benefits that were helpful in building wealth for White families (Katznelso, 2005, 10-12). This exclusion has contributed to the wealth gap between Blacks and Whites that continues today.

Federal spending from the Great Depression through the 1960s provided low-income and working class Whites with opportunities to build wealth through college access, social security insurance, union and employee centered labor regulations, and home ownership. Whites were given an unearned advantage over Blacks solely because of political deal-making to placate pro-segregationist Democrats and Republicans in Congress. These segregationist factions threatened to prevent the passage of legislation that would provide any benefits to Black Americans (Katznelson 2005, 21; Lowndes 2008, 14). The rhetoric that Reagan used to build his conservative base in the 1950s and 1960s, including his wording in the “A Time for Choosing” speech, is a significant political factor that provided a means for conservatives to eliminate the history of how White middle class families gained an unearned, economic advantage in the mid-20th century.

Reagan’s failure to accurately explain the history of the New Deal was accomplished by using the frame that Bonilla-Silva calls the “minimization of racism.” This frame suggests that discrimination existed in the past but is not a legitimate factor to explain why income inequality exists for Blacks (Bonilla-Silva 2013, 105). Reagan used the minimization of racism frame to articulate an alternative view of history to that showing how the legal exclusion of Blacks from New Deal programs negatively impacted the economic development of Black workers over time. Instead of discussing how government
discriminatory policies and practices perpetuated multigenerational poverty, he focused on how government programs “take from the needed and give to the greedy.” He states that the government’s failure to reduce poverty is not due to the inability to resolve discriminatory laws, but because of the programs administered by unethical employees who provide the benefits of the programs to unethical recipients (Reagan 1964). The perpetuation of Reagan’s rhetorical patterns that minimize racism continues to provide economic conservatives with a rationale to eliminate spending and civil rights enforcement in spite of the political demands to keep such programs in place.

Reagan’s speech was part of a broader effort for conservatives to cultivate an alternative version of the populist “forgotten man” frame, defined by Franklin Roosevelt as a label that could only be designated to White voters. In the 1960s, the “forgotten American” frame was defined by journalists and politicians as working class, “White male heads of households” and “White ethnics and Catholics” facing economic challenges. Minorities receiving preferences and services from big government programs were not engaged in the same level and quality of hard work that is expected of White middle class workers (Chappell 2011, 120-121). The racialized frame of White male resentment towards welfare and social programs became a permanent fixture in American politics. This frame, also called the forgotten man, either limits or discourages discussion of programs that have the potential to increase human capital and expand access to the middle class. The forgotten man has become a highly influential ideology and political symbol that amplifies racial resentment in politics (Kam and Kinder 2011, 180).

From the 1960s through the Obama-era, the idea of the conservative movement’s forgotten man has successfully perpetuated the political view that the pursuit of equality for racial minorities and the low-income is an affront to the personal liberties of the White middle class. In other words, the conservative forgotten man ideology has had a multigenerational impact on presidential rhetoric, serving to support economic inequality. The ideology has transformed the idea of a proactive government response to managing the problem of income inequality to the ideology that managing income inequality is not the responsibility of the president. The conservative viewpoint that post-Reagan presidents have embraced presidential activism in the pursuit of “the equality of outcomes,” not “the equality of
“opportunity” is an affront to the American values of liberty (Davenport and Lloyd 2013, 10, 36). Therefore, it is not the government’s role to provide resources and benefits to people and communities that have not earned prosperity on their own merits. The political divisions caused by those who pose policy differences and disagreements through the frames of the “deserving” versus the “undeserving” have had a lasting impact on the values that American voters place on social spending programs.

Reagan’s Legacy on American Views of Social Spending Programs

Reagan’s legacy related to the politics of the forgotten man is found in contemporary discussions regarding income inequality and poverty. A disconnect is present within members of demographic groups who use social aid and reject political policies that help their families, such as healthcare. The highest percentage of low income voters who hold negative views of welfare programs, including low-income and working class Whites who live in solidly Republican southern states, continue to vote for elected officials who do not support programs beneficial to their economic interest. The extreme opposition to these programs comes from Republican members of Congress who oppose and eliminate social spending without negative consequences from their constituencies, who receive these benefits from the government. Since 57 percent of the conservatives have used social spending programs, it appears these programs would have bipartisan cooperation and collaboration (Morin 2013). However, Republicans take actions to reduce spending for the low-income without any negative consequences from their constituencies. Pew Research Center studies have found that both Democratic and Republican voters use welfare and other safety net programs during their lifetimes.

Although these programs are used broadly across political ideologies, public assistance is considered socially and politically unacceptable, even if an individual’s economic circumstances require assistance to care for his/her family (Pew Research Center 2012, 2013). This belief suggests that despite the widespread, negative impact of the recession, public assistance is considered an unacceptable option, even for those living in poverty. However, researchers found that 55 percent of Americans have benefited from at least one of the six major entitlements: unemployment benefits, social security, Medicare, food
stamps, Medicaid, and welfare benefits. The survey also found that 60 percent of Democrats and 52 percent of Republicans have benefitted from at least one program. Additionally, 37 percent of Democrats, 30 percent of Republicans, and 28 percent of independents have benefitted from two or more entitlement programs (Morin, Taylor, and Patten 2012).

The bipartisan use of social programs, along with the high levels of unemployment and the persistent problem of income inequality, should support the premise that it is in the common interest of the government to engage in bipartisan efforts to pass legislation to grow the economy in depressed areas. However, the prevalence of political extremism has shown that Republican legislators will not support any appropriations for low-income people, even if the legislation includes funding for social welfare programs that benefit Republican voters in their state. Republicans’ use of coded language sends a message to their constituency that they are the party that protects White workers and their families. They support the elimination of welfare spending and are willing to punish non-Whites who abuse the programs. This message was visible during the debate held in 2014 to pass the Farm Bill. The legislation allocated $1 trillion dollars to corporate and family farms. Despite evidence that the economic downfall had increased the need for food assistance, and 72 percent of those in need were families with dependent children, the Farm Bill was marred in controversy and stalled for two years. When the legislation was approved in Congress, $8.7 billion in funding was cut from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps (Plummer 2013; Nixon 2014).

The Congressional debate on food assistance programs are often based on racial stereotypes. For example, in 2013, Senator Vitter offered an amendment that would prevent anyone convicted of a violent crime, at any point in his/her life, to be disqualified from receiving the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The disqualification would be mandatory even if the individual served his/her time and had no further encounters with the criminal justice program (Greenstein 2013). Vitter also wanted to require food stamp recipients to show a photo. Senator Vitter argued the requirement would reduce fraud and save taxpayers money (Albert 2014). Vitter’s assertions that the program was subjected to fraud and harmed middle class taxpayers contributes to the negative views that poor people, who many Whites often
believe are Black or other minorities, are not just inherently dishonest, but criminals. This frame prevents the development of constructive dialogues about the problems that perpetuate poverty in America.

The discussion of these political divisions and the bipartisan use of social spending programs related to entitlements are significant. This study’s central argument is that the Southern Strategy has been sustained by the continued use of racialized rhetoric that divides voters by race, even though they have common economic interests, by inserting racially stigmatizing language in policy debates. Despite high levels of need for government support for food, health insurance, and supplemental income resulting from the economic downturn of 2007 as well as the widening economic gap between the middle class and the low-income, the message that continues to resonate among the electorate is that government programs for the low-income are unnecessary and wasteful. Jennifer Sherman’s research on American attitudes regarding government spending on social welfare programs shows that in spite of the increased need for anti-poverty spending due to high unemployment and increasing downward mobility, there was not an increase in support for government aid or sympathy for the plight of those negatively impacted by the recession (Sherman 2013, 411-412).

The lack of political support for low income and people of color can explain why politicians use racial stereotypes and outright insults with impunity. The political environment of the 2012 campaign demonstrated that politicians could insert overtly racial tropes into the dialogue without facing any consequences from their constituencies. During the Republican presidential primary, candidate and former Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, repeatedly referred to President Obama as “the food stamp president” during his campaign bid (Gamboa 2012). Gingrich used dog-whistle politics to appeal to the racial resentment that hard right voters of the Republican base harbor towards people of color. He made the following statements during the Republican primaries:

“Obama is the best food stamp president in American history. More people are on food stamps today because of Obama’s policies than ever in history.”
“I’m prepared, if the NAACP invites me, I’ll go to their convention and talk about why the African American community should demand paychecks and not be satisfied with food stamps (Madison, January 6, 2012).

Both statements were made to stigmatize the first African American president of the United States and the African Americans who supported his election. Gingrich’s statements were intended to associate Obama and African Americans with racial stereotypes that portray food stamps recipients as lazy, welfare cheats who choose to live off of the public welfare system instead of working hard to earn an honest living.

An argument can be made that Gingrich used this tactic to develop strong support among White conservatives. Racial politics and dog-whistle code words have been largely considered an electoral tactic to cultivate votes by appealing to the racial resentment of White voters. Racial code words, which form the basis for dog-whistle politics, have significantly influenced the manner in which White voters interpret and respond to regressive economic and social spending policies (Haney Lopez 2013, 13). Haney Lopez argues that Reagan applied coded language more broadly than Richard Nixon and George Wallace. Reagan’s success as the U.S. President and leader of Movement Conservatism provided him a platform to intertwine the language of racial resentment with his philosophical beliefs and legislative agenda for a conservative government. Over time, Reagan’s philosophy became part of the mainstream political ideology for both parties. As a result, White voters focus on policies that are perceived as racial threats instead of their own economic interests (Haney Lopez 2013, 26, 72, 188).

Reagan’s Sustained Impact on Democratic Presidents

Reagan’s success integrating the Southern Strategy into an applied method of governing helps explain how the strategy has had success and longevity beyond his tenure as president. Reagan’s legacy has influenced Democratic presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama; both are perceived as less traditional advocates for social reform than former Democratic Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson. Mainly, this perception is due to the language they used to describe racial stereotypes and pathologies when articulating their views on social spending programs. Additionally, progressive
scholars, such as Michael Eric Dyson, Ian Haney-Lopez, and Adolf Reed, argue that Clinton’s and Obama’s use of Reagan’s wording has given legitimacy to the racial backlash of White conservatives (Dyson 2016, 78; Haney-Lopez 2013, 74; Reed 2014). The use of stigmatizing rhetoric by Democratic presidents is an outcome of Reagan’s language being integrated into mainstream political dialogue and normalized as acceptable speech in both parties.

Post-Reagan Democratic presidents give speeches that concede to voters who believe low income minorities engage in pathological behavior that perpetuates poverty and discourages those living in poverty from working hard and striving for a middle class lifestyle. Such speeches are used to mitigate criticism from the Republican Party. For example, the language used in Clinton and Obama speeches is considered by some political researchers as centrist, if not conservative. The words chosen to discuss poverty and racism appeared to be conciliatory and used as a tactic to distance themselves from liberal interests. For example, while Republican presidents use language closely aligned to racial coding and social pathologies, Presidents Clinton and Obama adopt language for racially oriented policy discussions that attempts not to outright offend minorities, but mollifies White middle class skepticism. Both presidents have employed similar frames to discuss prioritizing personal responsibility over structural barriers (Haney Lopez 2013, 208; Kennedy 2011, 76; Reed 2014). The impact of Reagan’s racialized language use is not widely discussed, even though code words continue to be used by presidents in both parties (Rucker 2013, 26-27). Democrats, who are often described negatively as liberals, have adapted to the rhetorical and policy frames of Reagan to mitigate criticism that they are out of touch with White voters.

Scholars who support liberal activism assert that the Democratic Party has largely abandoned advocating for traditional liberal social policies. Linda Faye Williams examines how Democrats gradually increased their support for conservative policy priorities in the 1980s and 1990s to mollify White moderate and conservative activists within the Democratic Party. One outcome of this trend was the establishment of the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) after Water Mondale’s failed presidential bid in 1984. The purpose of the DLC was to shift the party’s ideology from perceived liberal racial
politics towards an economically conservative agenda that appealed to White voters. Williams also argued that the New Democrat ideology of the DLC intentionally abandoned the pro-labor and anti-poverty policies that shaped the New Deal. She asserted the DLC was not interested in addressing the long-term economic inequalities between White and Black workers. The New Democrats argued they were more moderate than the liberal Democrats of the 1970s and 1980s as well as socially and economically conservative. They also embraced and inserted the rhetoric of 1960s political conservatism to appeal to the anger of White voters who continued to oppose the expansion of the political and economic priorities of Black Americans (Williams 2003, 226-228).

The language Bill Clinton used as a New Democrat significantly redefined the manner in which the party’s domestic priorities reflected center right policies that departed from the party’s historically liberal activism. Clinton’s New Democrat positions signaled to voters that he did not support traditional liberal policies that disproportionately impacted African Americans. His speeches signaled he was tough on crime and strongly opposed to welfare (Lopez 2013, 123). The ideological and rhetorical shift from liberalism continues to shape the Democratic Party’s agenda. The adoption of center right positions demonstrates how the party abandoned policies designed to address structural racism. The change also demonstrates the Democrats have successfully incorporated Reagan’s conservatism as to mitigate any criticism that they are imposing liberal policies that harm White families (Klinker 1999, 14).

Adolph Reed shares Williams’ and Haney Lopez’s view that the DLC has negatively impacted the importance the party places on legislation aimed to improve lives of low-income and racial minorities. He asserts the policy positions and rhetoric of the Clinton era were apparent in the Obama presidency. Reed argues the real significance of the Reagan presidency is that his rhetoric successfully defined the parameters of the political debate and the limits of political practice for the Democratic Party (Reed 2014). The arguments of Haney Lopez, Reed, and Williams imply that Democrats have incorporated the Southern Strategy in a way that demonstrates they have conceded the argument for the “forgotten man;” it is framed more from Reagan’s perspective than those of Democratic presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson.
Roosevelt and Johnson explained the plight of the forgotten man quite differently than Reagan. They acknowledged that poverty in America was caused in large part by economic barriers created by government policies (Roosevelt 1944; Johnson 1964 and 1965). Both presidents believed that the American government had a responsibility to fight for the forgotten man by addressing poverty, homelessness, and the lack of healthcare with proactive federal policies. The Democratic Party’s departure from Roosevelt’s and Johnson’s positions on anti-poverty policies is largely due to the perception that poverty is not a significant political interest for Whites but is viewed as a political interest for non-Whites. Because the partisan differences are amplified, this frame reinforces negative stereotypes of minorities with wording that suggests the economic problems of Blacks are vastly different from Whites, due to their irresponsible personal behavior (Greenbaum 2015, 160-162). Political scientists usually do not attribute race as a contributing factor to partisan extremism. Instead, mainstream political scientists often select “race neutral” factors, such as the influx of campaign funds, an unwillingness to compromise, party-based gerrymandering, and the elimination of moderate voters and officeholders, instead of racial divisions as the cause for political extremism (Guttman and Thompson 2012, 17-21; Ornstein and Mann 2012, 8-17 and 31).

The Problem of “Race Neutral” Explanations for Congressional Hyper-partisanship

The discussion of “race neutral” explanations has not included discussions about the Republican Revolution of 1994, specifically racialized policies. A Contract with America contributed to the racial polarization that occurred during the Obama and Trump presidencies and served as a proposal for the House Republican Caucus’ legislative priorities and proposals for Congressional accountability. The document included traditional Republican Party priorities such as tax cuts, deregulation, and business reforms. However, a review of the proposals and the statements that Newt Gingrich made to advance the Republican agenda included politically polarizing and racially stigmatizing priorities, such as law and order and welfare reform. The Personal Responsibility Act, also known as the welfare reform bill, was widely supported by voters (Hancock 2004, 74). The legislation had strong support despite sound
research that demonstrated the policy proposals would not reduce or eliminate the need for welfare programs (Gilens 2009, 36; Greenbaum 2015, 166; Kendi 2017, 460). Research from social scientists concluded that the unpopularity of welfare reform was shaped by the belief that voters have the right to punish the undeserving, mostly minority Americans who they assume “willingly” choose to live a dishonorable life at the expense of White voters (Gilens 2009, 36-37).

Kendi further argues that race and welfare reform cannot be viewed as two distinct issues because they have been intertwined in welfare reform politics since slavery. Black men and women have been portrayed as immoral and hypersexual beings as far back as the 16th century (Kendi 2017, 40). The U.S. government has enacted various discriminatory policies that support the view that government has the right to enforce laws that criminalize behavior, such as sexual activity for Black Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and Asians. Such policies were enforced by individuals who claimed these women could not control their sexual behavior and were unfit for motherhood. The government justified the forced sterilization programs for poor women of color well into the 1970s (Churchill 1997, 377; Davis 1983, 214-221, Washington 2006, 203). Additionally, the Social Security Amendment Acts of 1939 did not provide the same benefits to Black widowed mothers that they provided for White widowed mothers. White women were incorporated into the social safety net as dependents of their husbands instead of direct beneficiaries. Also, they had access to pensions that provided them the opportunity to raise their children full-time as homemakers. Even in death, the benefits of white men provided their families with economic security. Conversely, state governments did not extend the same benefits to Black mothers and expected them to hold, at a minimum, a part-time job (Chappell 2012, 16-18).

In spite of historical evidence that racist beliefs have shaped social welfare policies with legal provisions that penalized non-White women, many scholars who study the issue of hyper-partisanship between members of Congress and the President appear oblivious to the possibility that racial beliefs and attitudes are a significant factor in their perceptions of fair, effective policy. In other words, there is no acknowledgement that deeply entrenched racial beliefs and personal attitudes contribute to the problems of hyper partisanship. Race neutral explanations of partisan extremism provide an inaccurate, incomplete
account of political divisions in the federal government that existed long before Obama and Trump were subjects in political science research. For example, Gutmann and Thompson discuss the impact regarding the failure of members of both parties to deliberate and compromise with each other, but they fail to mention racism and racist policies that prevent bipartisan compromise and inhibit deliberation in ways similar to campaign finance and gerrymandered districts (Gutmann and Thompson 2012).

Sean Theriault’s book, The Gingrich Senators, does not mention the word “racism” or that Gingrich has a long history of promoting racist ideas (Theriault 2013). Mann and Ornstein also explain the development of political extremism in their book, It’s Even Worse Than it Looks. In the chapter, The Seeds of Dysfunction, they discuss how the rhetoric and policies enacted after the 1994 Republican Congressional take over, orchestrated in large part by Newt Gingrich, impacted the institution of Congress. Not once are the words “race,” “racism,” or “racist” mentioned in the book. Such omissions are peculiar considering that policies such as welfare reform and crime control were considered highly racialized issues (Mann and Ornstein 2012). Moreover, the demographic makeup of Congress and their voters are vastly different because the Republican Party is nearly all White and the Democratic Party is racially and socially diverse (Pew 2016). Perhaps these scholars did not recognize, or they intentionally ignored, the history of social policy development in Congress and the use of racialized code words and politics, which served as the foundation for the Republican ascendancy, to explain the hyper-partisanship within and between the Congressional and Executive branches of the government. Incidentally, not until Dionne, Mann, and Ornstein published One Nation After Trump: A Guide for the Perplexed, the Disillusioned, the Desperate, and the Not-Yet Deported did they address the issue of racism as a factor for the breakdown of the federal government (Dionne, Mann, and Ornstein 2017).

The incompleteness of race neutral discussions about hyper-partisanship were exposed shortly after President Obama was inaugurated. White protesters and politicians who objected to his election used racist statements, imagery, and symbols, such as the Confederate flag, to express their displeasure. President Obama’s opponents openly claimed he was born in Kenya. They depicted him in racial and dehumanizing images, including eating watermelon and fried chicken or as a monkey. Statements
associated him and the Democratic Party’s health care legislation with negative stereotypes of Blacks. The Republican Party has benefited from the exploitation of the racial fears of White voters. Few Republican Party leaders stood up against the racial tropes. Instead, they allowed the exploitation of the racist imagery to be used for their benefit to cultivate opposition to Obama and his legislative agenda (Fallows 2013; Kinder and Dale-Riddle 2012, p. 143; Skocpol and Williamson 2011, 81-82, 89; Thompson 2013). The foundation for political obstruction existed long before President Obama entered the White House. The practice of political nullification of the Obama Administration’s legislative initiatives helps explain how racial politics severely impeded the legislative process during the Obama era and prevented President Obama from implementing significant reform.

The Political Nullification of the Obama Presidency

Nullification often describes the segregationist actions during the Civil Rights era of the 1950s and 1960s to justify the refusal to enforce the Supreme Court’s orders to integrate schools and end Jim Crow laws and practices (Bartley 1999, 126-127, Lowndes 2008, 40-41). The conservative insurgency fueled by Reagan’s rise to power was founded on the philosophy of nullification. However, nullification was also apparent in the political environment during the Obama presidency. In many ways, the political extremism that appeared in the Obama-era mirrored the racial backlash in the 1950s and 1960s’ opposition to desegregation. Ornstein and Mann describe how political nullification was apparent during the Obama Administration. They explain how the Republican Party enacted a unified strategy “to oppose, obstruct, discredit, and nullify every one of Obama’s important initiatives” (Ornstein and Mann, 2012, 9).

The pattern of nullification is supported by the Congressional Republican leaders’ statements and actions towards Obama. In October 2010, the Speaker of the House, John Boehner (R-OH), stated that the GOP plan for Obama’s agenda was to “kill it, stop it, and slow it down” (Barr 2010). The Senate Republican Leader, Mitch McConnell, stated that as the incoming Majority Leader, “The single most important thing we want to achieve is for President Obama to be a one-term president” (Green 2011). Some may argue that the goal of every opposition party is to contest the president’s agenda. However,
the Republican response to the Obama presidency was to obstruct his agenda and block the President’s legislative initiatives.

Seemingly, the Congressional Republicans took advantage of the racial sentiments of their base. Obama’s social policies were commonly associated with overt racist messages. The messages that appeared during the Obama Administration were certainly more pronounced because of Obama’s racial heritage. However, it is not necessary to use racial overtones to express disapproval for policies. The racial images were demeaning to Obama. They portrayed him as an African savage, a thug, and a secret Muslim. Pictures depicted him and Mrs. Obama as apes and gorillas. Such images were used to undermine and weaken public support for his policies and legislative initiatives. They also served to remind Americans that if they supported and used these programs, they would be stigmatized and associated negatively with Blacks. Often, these images appeared when anti-Obama conservatives racialized his policies, even though the legislation was intended to help Americans of all races (Feagin 2012, 205; Skocpol and Williamson 2011, 85; The Washington Post 2016, 148).

One of the most flagrant racial insults directed at Obama came from the birther movement. Followers of this movement believe that Obama was not born in the United States and therefore, did not meet the citizenship requirements to legitimately qualify to be the President. The birthers insisted that his birth certificate was falsified. They developed a multitude of conspiracy theories that were circulated within anti-Obama constituencies, such as the Tea Party movement (Tessler and Sears 2010, 142). The most egregious peddler of the birther movement was Donald Trump, Obama’s successor. For five years, Trump joined the efforts of the birther movement to discredit the legitimacy of the first African American president by publicly and persistently stating Obama was born in Kenya. Not until the final months of the 2016 presidential campaign did Trump give into public pressure, admitting Obama was indeed a legitimate American president (Collinson and Diamond 2016; Dionne 2016, 310; Montanaro 2016).

The persistence of the birther movement forced the first African American president to be the first president to produce his birth certificate. On April 27, 2011, Obama addressed the White House press corps and stated he was releasing his birth certificate. He stated the topic had become a major
distraction and impeded his efforts to pass his agenda in Congress to reduce the deficit and stimulate the economy (Obama 2011; Tumulty and Kornblut Washington Post, 2011). Mary Rucker states that the birther movement was more than just a conspiracy theory. The denial of Obama’s citizenship was part of a longstanding belief that Blacks can never be considered legitimate citizens of this country. She argued the White Americans who subscribed to the birther theory could not accept that a Black man could represent what they perceived as White values in a predominately White nation (Rucker 2013, 57).

Tesler and Sears (2010) describe how non-racial issues, such as welfare and crime, became disproportionately associated with African Americans, evoking racial beliefs that Blacks are predisposed to the behavior associated with these policies. The racism voiced during the Obama Administration significantly affected how conservative voters viewed his policy priorities that were completely unrelated to race. These voters were either unwilling or unable to separate Obama’s race from policies intended to support all Americans. The actions of these conservative leaders and the electorate that supported birtherism and promoted the racialized images of Obama engaged in a long-standing practice using racial resentment to undermine social policies and the politicians who support those policies. Such actions demonstrate how the “spillover of racialization” was inserted into every political debate during the Obama administration, even when the policy was not related to race (Tesler and Sears 2010, 80).

Some of Obama’s critics did not engage in birtherism, but they used racially coded language and statements that encouraged anti-Obama voters to question Obama’s loyalty and fitness to serve the American public. Republicans with national stature, such as Newt Gingrich and former New Hampshire governor John Sununu, were engaged in efforts to spread the misconception that the President of the United States was lying to the American public about his citizenship. Gingrich stated that Obama was the “most dangerous president in modern American history”. Sununu also stated that he wished the President “would learn to act like an American.” Critics and supporters of Gingrich’s and Sununu’s comments heard them as dog whistle code words meant to grab the attention of the voters and the media. The insertion of racist code words could be interpreted as a reflection of Gingrich’s and Sununu’s internal racist views and values, but their actions to marginalize Obama may permit other politicians and activists
to believe they can call Obama a criminal, declare that he lied about his birth certificate, and tell their constituents the first African American president does not know how to behave as an American (Dyson 2016, 135).

The racist treatment Obama received from the Republican Party may have influenced his willingness to advocate for traditional liberal policies. Ta-Nehisi Coates’ (2017) criticism of Obama as a political centrist, and at times having conservative views, reflected Obama’s understanding that to be accepted as president, he had to carefully navigate a language that was palatable to a critical mass of American voters, both Black and White, to secure his political base. His preference to operate as a pragmatic bridge builder demonstrated awareness that his political power was limited because of his race. Coates also asserts that the Republican Party’s reaction to Obama was a symptom of the extreme political polarization that mischaracterized the depth of racial animosity and continues to impact the American presidency. Obama was operating in an environment in which the nation thought itself enlightened enough to elect a Black man as president and that his election represented racial progress. However, he was also aware the people could not accept a Black man governing the nation (Coates 2017, 120-123). Coates proposes that Americans hold a deep rooted fear of what he calls “Good Negro Government.” In other words, the fear is that if Blacks are empowered to govern effectively, the systems that have sustained structural racism will be dissolved and the nation will achieve social and economic equality (Coates 2017, 10-11).

The aforementioned analysis and the following three points help to explain the upcoming key discussions on the impact of Reagan’s rhetorical frame. First, Reagan’s color-blind rhetoric masked the depth of racism and fear of African Americans and other non-Whites that was revealed during the Obama Administration. Second, Democratic Presidents Clinton and Obama used the opportunity to take centrists or conservative political positions because they were more likely to have political achievements with conservatives, than if they supported policies appearing to provide benefits for racial minorities. Third, influential constituencies continue to believe that White supremacy is the only acceptable philosophy to guide our economic and social policies.
Study Focus: The Longevity of Reagan’s Rhetorical Frames

The previous discussion examined how the Democratic and Republican parties used racialized frames, and showed how Reagan’s coded rhetorical frames have influenced the presidency since he left office in 1989. The focus of this study is to demonstrate how Ronald Reagan’s continued influence on the Southern Strategy has affected the way White middle and working class Americans view the role of government. Reagan’s influence on the Southern Strategy in the decades since he left office in 1989 is central to the Republicans’ ability to cultivate broad support among all White Americans. He eliminated the social safety net by contrasting racial and socioeconomic stereotypes about pathological behavior of the low-income minorities with images associated with White middle class values and expectations (Feagin 2012, 181-182). In the post-Reagan era, Republican and Democratic presidents have embraced Reaganism. The use of these frames demonstrates they have embraced Reagan’s code language and political philosophies. They signal to White voters that they are protecting White middle class interests and moral standards by voting against policies they perceive as favoring minorities. But, they also encourage Whites to vote against their own economic interests (Dionne 2016, 180; Rucker 2013, 129; Zarefsky 2015, 32). The unwillingness to confront the impact of coded language prevents the United States from addressing the most basic social needs of all citizens. Therefore, racism is allowed to be an intractable problem instead of opening an opportunity to find commonality in spite of racial and ethnic differences.

The Multigenerational Use of the Politics of Pathology in Presidential Rhetoric

In the nearly 50 years that separate the beginning of Nixon’s term and the end of the Obama presidency, every president has linked race to pathologically or socially deviant behavior. White voters were ensured that their administrations supported White middle class values. Such values separated them from non-White individuals who made bad or irresponsible decisions that negatively impacted their economic situation. Presidencies manifested this separation with Richard Nixon’s “us versus them”
dichotomy. He used the language of racial resentment to make implicit appeals to the silent, White majority. His tactics encouraged Whites to consider themselves as victims of race riots and protests by Blacks (Engel 2010, 314). Nixon’s influence in Republican politics ended with his resignation in 1974. However, Reagan’s rhetoric continued to refine the racial frame of “us versus them,” in which Whites were the victims of liberal policy advocacy, such as civil rights and women’s rights movement. He engaged his audience with “you and I” statements and discussed the dishonor of living in a sick, dysfunctional society that advances the interests of the low-income individuals while simultaneously harming the interests of middle class voters (Perlstein 2014, 543). The “you and I” frame from Reagan solidified the “us versus them” and “Black versus White” divisions that continue to undermine the belief that Americans of all races have common interests.

The “us versus them” frame also appeared during the Clinton and Obama presidencies. Both Clinton and Obama faced vehement opposition from conservatives during their terms in office. The racialized identity politics of White conservatives was clearly evident during the Obama presidency (Anderson 2016, 148; Dyson 2016, 5; Skocpol and Williamson 2011, 81-82). Because Obama was the first African American president, the policies he proposed were racialized even when they did not have a racial focus. The emergence of conservative activists, such as the Tea Party, against the Obama presidency and his policy priorities were direct attacks by conservative White Americans that may have encouraged him to turn away from his liberal positions and advocate for right of center political compromises.

In spite of Obama’s attempt to find a middle ground on racial issues and policies, the use of covert and overt racism were successful in limiting his administration’s economic agenda. Racially conservative activists, such as conservative radio commentators, Tea Party activists and members of Congress, undermined his administration’s ability to pass legislation to support programs that promoted social justice reform. Opponents convinced their constituencies that these policies threatened America’s standing as an exceptional nation (Rucker 2013, 155-156). Americans’ inability to reject the use of racial stereotypes in policy discussions, even policies beneficial to their own well-being, indicates that
American politics may have been permanently transformed. Paul Fryer discusses this transformation as the “great normative shift.” He concedes that Whites have developed a consensus that overt discrimination, such as legal segregation and views that Blacks are mentally inferior to Whites, are unacceptable. However, these same voters embrace more subtle forms of racism, such as the negative stereotype that portrays Blacks as lazy and irresponsible and, therefore, responsible for their lower economic status. These beliefs allow them to oppose substantive policies designed to reduce economic inequality even if the policies will also improve the economic standing of economically challenged White families (Fryer 2010, 253).

The Impact of the Reagan Effect and its Impact on Contemporary Poverty

The “great normative shift” explains why White Americans embraced conservative policies on welfare and social policies, re provides a foundation to examine King and Smith’s concept of “the Reagan Effect.” King and Smith attribute the multigenerational influence of the Reagan Revolution to his ability to develop a durable ideology for the conservatives coalition. The durability of his rhetoric can be linked to the dismantling of the social safety net by blending concepts of good and moral behavior with the adoption of color-blind policies (King and Smith 2011, 134-135). The concepts of “the normative shift” and “the Reagan Effect” allow for application of the color-blind rhetoric that appeared in the “A Time for Choosing” speech. The concepts provide an additional explanation for the continued efficacy of Southern Strategy among White voters into the 21st century, even though the candidates do not protect their economic interests.

Post-Reagan Democratic presidents have incorporated Reagan’s language that emphasized the reduction of government spending for low-income, inner city individuals while deemphasizing the negative economic impact of policies that were supported by conservative and corporate interests. Legislative initiatives associated with Democrats and liberals were unpopular with White working class voters who blamed their economic instability on the government spending that supported subsidies for the undeserving poor (Katz 2013, p. 179). Arguably, there are people who have made personal choices that
made it difficult to escape poverty. However, the institutions and structures of the American economy have been weakened for several complex reasons. The continued stigmatization of low-income communities prevents the public from discussing business and government practices and policies that contribute to increased poverty. For example, wage theft, paying employees less than they have earned, contributes to poverty. Employees subjected to wage theft are forced to work off the clock or not paid for overtime hours. Deregulation and the lack of reduced funding for state and federal agencies that have a statutory responsibility to protect workers have left workers unprotected (Draut 2016, 50). Instead of finding political solutions for problems that contribute to income instability, which are not caused by an individual’s personal decisions, many policy makers describe poverty in ways that not only show a lack of empathy for the poor, but also use stigmatizing language to describe poverty. The stigmatization is used as an excuse to defund government investments in the workforce, including workplace regulations, union protections, and the social safety net (Abramsky 2013, 51-52).

The widespread nature of economic inequality suggests that those who are in poverty should be able to associate conservative economic policies with their inability to achieve economic instability. However, many low-income whites will not advocate or provide political support for anti-poverty programs. This lack of support is evident from 2008 to 2010, even after Americans faced the worst economic recession since the Great Depression. Social programs continue to remain highly racially stigmatized among voters. Research conducted by Skocpol and Williamson on Tea Party activists demonstrates that the frame for the deserving low-income has specifically narrowed to the point that anyone who uses public assistance is perceived as an individual who has not earned their way and are abusing public expenditures. Therefore, no justification exists in their minds for the use of public spending. Individuals who use anti-poverty programs are accused of inflicting personal harm to those who do not use public assistance (Skocpol and Williamson 2012, 77-80). The political arguments are intentionally developed using racial codes to blame the economic woes of middle class families on the actions of the low-income minority populations who are perceived as intentionally failing to contribute to the wellbeing of the American way of life (Haney-Lopez 2013, 163; Skocpol and Williamson 2012, 82).
The change in public opinion related to spending for the economically vulnerable is traceable to Reagan’s long-term standing as the Republican Party’s standard bearer. No other Republican leader had articulated to party members the values and policies essential to the identity of the Republican Party. For example, President Eisenhower was considered a fiscal conservative. However, as President, he held off attempts by the right wing of the Republican Party to remove funding for New Deal programs. He understood many Americans had accepted the policies of a limited welfare state as part of the support structure that provided economic security to families since the years of the Great Depression (Kabaeservice 2011, 38). By the 1964 election, Movement Conservative activists had primed conservative leaning voters to be skeptical and resentful of the perceived intrusive nature of “big government.” Reagan frequently stated throughout his career, “We can’t solve our problems through more government and government planning” (Davenport and Lloyd 2013, 55). The content of Reagan’s speeches from 1964 through his presidency did not change.

The reaction of the press and political analysts to the election of Donald Trump as president provides an additional reason to question the culture versus structure divide. Members of the press and political analysts continue to attribute Hillary Clinton’s loss to the Democratic Party’s inability to attract White working class voters. The general conclusion is that the Democratic Party has lost working class voters because of the party’s focus on identity politics. The belief of many political pundits is that the White working class voters will not support the Democrats because they are too focused on policy issues that are associated with racial minorities and have ignored the needs of White families. Consequently, pundits often assert that voting for Trump does not make his supporters racist. They further argue that liberal priorities have not just alienated White working class voters, but Democratic politicians have become completely unaware of how average Americans live and are ignorant of the challenges these families face on a daily basis. Therefore, messages and policy proposals directed to the working class by the Democratic Party do not resonate with Trump voters (Boyd, April 2017; Martin and Burns, December 2016; Kristof, April 2007; Lilla, November 2016; Rich, March 2017).
Ta-Nehisi Coates (2017) challenges this narrative. He argues that those who advocate for the Democratic Party to prioritize White working class voters over their coalition of diverse constituencies are asking the party to overlook, not evaluate why, White working class voters can overlook overt bigotry and vote against their own interests. He states the focus on the White working class ignores the fact that non-White working class voters have faced the same economic challenges as White working class voters. Yet, there is a resistance for Whites to join in coalition with non-Whites to address the issues that impact the economics of workers of all races, such as downsizing, outsourcing, wage stagnation, health care access, and affordability, instead of placing the emphasis solely on those perceived as White working class policy interests. Finally, Coates asserts that although White working class voters are considered “salt-of-the-earth” Americans, they are susceptible of supporting racist ideas and policies (Coates 2017, 325 and 333).

Such statements imply that the needs of the White working class do not perceive that the same structural changes that undermine their economic stability are no different than those facing non-Whites. Yet, their support for anti-minority policies demonstrate they embrace arguments that blame non-whites for their economic insecurity. In turn, this shows that these voters want to remain separate from the politics of non-White Americans. This distance reflects a failure to concede the systemic bigotry that continues to influence American politics. In spite of the continued cultural and racial diversification of our national demographics, large segments of White voters continue to resist aligning their economic interests with those of non-Whites. A deeper understanding is needed to learn why race continues to divide voters who have the same class and economic interests.

Conclusion

In the six decades since Ronald Reagan became the leader of Movement Conservatism, the political battle for the forgotten man is the defining domestic issue of American presidential politics. While this study only focuses on how presidents discuss social welfare spending through the prism of race, the American experience of racial divisions has a significant influence on the way that Presidents
manage the racial climate in a way to demonstrate that the economic interests of Whites will take priority over the economic interests of Blacks and other people of color. Although the US continues to make gradual progress in the area of racial equality, the manipulation of race through the Southern Strategy’s use of stigmatizing language has impeded Americans from finding common economic interests. The study examines how Ronald Reagan’s use of color-blind rhetoric for the forgotten man has permanently transformed the American presidency and the country’s values on government investment in the social safety net.

As I begin Chapter Two, I refer back to Senator Obama’s statement in his 2008 speech on why the intractability of race in America’s racial divisions is the reason many of our social issues remain needlessly unresolvable. The next chapter focuses on a discussion of the history of White resentment in the context of Black resistance and achievement. Discussions of the Southern Strategy and White resistance as pathways to political power often neglect the development of White resistance from the end of slavery through the current times. This history of the forgotten Black man is just as important as the history of the forgotten White man in the development of the Southern Strategy. The history outlined in Chapter Two explains how the tensions between the forgotten Black man and the forgotten White man have shaped American presidential rhetoric.
Chapter Two

Reconstruction, Rage, and Resentment: A Historical Review of the Black Forgotten Man

Introduction

This chapter discusses the history of the forgotten man from the African American perspective. It describes how White racism and its reiterations of violence and political backlash shaped the political environment as African Americans throughout the nation demanded equality from the end of the Civil War to 1968. The “forgotten man” is a political label commonly used to describe working and middle class Whites who work hard, play by the rules, and pay their taxes to the government. Although the Civil Rights Movement always has focused on economic equality, the “forgotten man” label is not associated with its cause. The focus on the White “forgotten man” is visible in the explanations that journalists use to explain the voting patterns of working-class White voters. For example, the press often explains Hilary Clinton’s loss to Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election due to her inability to relate to White working class voters. Their argument is that Clinton did not recognize the importance, or alternatively, was dismissive of White blue collar workers who were justifiably angry because they of the significant impact of wage stagnation and unemployment in midwestern states that formerly produced well-paid jobs in the manufacturing and auto industry sectors (Ball 2016; MacGillis 20016; Theissen 2017).

The election of Donald Trump to the presidency will be analyzed for decades to come. However, an over reliance on the argument that Clinton’s loss is due to her inability to appeal to White blue-collar workers assumes that only working-class voters who were disrespected or alienated in the 2016 election were Whites. This does not mean that White working-class voters do not have legitimate grievances and expectations of the government. The wage stagnation and income inequality are significant social problems in the United States. However, the problem of racism or xenophobia, undermines the development of transformative economic agenda that would benefit the White working class. Justin Gest describes this as “welfare chauvinism.” (Gest 2016, 41).
The depth and complexity of the fight for equality is often missing from the discourse on the development of the Southern Strategy because it is considered Black history and treated separately from American or Southern history. The analysis of White working class voters ignores the plight of working class people of color. More specifically, the invisibility of African American working class voters in such does not provide the opportunity to discuss how policies that undermine the economic stability of White workers are often more harmful to African American workers. John McCullough (2019) argues that journalists constructed an image of working class voter as a blue collar, small town, middle-aged, hard-hat wearing, White male. However, the reality is that the majority of the Trump voters that were designated as working class made between $100,000 and $200,000 a year. The working class were actually culturally conservative members of the business class that voted for an agenda that would halt, and even roll back, the progress of women, racial minorities, and low-income populations (McCullough 2019).

Malaika Jabali (2019) further refines McCullough’s argument in her analysis to explain her views on why Clinton loss the state of Wisconsin. She agrees that the plight of the Black forgotten man was marginalized in the working class narrative. However, Jabali also argues the Clinton and the press failed to understand how the confluence of centrist conservative Democratic Party policies such as welfare reform, and school vouchers, and combined with voter suppression have been particularly harmful to Black workers, and therefore, led to her defeat in Wisconsin (Jabali 2019). Jabali’s analysis indicates that the legitimate grievances of the “forgotten Black man” are repeatedly marginalized and improperly evaluated within the context of electoral politics.

This chapter explains how the historical narrative has been manipulated to marginalize the political and economic struggles of African Americans since the Civil War. Its inclusion provides scholars, students, and the public with a more comprehensive understanding of how the nation evolved politically, socially, and economically. Readers will learn how African American activism precipitated White resentment and racial backlash, that subsequently influenced the evolution of racial politics. This interdisciplinary discussion is essential because it provides a broader understanding of the roots of White
backlash and resentment. Scholars from political science, history, and anthropology explain that these roots are more complicated than explanations that focus on the political attitudes of Whites and their preferences for racial and socially conservative values. These explanations are disconnected from government sanctioned discrimination and acts of extreme violence. The long-term success of the Southern Strategy is clearly connected to a long history of extreme political repression and violence. These factors must be integrated in political discussions so that citizens have a contextual understanding of why presidents have discussed social spending programs within racially marginalized frames. In a plenary address to the 2018 Policy History Conference, political scientist Bartholomew Sparrow spoke of the necessity of including an interdisciplinary context in our scholarship.

(It is) very frustrating to read political science on a constitutional issue or the courts that ignores the constitutional literature or legal scholarship, just as presidential scholars not consult biographers and other chroniclers of presidents, their administrations, and their times. This means more work, but if our subjects touch on political sociology, political psychology, constitutional law, political culture, military history, or other areas, then it is on us to know what the sociologists, psychologists, legal scholars, anthropologists, and others are writing. It seems that our goal is robust, intellectually honest, and cumulative scholarship, to “get it right.” The corollary of this is that this type of scholarship—at once descriptively thick, inductive, and conceptual—puts a premium on expositional skills and historical analysis. Writing for multiple disciplinary audiences, means avoiding jargon and taking less for granted (Sparrow 2018).

This chapter is an attempt to do as Sparrow suggests and provide a more accurate description of the development of the Southern Strategy with the inclusion of historical research.

I. The Marginalization of African American History in the Study of the Southern Strategy

African Americans largely have been marginalized from the political discourse related to economic and middle class politics. The struggles of Black Americans have never received the same treatment and respect given to White Americans. In fact, for centuries, Black American efforts to achieve equality have been repressed, restrained, and often subjected to violence. The discussions of the impact of the Civil Rights Movement on the Southern Strategy often fail to mention the length, complexity, and
comprehensive description of the extreme violence that African Americans faced from the end of the Civil War through the implementation of the Southern Strategy in the post-Civil Rights era.

The inclusion of the African American experience and perspective is essential in the effort to address the narrative of the Southern Strategy and explain the complexity of the manifestation of White resentment and backlash in the political dialogue. This inclusion is needed because the narrative of the Southern Strategy has been mainstreamed and discussed well beyond the community of scholars in the academy. For decades, it has been discussed by journalists and political pundits who promote overly simplified explanations to voters in countless media outlets. They repeat their limited understanding of the strategy and only discuss how it evolved from the Nixon campaign to cultivate voters by exploiting White anger related to the passage of the Civil Rights legislation of Lyndon Johnson’s Administration (Buchanan 2010; Eaton 2011; Ehrenfreund 2015; Oreskes 1989; Risen, 2006). Further, there is little discussion on how the evolution of the strategy has contributed to the problem of political extremism that not only exists today, but also has served as a pathway for Tea Party politics and the racialized environment that facilitated the election of Donald Trump to the presidency (Boag 2016; Burnett 2016).

Additionally, the most notable studies of the Southern Strategy and Southern politics are authored predominately by White men in order to explain the Republican Party’s increased influence in the South, the significance of backlash to party identity, and voting patterns (Aistrup 1996, 68; Black & Black 2002, 2-4; Key 1964 and 2006). White backlash is often discussed by showing how Southern White voters were angry with Democratic presidents and White politicians who supported desegregation and the enforcement of civil rights laws. Thus, the opponents of civil rights are designated as Southerners instead of Americans from all regions of the nation (Edsall and Edsall 1992, 154; Lamis 1990, 18; Kabaservice 2012; 148; Lowndes 2008, 93).

It appears that the subject of backlash is portrayed as a somewhat benign ideological disagreement that was racist, but with less harmful consequences than the overly racist actions taken by the Klu Klux Klan or White men who enforced Jim Crow segregation. As an African American female political scientist, I examine American politics through the perspective of race and gender. Thus, I find it
difficult to promote a dispassionate explanation of White backlash and racial resentment that perpetuates inequality in economic, social development, and criminal justice. This study will show that White backlash often manifested as brutal physical abuse and deadly violence. The term “backlash” fails to explain the story of severe domestic terrorism that African American’s faced as they fought to become free and equal citizens.

For decades, political science and history have focused on backlash by examining voting patterns, changes in party affiliations, and attitudes related to racialized policies through quantitative analysis (Crespino 2006; Edsall & Edsall 1992; Lowndes 2008; Phillips 2013). Often, qualitative analysis is the preferred research method in political science used to understand the influence of race in American politics. However, the findings are not easily translatable for those who do not have the skills needed to interpret statistical analysis (Black and Black 2002, 183; Gilens 2009, 195-201; Mendelberg 2001, 195-201). Qualitative analysis, and more specifically case studies, provides the opportunity to provide a historical context which is essential to needed discussions on difficult and uncomfortable issues. This type of analysis allows for a more nuanced examination of complex topics such as racism. Questions can be used to explore complicated policies. For example: Why did our presidents, elected officials, and citizens who were not affiliated with overtly racist organizations such as the Klu Klux Klan tacitly allow Blacks to be subjected to blatant discrimination and violence that often resulted in murder? How do our past policies influence challenges that exist today? What policies allow the police to murder unarmed Black men, women, and children without prosecution? And, are there links to the rise in anti-Muslim bias in the 21st century to the anti-German immigrant bias of the early to mid-20th century. Political science should expand the general knowledge of the influence of race on our politics and political institutions, including the presidency. The discipline can and must broaden the manner in which the development of the Southern Strategy is examined and explained.
The Tropes and Mythologies of Racism in America

From my perspective, the Southern Strategy is one of the most misunderstood and misinterpreted tropes of American politics. Journalists, political pundits, historians, and political scientists too often exclude complex descriptions of the decades’ long history of Black activism that placed sustained political pressure on White political institutions, yet not included as a significant, contributing factor for the rise of White massive resistance. The barbaric descriptions of White violence and criminal behavior against Black communities also are missing from the discussions. In addition, the significant contributions of Black women activists are marginalized.

The public’s understanding of America’s racial history and, by association, the Southern Strategy has been reduced to a trope. In large part, this reduction is due to the way Americans learn about and discuss the role of race in the development of democracy in an oversimplified narrative. Joseph Lowndes, Julie Novkov, and Dorian Warren (2008) explain the history of race is taught in a manner intended to “reassure” students that it is a story firmly based in progress. They explain race by using key historical milestones that show how the country found political solutions as compromises for legitimate disagreements. For example, Americans learn that slavery was inserted into the Constitution as a compromise to promote unity among the Founding Fathers. The narrative continues the discussion with the growth of slavery and tensions that led to the Civil War; it continues with the addition of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to expand civil and political rights to former slaves. Americans learn that after the Civil War, White Southerners developed Jim Crow laws that subjugated all Blacks below Whites; this subjugation remained in place until the Civil Rights era successfully eliminated discrimination. Lowndes, Novkov, and Warren also explain that victories from the Civil Rights era have been used to show that the country lives up to American ideals. Therefore, subsequent discussions of race are based in legitimate disagreements over the role that government may play to resolve contemporary policy concerns related to race (Lowndes, Novkov, Warren 2008, 1-2).

The general acceptance of this historical narrative that only focuses on racial progress and, in turn, marginalizes and ignores the problems that caused the implementation of racist policies, practices,
and racial resentment undermines Americans’ understanding of how race impacts our contemporary politics and policies. Ibram Kendi (2017) argues it is important to understand that discriminatory policies and practices have evolved out of the political, economic, social, and cultural self-interests of politicians and citizens. He states the answer to questions about why people choose to accept racism or remain silent when they know that policies or practices are discriminatory as due to the fact that these decisions benefit their self-interests (Kendi 2017, 19). Therefore, it is essential to examine how the Southern Strategy evolved from the intentional racial stigmatization and marginalization of the political actions of African Americans to shape American politics and the American presidency from the end of slavery to the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968.

The Proliferation of an Incomplete and Colorblind Civil Rights Narrative

The general American belief that the history and ideology of the United States are rooted in progress and equality is reflected in the manner that Americans celebrate the legacy of the most prominent civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, Jr. Every January, Americans observe King’s birthday and celebrate King’s struggle for racial equality. Inevitably, the focus during this time is placed on the last paragraph of his “I Have a Dream Speech” speech delivered at the March on Washington on August 28, 1963.

And when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all God’s children – Black men and White men, Jews and Gentiles, Catholics and Protestants - will be able to join hands and to sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, “Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, we are free at last” (Washington 1986, 220).

This paragraph is embraced widely by the public. Americans, the media, and politicians embrace these words to emphasize the claim that because Jim Crow laws are illegal, most of America’s racial problems have been solved. Therefore, Blacks have the same opportunities to succeed as Whites. These words also call to celebrate a color-blind America that never existed. The focus on the last paragraph and the claim that King’s dream largely has been realized negates the fundamental core of his mission for civil rights. King did not fight or advocate for a colorblind society. His activism was fundamentally a
fight to achieve basic social and civil rights for Black Americans owed to every man and woman solely because they are human beings and deserve fair, equal treatment. Yet, this part of his speech is vigorously manipulated by anti-civil rights politicians. They use the argument that political policies should be evaluated through the lens of colorblindness instead of addressing specific, unique discriminatory actions that cause Blacks to be economically and socially disadvantaged.

Ronald Reagan resisted signing the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday legislation into law. Historians suggest that he did not support the bill because he had a record of opposing civil rights and of exploiting White resentment for political gain (Crespino 2012, 180; Dalleck 2000, 238-239; Theoharis 2018, 24). Reagan infamously made his first stop after winning the Republican presidential nomination in 1980 at the Neshoba County Fair in Philadelphia, Mississippi. While he was at the fair, he advocated for “states’ rights.” This campaign stop was controversial because Neshoba County symbolized White massive resistance to the civil rights movement. During the 1964 “Freedom Summer” voter registration project, three civil rights workers, James Channey, Andrew Goodman, and Mickey Schwerner, were lynched and submerged in a lake in Philadelphia, Mississippi, located in Nashoba County (Haney-Lopez 2013, 73; Kendi 2016, 450).

Reagan’s appearance in the county in which one of the most notorious tragic episodes of racial violence in civil rights history took place is a bullhorn that announced his racist beliefs. He prioritized his support from racist conservatives over the priorities of the civil rights community. Due to the success of a public campaign to make King’s birthday a national holiday, Reagan’s continued opposition appeared politically insensitive. Reagan’s correspondence with former governor Meldrim Thomsom (R-NH) regarding King not deserving the revealed his belief that King was a communist sympathizer with communist associations (Theoharis 2018, 24). When reporters asked Reagan in October 1983 if he supported Senator Jesse Helms’ statements that King was a communist, Reagan responded by saying “we will know in about 35 years” (Reagan 1983). This statement alluded to the required time frame for the public release of the FBI records that are related to the agency’s investigations of King and his activities (Clines 1983; Dallek 2009; Williams 1983).
Jeanne Theoharis (2018) also asserts that in spite of his long standing opposition, Reagan used his eventual signing of the national holiday bill into law to his political advantage. Theoharis argues that in spite of Reagan’s opposition to the legislation, he used the King holiday’s as a symbol to show that King enlightened the American public on the injustice of racism. Reagan praised King’s dream of a colorblind America. He also made statements to suggest that King educated the American people on the problem of discrimination which he suggested was a problem of the heart. He also stated that racial discrimination was largely repaired when President Johnson signed the 1964 and 1965 Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts into law. Reagan’s remarks minimized the problem of racism as a systemic issue that has perpetuated inequality since the nation’s founding. His focused on the racial tensions of the 1950s and 1960s as if these tensions did not exist in the 1970s and 1980s. However, his most egregious claim was that the problem of racism had been resolved and that “traces of bigotry still mark America” (Reagan 1983; Theoharis 2018, 25-26).

Theoharis (2018) also describes the rhetoric Reagan used to portray the trajectory of racial progress in America as a fable that would grow in strength as the distance from the Civil Rights era increased. Subsequent presidents from George H. W. Bush through Barack Obama would follow Reagan’s example and claim that King’s rhetoric was a call for a color blind America (Theoharis 2018, 6). Reagan’s speech was not a tribute to the successes of the Civil Rights Movement and to alter the nation’s history, but an attempt to thwart ongoing demands for racial equality. Reagan stated:

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Now our nation has decided to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by setting aside a day each year to remember him and the just cause that he stood for. We’ve made historic strides since Rosa Parks refused to go to the back of the bus. As a democratic people, we can take pride in knowing that we Americans recognized a grave injustice and took action to correct it. And we should remember that in far too many countries, people like King never have the opportunity to speak out at all (Reagan 1983).

Reagan’s remarks are significant for an additional reason. He conveyed to the American people that King’s successes meant the government did not need to remain engaged in civil rights. In other words, the problem of racial bigotry was no longer a national problem. Bostdorff and Goldzwig (2005) asserted that Reagan claimed racial bigotry was a problem of the heart or one of an individual, moral
failing. Therefore, because of King, the United States had become a more just society. Racial discrimination was the result of a uniformed society rather than the consequence of a nation that built its wealth on the back of systematic institutional discrimination and the exploitation of Black labor (Bostdorff and Goldzwig 2005, 670).

Reagan ignored the claims that King made to describe how systemic racial discrimination impacted Black Americans, which was initiated after Emancipation and continues to be relevant into the 21st century. His speech was a rebuke of America’s consistent failure to establish and enforce racial equality for African Americans. At the beginning of the speech, King stated:

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free, one hundred years later, the life of the Negro today is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination; one hundred years later, the Negro lives on the lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity; one hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and he finds himself in exile in his own land.

So, we’ve come here today to dramatize a shameful condition. In a sense we’ve come to our nation’s capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was the promise that all men, Black men as well as White men, would be guaranteed unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note in as so far as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro a bad check: a check that has marked “insufficient funds.” We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so, we’ve come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice (Washington 1986, 217).

The focus on the phrases that celebrates a color-blind America in the “I Have a Dream” speech is also a mischaracterization of King’s activism. Civil rights activists always have considered economic access and equality to be on par with issues of voting rights and public accommodations. For example, the policy focus of the 1963 March on Washington was broader than the demand to end Jim Crow segregation for public accommodations and the right to vote. It was a march for jobs and social justice. The organizers of the March called for an end to government sanctioned employment discrimination (Jones 2013, 6). Yet, the focus on this part of King’s speech reduces the significance of the contributions
that he and the Civil Rights Movement made to the face of White resistance when King is labeled as “a dreamer.” The focus on King’s dream and Jim Crow racism allows Americans to feel that even if racism is still a problem in America, the nation is much better off than when King was alive. Yet, his declaration that America has defaulted on its promissory note to African Americans expresses the uncomfortable truths that America has never truly fulfilled its obligation to treat Blacks as equal citizens. In fact, our nation has a shameful, violent past filled with countless episodes of suppressing King’s advocacy as well as the activism of the many unknown men and women who fought for the Black Forgotten Man. This resistance to accepting historical facts that perpetuated systemic racism limits the understanding of why racial politics continues to have the power to perpetuate and support unnecessary political divisions.

**The Expansion of Black Rights as a “Racial Threat”**

The explanation of the “backlash theory” of the Southern Strategy must include accounts of the actions that White moderates in the South and other regions of the country took to impede racial progress. An honest, comprehensive inclusion of Black history to explain the longevity of White resentment should also explain that White backlash is not just a term to describe anger towards Blacks or the federal government. It also describes the fear White Americans continue to hold because they fear that Black political equality is a direct threat to White political and social power. Lublin’s racial threat theory explains that White backlash is caused when Whites believe the increases in Black population and power poses a direct threat to White political dominance (Lublin 2004, 147). In other words, White backlash or White opposition has been a central component in the development of American politics well before the mid-20th Century civil rights era. It evolved in the decades since emancipation and Reconstruction. Therefore, the discussion of the relationship between Black activism and White resistance is essential to understanding how the politics of resentment served as the impetus to the Southern Strategy.
II. The Development of Civil Rights in America: The Negro’s Journey from Captivity to Exile

The Contradictions of the American Creed

Political scientists often use the research of Gunner Myrdal (1944), a Swedish economist, to explain the pervasiveness of social and economic inequality between Blacks and Whites during the depression era and the hypocrisy of the American creed of equality for all. Gunner Myrdal questioned the American system of racial inequality. In the late 1930s, the Carnegie Foundation funded Myrdal’s study to examine the impact of race relations on American society. Myrdal posed questions to determine why Negroes were so poor and economically disenfranchised, not just in the South, but across the United States. He examined the contradictions of the American Creed, which he described as “American economic liberalism.” Myrdal explains that this concept is also called “rugged individualism.” These terms describe the belief of Americans citizens in the social ideal and political philosophy that its citizens have both the individual right and responsibility to strive for social and economic mobility (Myrdal 1944, 238).

Myrdal discussed the “Negro problem” as a paradox of conflicting values that allows Whites, including those who face the same economic challenges and disadvantages as Blacks, to fully embrace the American values of liberty, justice, and equal opportunity on one hand while conversely subjecting Black Americans to violent opposition to any and all measures that may extend these values due to them as American citizen (Myrdal 1944, 33). He wrote that Americans embraced the philosophy of equality while enforcing discrimination that impedes Blacks from reaching economic, social, and legal parity with Whites. In his study, American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy, Myrdal stated:

We must remember that the whole white Southern culture, generation after generation, is laboring to convince itself that there is no conflict between the egalitarianism in the American Creed and the economic discrimination against Negroes. And they can never get enough good reasons for their behavior. They pile arguments one on top of the other (Myrdal 1944, p. 243).

Although Myrdal’s study was conducted over seven decades ago and significant progress has been made in the efforts to apply the values of American Creed to provide Blacks and other non-White Americans with the opportunity to partake in the system of American economic liberalism on equal terms.
as Whites at that time, there continues to be a cyclical pattern of White resentment and backlash that remains central to understanding how race has influenced American politics. And, that knowledge must include the narrative on the ways that resentment and backlash undermine the tenets of American Creed that all Americans are born with the fundamental right to be free and equal citizens.

**The Persistence of White Rage**

White backlash, or as political scientist Carol Anderson calls it, White rage, is visible when challenges are made to break racial barriers and expand opportunity for non-Whites; it has consistently appeared throughout American history. Anderson defines White rage as the pattern of legal and government actions to limit Black progress; it appears when Black advancement is visible to Whites. Anderson states:

> The trigger for White rage, inevitably, is Black advancement. It is not the mere presence of Black people that is the problem; rather it is blackness with ambition, with drive, with purpose, with aspirations and with demands for full and equal citizenship. It is blackness that refuses to accept subjugation, to give up. A formidable array of policy assaults and legal contortions has consistently punished Black resilience, Black resolve. (Anderson 2016, 7).

Anderson also suggests White rage operates in ways that are not always visible as outright violence. Racial resentment can manifest not just in visible discriminatory practices, but also through the legislatures, courts, and government bureaucracies. Nor is opposition to Black advancement solely relegated to Southern racism, but is a phenomenon that has been experienced across the nation. African Americans have faced fervent resentment in the North in ways that have been equally harmful to their effort to gain economic and legal freedoms as it has been for Blacks living in the South. The persistence of rage has served to undermine and weaken our democracy. It also has served as the justification for spending billions of dollars for the purpose of incarcerating a disproportionate number of Blacks as part of the “war on crime” (Anderson 2016, 9). The history of White backlash and rage must not be limited solely to the efforts to desegregate the Jim Crow South in the 1950s and 1960s. This history must include
the context of a 150 year old battle to dissolve the remnants of slavery and the racial caste system that continues to prevent economic and social mobility for significant segments of Blacks in America.

As Michelle Alexander explains, the caste system established by the institution of slavery continues to be maintained by shifting social and legal structures that use racism to maintain a racial hierarchy, keeping Blacks in a social position below Whites. The right to be free after the Civil War was significantly tempered because state governments across the nation inserted laws that imposed social controls on Blacks. Like Anderson, Alexander argues that every time progress is made to end a major racial barrier, new social controls are simultaneously inserted into government policies and bureaucracies. Alexander explains the backlash against the Civil Rights Movement is primarily portrayed as the efforts to end affirmative action. Instead, backlash of that era began with the judiciary’s imposition of a system of mass incarceration (Alexander 2012, 38-41).

The issue of White backlash also must be placed in a context that demonstrates it occurs as well when Blacks demand the right to vote or protest for human rights and achieved economic mobility. Political activism for economic and civil rights always has been challenged by legal and legislative restrictions, violence, and rhetorical degradation. This discussion places the development of the Southern Strategy within the historical patterns of White rage and White backlash in the context of collective, longstanding efforts of Black Americans to become full participants in American society.

**Totalitarianism and America’s Racial Past:**

The *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics* defines totalitarianism as a dictatorial form of a centralized government that regulates every aspect of private behavior (Oxford 2009). The concept of totalitarianism helps to explain the severity of White backlash as a response to Black political activism. Totalitarianism accurately describes the harsh treatment Blacks received after emancipation. It also demonstrates White backlash is much more than an innocuous voting behavior or the acceptance of racial stereotypes to justify policy preferences. The occurrence of backlash is habitual and appears when Whites apply totalitarian policies and violence to prevent Blacks and other minorities from exercising
their equal rights as citizens. The term totalitarianism challenges and offends the fundamental belief that America exemplifies the standard of freedom for nations around the world to follow and emulate. However, the history of African Americans’ efforts to be free and have full citizen rights challenges the common belief that American is a model nation that serves as an example for nations around the world.

In spite of the long civil rights history, African Americans continue to fight for basic human rights. Though there have been many reforms, they have never provided permanent change and relief. Paul Butler (2017) asserts that “African Americans have never been free. African Americans have never been safe.” Butler explains that civil rights reforms stigmatized racial discrimination, but it has not ended it. Even as other ethnic groups entered American society, Blacks have remained among the most stigmatized demographic group and the group most unable to achieve social and economic parity with Whites (Butler 2017, 195).

Government enforcement of anti-discrimination laws is often temporary. Further, countless examples show how police violence and Whites acting as vigilantes have been accepted and inflicted by local, state, and federal government agencies for Blacks in ways that would not be tolerated by White citizens. The temporary nature of human rights is largely due to the American government’s unwillingness to address the totalitarian political interests that continue to undermine racial equality.

Butler’s assertion that African Americans have never been free or safe in the United States is further explained by Hannah Arendt’s (1973) scholarship on totalitarianism in the 19th and 20th century Europe. In this case, American White supremacy was developed to enforce a social and economic system that relegates African Americans to a second-class status. She states, “Every full-fledged ideology has been created, continued, and improved as a political weapon, and not as a theoretical doctrine” (Arendt 1973, 215).

Scholars can learn and apply Arendt’s studies on how race was constructed to unify citizens of German heritage to accept anti-Semitism as an ideology. Ultimately, anti-Semitism accompanied by the dehumanization of the Jewish people led to extreme violence and genocide. Scholars also can consider the impact of White backlash as well as the patterns of racially stigmatizing speech that create and exploit
the feelings of citizens within the nation. German “race-thinking” developed from the 1870s through the Nazi era as a means of awakening German ethnic sentiment to unite and identify as a common people with needs and concerns separate from citizens who were not ethnic German (Arendt 1973, 222-223). While many Americans may be offended by this comparison, it explains why the stigmatization of Black and other non-whites continues to be accepted readily by racially conservative Whites. It also serves as a reminder of how long descendants of slaves have been treated in America as less human.

The exploitation of fear and resentment excites extreme reactions to Black progress that continue to divide Americans. With every victory to end discrimination, new barriers are inserted into American life. Also, White resentment manifest as punitive and exploitative policies that are put in place to remove government funding for social services, education, infrastructure, and other proactive investments in non-White neighborhoods while providing funding for programs that focus on punitive, anti-drug, and anti-crime public policies (Alexander 2012, 104; Hayes 2017, 74). Finally, when the ultimate racial barrier fell and Barack Obama was elected for two presidential terms, the permissiveness of high profile shootings of unarmed African Americans seemed to become an epidemic (Anderson 2016, 166; Park and Lee, 2017). The outbreak of murders committed by police and vigilante individuals reminds African Americans that even after 150 years of civil rights activism, freedom from lynching is not an inherent, inalienable right. The failure to prosecute the shooters, regardless of evidence that shows their livers were not in imminent danger, sends two clear messages. First, White resentment is prevalent and widely accepted across American society. Second, the source for White resentment, African American success and progress, is often met with overt racism, punitive laws, and deadly violence. White backlash has shaped race relations since the Civil War. No matter how much progress is made, policies are put in place to ensure that racial equality will be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

III. The Two Reconstruction Periods in American History:

The history of racial backlash in America can be explained by examining the complex history of Black social progress and change in relation to the demands and expansions of rights for Blacks and other
people of color in two distinct periods of reconstruction. Historians generally consider the period of the first reconstruction as beginning in 1863 with the Emancipation Proclamation and ending in 1877 with the fall of the Republican government and removal of Union troops from the former Confederate states (Foner 1988, xvii). The second reconstruction is the era of Black activism that started during World War II and ended in 1982 with President Reagan’s first term in office. The backlash from the second reconstruction supported Ronald Reagan’s election to the presidency. Reagan’s agenda focused on the implementation of conservative policies that curtailed the civil rights policies of the 1950s and 1960s and social spending from New Deal and the Great Society programs (Marable 1984, 15 and 169). The inclusion of the concepts of reconstruction eras helps to demonstrate how the patterns of racial progress and backlash are intrinsically linked as America moves towards a more just, equal society.

The explanation of the two cycles of reconstruction also helps to place Carol Anderson’s theory that White rage and White backlash are central to understanding how racism continues to influence American politics generally and the American presidency specifically. As they pertain to the underlying study on the Southern Strategy, racial resentment and stigmatization have had many reiterations that go beyond the commonly defined existence of the Southern Strategy from 1968 to 1992 (Bass and DeVries 1976, 27 – 32; Lowndes 2008, 93). Further, the persistence of backlash forces the country to have repeated debates to determine if African Americans should be treated as equal citizens with legitimate social and economic needs, concerns, and demands.

**The First Reconstruction: The Foundation of White Backlash and Unearned Racial Advantage**

White backlash is not a product of the 20th century; it did not begin with the Civil Rights victories of the 1960s. The freedoms derived by Emancipation were followed by the establishment of laws that have shaped the problem of economic inequality between Whites and non-Whites. The civil rights activists of the mid-20th century fought to end 100 years of legalized poverty and economic exclusion. The Jim Crow laws that existed from Reconstruction through the 1960s were created by the insertion policies and political frames that have separated the economic interests of Whites from Blacks.
Legal scholar Daria Roithmayr (2014) argued that laws and cultural practices were put in place to limit the opportunity for Blacks to reproduce wealth from one generation to the next. She contended laws have reinforced structural limitations that impose residential segregation and, therefore, limit job opportunities to the area where a person lives. Cultural values include shared values, goals, and practices that reinforce practices that keep structures that reproduce wealth inaccessible to those excluded by law and practice (Roithmayr 2014, 23).

Roithmayr also stated that discriminatory laws directed at Blacks before and after slavery were instituted not just because of racism, but also to eliminate competition and protect the wages of White laborers, giving them an unearned advantage solely based on their race (Roithmayr 2014, 38). Roithmayr’s arguments are relevant to this study because the rhetorical frames and political practices that have defined backlash since Reconstruction have framed Whites as “the deserving” and Blacks as “the undeserving” beneficiaries of the American economy. Economic discrimination and inequality were created and enforced by government actions. Instead of an expansion of freedoms, Reconstruction ushered in new laws that undermined all efforts of former slaves to receive equal treatment under the laws.

The general public’s view of Reconstruction is as a “golden age” or positive era because a large number of former slaves were elected to political offices. Reconstruction is often depicted as a time of significant political achievement by freed slaves. However, many historians, such as Cox Richardson (2009), Foner (1988), and Franklin and Moss (1994), agree that assumption that Reconstruction was a positive era on the sole basis that many African Americans were elected to state and federal offices is incorrect. The political activism of Blacks during Reconstruction was mischaracterized by images of corruption and laziness that would cost the White man economic security and political power (Cox-Richardson 2009, 72; Franklin 1994, 225). Reconstruction failed to bring long term changes for Blacks because racist policies and politics negatively impacted their ability to produce lasting progressive social reform (Foner 1988, 603) At the end of Reconstruction, Blacks found they were under new systems of
oppression that reproduced slavery and economic inequalities for multiple generations of African Americans.

The Failure of the 13th Amendment and the Re-enslavement of Black Americans

On April 11, 1865, President Lincoln delivered his final public address and spoke of the inherent weakness of the 13th Amendment. Lincoln stated the question of suffrage for former slaves was the “unfinished business” of the Civil War. Blacks were free from slavery, yet they did not have the right to vote. Lincoln acknowledged that “the colored man” was inspired by the Union’s victory. He proposed that Black men who were highly intelligent or a Union veteran should receive the right to vote. Further, the reunification of the nation provided the justification for extending Negro voting rights. Yet, the refusal to extend these rights would be a regressive (Lincoln 2009, 3637).

In the post-Civil War years, former slaves continued to work with abolitionists to press for suffrage for all Black men. The right to vote was a high priority for the former slaves. Edna Medford Green (2006) stated that Lincoln’s martyrdom inspired former slaves to aggressively focus to establish a guaranteed right to vote. During Reconstruction, Blacks voted in extraordinarily high numbers. The participation rate for Blacks in many elections had up to 90% turnout. In addition, the Republican Party served as an important institution for Black political activism (Foner 1998, 291). The high level of political organization and activism stemmed from the belief that the rights of the Negro could not be protected unless they had guaranteed access to the ballot. They had no confidence that freedom from slavery would mean Whites would treat them as equal citizens (Green Medford 2006, 40-41).

Frederick Douglass (1865) discussed the mistrust former slaves held against the federal government’s commitment to protect their interests in his speech, “What the Black Man Wants;” he argued that in spite of the contributions that Negros made to the Union cause during the war, the federal government was willing to forgo advocacy for their rights to placate Confederate interests. Douglass stated:
You have called upon us to turn our backs upon our master, to abandon their cause and espouse yours; to turn against the South and in favor of the North...You have called upon us to expose ourselves to all the subtle machinations of their malignity for all time. And now, what do you propose to do when you come to make peace? To reward your enemies, and trample in the dust of your friends? Do you intend to sacrifice the very men who have come to the rescue of your banner in the South, an incurred the lasting displeasure of your masters thereby? (Douglass 1865).

Douglass’ concerns regarding the machinations of the South to eliminate political rights of the newly freed slaves proved true for the development of the 13th Amendment. Americans are taught the 13th Amendment of the Constitution freed the slaves. However, many are unaware of the loophole contained in the text that allowed the government to remove this right and reinsert the conditions of slavery that mirrored the conditions that existed before 1865. The text of Section 1 of the amendment states: Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States or any place subject to its jurisdiction (Smith 2011, 421).

This exception allowed state and local governments in the North and South to use the premise of the conviction of crimes to impose White supremacist laws, such as the Black Codes, to implement systems of convict labor that forced Blacks to work under inhumane conditions and without pay (Childs 2015, 16 and 154-157). By the time Reconstruction ended in 1877, the leasing of convicts to private business was legal in every former Confederate state with the exception of Virginia (Blackmon 2008, 56).

The concept of free but not free explains how the government allowed the development of Southern commerce based on the exploitation of involuntary Black labor. The exploitation of the 13th Amendment failed to provide former slaves with significant political tools, such as voting and the right to legal protections, against the actions of pro-Confederate politicians and slave owners to assert their rights as freed citizens. This perspective provides a fuller understanding that the Civil Rights movement always has been a comprehensive campaign to gain the right to use the same accommodations, secure the right to vote, housing, and a quality education. It was also a fight to ensure the government did not allow individuals and business the legal ability to perpetuate slavery. The early civil rights activists understood the issue of slavery was far from settled, and in fact, many former slaves had been re-enslaved with the consent of the government.
The system of convict leasing served as the human infrastructure that provided significant support for building the industrial South from the end of the Civil War until the end of World War II. The use of state-owned convicts provided business with an inexpensive, steady stream of non-union labor. The moniker of “convict” given to the men ensnared in these businesses misconstrues their status. The men were convicted of crimes they did not commit. When they were classified as convicts, they were forced to work on farms as well as coal mines, steel mills, and railroad tracks without pay. Their living conditions were equally inhumane. Historical records from state inspectors reported convict labor camps provided little food or water to the convicts. The camps were often without toilets and were “filthy beyond description” (Blackmon 2008, 73). The convicts were poorly fed and clothed; they frequently died of their injuries and illness because the businesses did not provide health care. They were subjected to extreme punishments, such as beatings with wet heavy leather straps, as well as mauling from dogs by overseers. The men in these camps died at high rates (Blackmon 2008, 73-74; Childs 2015, 34; McWhorter 2001, 20). The ability of states to place freed Blacks into the system of convict leasing shortly after the Civil War signaled that Black legislators did not have the ability to contain efforts to re-impose systems that reproduce slavery, such as the Black Codes.

**Black Codes**

After the Civil War, Whites were afraid they would become politically subordinate to the freed slaves. However, they maintained enough influence to prevent the development of black political power. Shortly after the war ended in 1865, newly freed slaves began organizing in mass meetings across the South to seek legal equality and demand the repeal of all racially discriminatory laws. Black Codes were established to define and limit their rights (Foner 1988, 199). In 1865, pro-Confederacy politicians also organized constitutional conventions in Arkansas, Virginia, Louisiana, and Tennessee to regain control of their state government from the federal government. And, they imposed legal restrictions on the political, economic, and social rights of the former slaves (Wilson 1965, 61, 62). The laws mirrored the slavery era and established that Blacks were legally and socially subordinate to Whites.
The laws impacted every aspect of life from birth to death. The laws regulated labor, voting and civic engagement, public accommodations, education, commerce, home and land ownership, and housing. Foner argued the central purpose of the Black Codes was to regulate the labor of the former slaves and legally recreate the labor conditions of slavery. Many state laws forced Blacks to work under contract for White plantations and landowners. Blacks who either quit their jobs or refused to work under contract were legally subjected to violence and imprisonment. States often required Blacks to produce written evidence they were employed. Conversely, economic opportunities were further restricted by laws that prohibited labor for Blacks outside of a plantation system and the contracted agreements that bound freedmen into a restructured system of slavery (Foner 1988, 199-200; Wilson 1965, 61-62).

The Black Codes served as a conduit for Whites to express their resentment; essentially, Blacks were forced to work and “pay for freedom.” Whites criminalized former slaves with laws that punished vagrancy, laziness, idleness, and public drunkenness and jailed them for these misdemeanors. The prisoners were placed under conditions that mirrored indentured servitude. Black Codes reinforced racist beliefs that former slaves were dangerous and uncivilized. Whites, including those who considered themselves to be reformers, supported efforts to “civilize” Blacks. Social reformers, government agents, and landowners believed in applying brutal physical punishment to force compliance with White social standards (Childs 2015, 70; Emberton 2013, 42 and 48; McWhorter 2001, 20). For example, the Mississippi Black Codes had a law to amend the vagrancy laws of the state. Vagrancy was defined as runaways, drunkards, pilfers. It prohibited lewd, wanton, lascivious behavior and speech. Any Negro accused of neglecting their employment, misspending their earning on immoral behavior, or failing to support their families was fined up to $100 and 10 days in jail. The same code also levied a poll tax that allowed the government to force any individual between the ages of 18 to 60 to contribute to the “Freedmen’s Pauper Fund.” The failure to pay the tax was viewed as “prima facie” evidence that the Negro was a vagrant (Wilson 1965, 68).

In many ways, the passage of the 13th Amendment rendered freedom meaningless. The restrictions on Black lives undermined all opportunities to make demands for equality. The right to have
American citizenship, the right to vote for Black males, the right to be free from discrimination, and due process of law established under the 14th and 15th Amendments were severely undermined by the lack of enforcement (Smith 2011, 421-422). The laws and practices that formed the Black Codes practices worsened the social conditions for Blacks and formed the foundation of government policies that contributed to the wealth gap that continues into the 21st century. Blacks would continue to live with the status of citizenship, however, with very little, if any, support from the government to allow them to exercise their rights.

**Free, But Not Free: The Legal Status of Former Slaves**

The ability of former slave masters to force former slaves to return to work on their plantations and businesses demonstrates that emancipation did very little to change the status of former slaves with Whites and the government. The freedom granted to them under the 13th Amendment did not grant them true equality. They were in a precarious situation where they were legally free, but essentially lacked legal protections. There was no way for Blacks to develop economic parity with Whites, which is due to the way the most troubling aspects of America’s racial history are removed from the accounts that discuss the restrictions of Black advancement in the 20th Century. This myth is used to promote a colorblind frame that does not include the impact of laws such as the Black codes in the narrative that states all Americans, regardless of race, have an equal opportunity to succeed. Jelani Cobb (2017) discusses this phenomenon as a misuse of history that perpetuates the mythology of equal opportunity for all. It undermines Americans’ understanding of how past and current policies and government leaders have contributed to the development of structural racism that maintains social and economic inequalities between White and Black Americans.

Cobb states, “The habitual tendency to excise the most tragic elements of history creates a void in our collective understanding of what happened in the past, and therefore, our understanding of the potential tragedy in the present” (Cobb 2017). Cobb’s explanation on the removal of the ugly, repressive aspects of American policy explains why White Americans believe the end of slavery meant that Blacks
had the same opportunities available to Whites. However, the legal condition of “free, but not free” made it impossible to develop the level playing field needed to establish full equality as Americans.

The Deserving and Undeserving Poor: Post-Civil War Poverty Relief Programs

The stigmatization that provided justification for the Black Codes also negatively impacted the ability of former slave to benefit from poverty relief programs. The ideology of American exceptionalism is largely based on the premise of individualism. More specifically, the value of individualism requires citizens to “pull themselves up by their bootstraps.” An individual’s success is based on his or her ability to make the decisions and obtain the opportunities necessary to prioritize his/her goals and needs to ensure they are economically and socially successful (Rucker 2013, 161). In spite of the fact as slaves were completely dependent on their slave masters for their basic human needs such as food and shelter, there was an unrealistic expectation that newly freed slaves should be treated as economically independent. The stigmatization of the Black Codes impacted the management of the post-civil war poverty relief programs. Daria Roithmayr’s (2014) argued that the legal structures established in the post-slavery era formed a foundation for the inequality that would produce a permanent disadvantage for Blacks that remains today (Roithmayr 2014, 6). The development of a two-tier safety net program was evident by the way the federal government and private organization applied different standards for former slaves and poor Whites to address the extreme poverty that impacted both populations after the war. The economic infrastructure of the South collapsed and caused tens of thousands of Whites and Blacks to become homeless, jobless, and landless. The destruction of farmlands and the burning of crops caused mass starvation. White veterans were labeled the “deserving poor” and received generous social insurance benefits (Williams 2003, 31-33). However, slaves and poor Whites were treated differently.

The federal government established the Freedmen’s Bureau to provide welfare services, such as food, clothing, education, and medical services, to destitute former slaves and White refugees (Isenberg 2016, 214; Williams 2003, 36). The leadership of the Freedmen’s Bureau provided relief to significant numbers of Blacks and Whites. However, the agency was stigmatized because it provided aid and
assistance to Blacks. Southern Whites viewed the bureau as a symbol of waste and dependency for the former slaves whom they marginalized as morally and intellectually unfit to live as freemen. Segments of the leadership of the Bureau believed Blacks were unfairly taking advantage of the government programs and such assistance would encourage Blacks to live a life of dependency, idleness, and vagrancy. (Emberton 2013, 76 and 78). Whites became increasingly resentful of the services provided to Blacks. These administrators refused to provide assistance and forced the freedmen to work. As the resentment for these programs increased, the distribution of the benefits significantly decreased (Williams 2003, 37-38).

Carole Emberton (2013) and Linda Williams (2003) argued the racial stigmatization of welfare was based on the assumption that aid to former slaves would be permanently dependent on government assistance (Emberton 2013, 79; Williams 2003, 52). Williams further asserted the Bureau’s racially biased views about government dependency was instrumental in cultivating the “truly needy” political frame. Blacks were forced to prove if they were appropriately needy when they applied for assistance from the bureau. For instance, Black men were expected to have a job that would support their families. The Freedmen’s Bureau also was directed to end the “inappropriate dependency” of Black women. The agency often refused to provide welfare to unwed mothers unless they could prove they were unable to take care of their children on their own. Many Black women and their children left the South. If they were unable to migrate to the North to find work or rent land that could be used for farming, those who needed assistance were forced to wash laundry for Whites without any payment (Williams 2003, 52-54). These conditions showed that slavery did not end at the conclusion of the Civil War.

**White Violence and Black Independent Movements**

The period of Reconstruction was an extremely dangerous time for former slaves. Whites expressed their resentment and reinserted their power over Blacks by using public murders of Black men and women, also known as lynching, to cause fear among those who would demand equal rights. Nearly 1,900 Black men and women were victims of lynch mobs between 1882 and 1910 (Tolnay and Beck...
1992; 104). Ida B. Wells (2015), a civil rights activist from the era, described how White segregationists accused Blacks of a variety of crimes, most commonly the rape of a white woman, to justify mob violence and the murders of hundreds of Black Americans. The violence was used as a tool to remind Blacks that they would always remain economically and socially subordinate to the White man (Wells 2015, 7-9). Wells clarified the focus of resentment even further. She expressed in her anti-lynching treatise, *Southern Horrors*, the violence of lynching and massacres reasserted White supremacy and was intended to undermine the emancipation of slaves and extension of the franchise to Blacks (Wells 2015, 21).

The inability to escape from the indignities and brutalities of racism forced Blacks to develop their own communities that provided economic independence from Whites. The extreme violence and oppression served as the impetus for Blacks to call for the development of economic independence movements that began in the last decades of the 19th Century and advanced through World War II. By the 1880s, a growing number of Blacks considered themselves to be a part of the “better” or aristocratic classes. They promoted education, religion, a strong work ethic, and advocated for temperance and conservative personal behavior. Many did not see their fate as intrinsically tied to the political and social challenges of those who remained in poverty. Some argued the poor were lazy and wanted the government to lift them from poverty instead of working by their efforts to enter the middle class (Cox Richardson 2009, 201-202). Their policy disagreements with reformers revealed class division that would reflect the differences in Black political leadership.

Early 20th Century activists or Black empowerment reflected these philosophical divisions. For example, Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. DuBois, and Marcus Garvey advocated that the training and education of the Black community was essential to overcoming the lack of opportunity caused by racist economic systems. They also promoted the philosophy of self-help as a means of gaining self-respect, dignity, and ultimately, as a means to build communities that supported the ambitions and culture of Black men and women (Broussard 2002, 23-26; DuBois 2012, 74-88; Franklin and Moss 1994, 270-276). The philosophies of Washington, DuBois, and Garvey were vastly different. However, they reflected the diversity of political thought and social opinions among Blacks in the first and second generations of the
post-slavery era about how to uplift the race. Booker T. Washington (2014) advocated for the education of the Negro so that he had the opportunity to work. He believed education would provide the tools required to contribute to the economy, business, and industry of the South. Washington argued that educating the Negro to contribute to society would earn the respect of the South (Washington 2014, 141). Conversely, W.E.B. Dubois (2012), the leader of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), promoted the training of elite Black educators who would educate the new leaders to be “broad minded” and “cultured” men and women and bring “civilization” to those who are not just illiterate, but needed to acquire knowledge about the broader society in which they lived (Dubois 2012, 78-80). Both men focused on establishing Black rights and economic justice within American society.

Marcus Garvey vastly departed from Washington and DuBois. Garvey (2012) was the founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). His philosophy, coined as Garveyism, was staunchly opposed by DuBois. He focused on placing Blacks in control of their own government. Garvey believed that Black churches and civic organizations, such as the NAACP, sought to make Negros subservient to a system that would never grant them equality. His mission was to lead a mass movement to liberate 400 million Blacks from colonial and racial oppression around the world (Garvey 2012, 8-9, 149-156).

The calls for economic and political independence led to the establishment of businesses to serve Black patrons with goods and services they could not purchase in White establishments. This era also witnessed a significant level of social and cultural growth. In addition to the establishment of Black owned businesses, social and political organizations developed to provide support for civil rights advocacy, economic advancement, and philanthropic organizations to serve the needs of the poor (Franklin and Moss 1994, 282-283; Jackson 2012, 455). While this was a time that allowed Blacks to develop independent, middle class communities, the violence and discrimination continued. The backlash they continued to face was detrimental to their ability to build individual and collective wealth.
The Destruction of Black Wealth by White Mob Violence

The financial independence and success of Black communities was a source of resentment and anger. In addition to the disparities in the post-Civil War welfare system and the re-enslavement of men and women due to convict leasing, Blacks also faced the destruction of their businesses as a consequence of their economic and political independence. In the years after World War I, Black communities across the nation experienced a degree of economic success in cities across America that provided for a level of economic independence from Whites. It was also an era of aggressive political activism in which activists demanded an end to Jim Crow discrimination and lynching. Additionally, Black World War I veterans who fought for freedom in Europe and returned to the United States and demanded freedom and economic opportunity within their country encountered White resentment across the nation (McWhirter, 2011, p. 13; Rogers, 1960, p. 144). However, as Blacks advanced within their communities, they were confronted by severe violence from Whites.

The White backlash in this era was commonly referred to as “race riots.” The use of the word “riots” suggested that Blacks were the instigators of the violence. Yet, the historical facts show that the violence was almost always attributed to white vigilantes who used rape and other crimes, almost always without any evidence, as an excuse to seek revenge against Blacks. Almost always, the riots were used to protect the reputations of White women who claimed Black men raped them (Dray 2007, 9; Rogers 1969, 149; Swiercek 2008, 8-9; Wells-Barnett 2014, 12). The violence in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1919 was fundamentally a labor dispute. The White population became resentful with the Blacks who migrated from the South and were able to take advantage of the city’s labor shortage (McWhorter 2011, 193-194). The city’s newspaper, The Omaha Daily Bee, systematically stoked racial tensions by publishing multiple reports of Black men raping White women and asserting that Blacks were morally unsuited to live among their community (Swiercek 2008). The summer of 1919 was particularly violent and has been called “Red Summer.” Blacks were lynched by vigilante White gangs while their homes and businesses were burned to the ground. At least 25 major riots occurred across geographically diverse cities such as Washington, DC, Chicago, Knoxville, and San Francisco. There were also race riots in Florida, Arkansas,
and Nebraska. Cameron McWhirter (2011) asserted that in nearly every case, these riots were initiated by White mobs (McWhirter 2011, 15).

Mob violence was always a threat to the lives of Black people and their economic stability. From 1917 to 1923, Whites across the United States inflicted a sustained campaign of violence against entire Black communities. The federal government did nothing to intervene and protect the lives and economic interests of Blacks and allowed lynch mobs to spread across the nation (Colburn 1997, 176). Racial resentment served as the foundation for the violence against Black workers. White veterans had returned home after the war to face unemployment and poverty. They also understood that employers in the North and Western states had remedied their labor shortages by employing Black men and women in jobs that were previously held by Whites. Many of the riots were led by White union members who considered the replacement workers as union busters (McWhorter 2011, 19).

In other instances, Whites joined with the Klu Klux Klan to use violence as a means of social control and suppressed the efforts of returning Black soldiers who asserted their rights as American citizens (Swiercek 2008, 3). In the West, African Americans as well as Japanese and Mexican American immigrants were flogged, tarred and feathered, lynched, and burned alive. In the South, Black soldiers were lynched in their uniforms. Instead of placing the blame and anger for the loss of jobs on the labor and economic policies that provided Blacks with the opportunity to fill those jobs, including the shortage of labor for manufacturing jobs that occurred when the White workforce left to fight in World War I, the justification for vigilante violence against these communities was attributed to false reports that accused Black men of raping White women (Dye 1997, 29; Ellsworth and Franklin 1992, 46; Franklin and Moss 1994, 348-350; Swiercek 2008, 2).

The prevalence of race riots and mob violence in the post-World War I era also played a significant factor in reducing the ability of Blacks to build intergenerational and collective wealth. While most African Americans in the early 20th Century lived in poverty, there were urban districts and majority-Black cities and towns that had developed enclaves of middle class wealth. Many areas impacted by the most severe violence and destruction were Black towns with thriving centers of black-
owned business and significant numbers of educated, black professionals. For example, Omaha had over 100 black-owned and operated businesses as well as a significant number of lawyers, dentists, and physicians. The community had a network of religious and social organizations that was self-contained and self-reliant (Swiercek 2008, 5). Tulsa, Oklahoma had a prosperous commercial center that had become known as the “Negro’s Wall Street.” Blacks owned a number of grocery stores, restaurants, and rooming houses. Like Omaha, Tulsa had a significant number of Black professionals (Ellsworth and Franklin 1992, 15-16). Finally, the city of Rosewood, Florida, also had thriving Black-owned businesses, including a general store, that provided Blacks with economic independence (Dye 1997, 29). The success of these communities made them targets for racially motivated destruction.

Omaha, Tulsa, and Rosewood were among many cities and towns where the development of successful Black businesses and communities were considered threats to White workers, especially those who were poor and socially marginalized. The Black wealth and commerce that developed over decades in each of these cities were completely destroyed by vigilantes who justified their violence by accusing Black men of viciously raping and, therefore, destroying the honor of White women (Dye 1997, 29; Ellsworth and Franklin 1992; Swiercek 2008, 6). In addition to using the pretext of rape to justify violence and terrorism, Whites politicians also inserted the prospect of rape as a justification for not including anti-lynching laws into the Progressive Era’s agenda. The progressive era of the early 20th Century was known for the implementation of social reforms and economic regulations that focused on reforms for corporate abuses, women’s suffrage, and government reform (Keller, 1999, pp. 131-132; Kirby, 1980, p. 7). Race was not an issue embraced by the progressive leaders of the era. There was no federal effort to mitigate the violence or help to rebuild the communities and businesses destroyed. As a result, the political and social conditions for Blacks worsened.

**The Failure of Anti-Lynching Laws**

Racial lynchings posed a significant threat to Black men and women from the Reconstruction era well into the 20th Century. Lynchings did not begin until after Ida B. Wells (2015), the most prominent
anti-lynching advocate of the post-Reconstruction era, stated that slaves’ bodies were always subjected to violence as a means of maintaining subservience. After Emancipation, the violence against Black bodies often led to the loss of lives (Wells 2015, 8). Lynchings, whose victims were disproportionately Black, is defined as extrajudicial executions by a mob for an alleged crime or transgression of a racial code (Dray 2007, 8). Clearly, lynchings were a method to retaliate against Black political activism. The first lynching that gained national attention occurred in Kentucky in 1872. The victim, Samuel Hawkins, was a Black Republican voter registration leader. He and his family were abducted from their home and found hanging from a tree the following day (Dray 2007, 8 and 66).

The rate of lynchings significantly increased between the 1880s and the post-World War I years. Black organizations, such as the NAACP, and Black women’s organizations, such as the Anti-Lynching Crusaders and the National Association of Colored Women, organized to raise public consciousness and advocate for anti-lynching legislation. Philip Dray (2007) noted the failure of anti-lynching laws from the post-Civil War era through the Civil Rights era. In spite of national anti-lynching campaigns, the federal government signaled few, if any, efforts would be made to uphold laws intended to protect the rights and, ultimately, the safety of Black citizens. In 1883, the Supreme Court refused to uphold anti-Klan statutes established in the Reconstruction era intended to penalize conspiracies that aimed to deprive federal citizens of their rights (Dray 2007, 303). Blacks had few White allies in their decades’ long efforts to halt lynching across America. Dray argued the public failed to view vigilante violence against Blacks as a moral threat to American society. Further, the violence was justified because American institutions, including the government and the press, accepted the practice of lynching as a necessary measure to control the behavior of Blacks who were without a moral core (Dray 2007, 126-127).

The lack of moral clarity was reflected in the way White newspapers reported the incidences of lynching. While Black newspapers called lynching a national moral crisis, White newspapers lagged far behind in their condemnation. Publications across the country provided graphic details about the brutality of the killings. There were reports that participants mutilated the victims and removed body parts that were sometimes sold as souvenirs. The press regularly reported how the victims were tortured for hours
before their bodies were set on fire. Despite the barbarism of these crimes, White periodicals did not give a full condemnation of lynching. They assumed the victims were guilty and usually reported they had committed the crime of rape. Yet, little condemnation existed for the White mobs responsible for the murders. Editorials argued that while lynchings were morally reprehensible, these crimes would not end until Blacks controlled what they called “immoral behavior” (Perloff 2000, 319 and 323; Rosenberg 2018).

The lack of moral authority in the nation’s newspaper reflected the leadership void in the federal government to address the crisis. Several efforts were made to pass anti-lynching legislation in the 20th Century. In 1900, the lone Black Republican member of Congress, George W. White, argued the fear that White women were routinely raped by Black men was a myth. In fact, White men raped Black women at significantly higher rates than White women were raped by Black men (Dray 2007, 300). In 1922, Congressman Leonidas Dyer, a White representative of a Black district, proposed legislation specifically to prosecute mob violence and require law enforcement to protect prisoners in their custody. For example, the legislation stated that Black prisoners could not be released to mobs. However, it was criticized for encouraging rape. Opponents also stated the bill undermined the independence of state law enforcement agencies. In support of states’ rights, anti-lynching forces argued the federal government had no right to protect citizens from the actions of mobs. After several efforts, Dyer’s anti-lynching legislation failed to gain significant Congressional support (Dray 2007, 298-304).

Anti-lynching legislation appeared in the Depression era and through the Civil Rights years. Again, the opposition prevented passage of any legislation intended to mitigate lynching. In 1937, President Roosevelt had his New Deal legislation stalled by a filibuster to stop anti-lynching bills from moving forward. Roosevelt declined to take a position on the filibuster. Further, non-Southern Democrats refused to fight the filibuster without Roosevelt’s leadership and willingness to stand up to the Southern Democrats. Dray argues that Roosevelt could have forced a vote on cloture to end the filibuster but choose not to do so. Therefore, he chose not to challenge the Southern Democratic coalition in spite of the dire need for legislation to prosecute lynching (Dray 2007, 407 and 410-411).
In the 1950s era of White massive resistance, Southern politicians continued to argue that anti-lynching legislation was counterproductive and, most importantly, a restraint on Southern authority. The violence against Blacks increased following the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) the Supreme Court decision that ordered American schools to desegregate. The calls to address lynching grew following the lynching of Emmett Till in 1955. Till was a 14-year-old Black boy was brutally murdered in Mississippi after he was accused of whistling to a White woman, Carolyn Bryant (Dray 2007, 476). In spite of the gruesome nature of the murder and national press, anti-lynching legislation failed to garner the support it needed to become law (Dray 2007, 46 and 51). The failure to pass anti-lynching laws are part of a historical pattern that shows the institution of the presidency being unwilling to protect the physical safety of Black Americans.

**Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson: Race and Progressive Era Presidents**

Although this chapter focuses on the history of the political activism of Black civil rights, a brief discussion of how the two most prominent presidents of this era, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, treated Black civil rights and White mob violence as lynchings and race riots erupted across the nation is included. No progressive reforms addressed this critical issue. Neither Roosevelt nor Wilson had any interest in providing relief from the racially motivated violence. Woodrow Wilson’s overt racism and blatant disregard for the interests of Blacks give the false appearance that Blacks fared better under the indifference and disengagement of the Roosevelt Administration. However, it is inappropriate to argue the conditions for Blacks were better under Roosevelt.

The assumption that the Wilson Administration was worse for Blacks than the Roosevelt Administration based on Wilson’s overt racism demonstrates a failure to understand the conditions for Black Americans were deplorable under both administrations. If a citizen may be imprisoned or subjected to life threatening violence for his/her race and does not have the ability to seek protections from the government, he or she is extremely vulnerable. Both presidents condoned the vigilante violence and did nothing to provide federal intervention. Their inaction contributed to the marginalized
environment that Blacks faced in this era, where lynching posed a significant physical and economic threat to communities across the nation.

Historians often discuss the dinner meeting Roosevelt hosted for Black civil rights activist Booker T. Washington as a significant effort to develop racial harmony in America. Roosevelt’s invitation to Washington is portrayed as an act of bravery because of the considerable criticism he received from Whites. Yet, his racial shortcomings are treated cautiously by stating that he was “a man of his time” (Duchshere 2015; Milkis 2017). In other words, Roosevelt lived in an age where racism was overt and prevalent. Therefore, it would be unreasonable to expect that he would have progressive opinions and policies related to racial equality.

However, in his 1906 Sixth Annual Message, Roosevelt (1906) addressed the issue of lynching with statements that implied Blacks were more inherently inclined to commit rape that White men. He also argued that rape, as the most heinous and hideous of crimes, was “even worse than murder.” It seems that Roosevelt wanted to take middle ground by using a “blame the victim” approach. He condemned the lawless act of lynching and called it an uncivilized, inexcusable crime that was a form of torture. He also called for Whites to treat Blacks with dignity. Yet, Roosevelt placed the responsibility for ending lynching with Black communities. He stated the Negro community must not harbor criminal behavior. The harboring of criminals “is the larger crime” that provokes White men to commit atrocities. (Roosevelt 1906).

It also seems as if Roosevelt did not want to offend Whites by solely placing the blame of lynching on Whites. Roosevelt’s statement on lynching provided the government with the justification to kill Blacks accused of rape:

Every colored man should realize that the worst enemy of his race is the negro criminal, and above all the negro criminal who commits the dreadful crime of rape; and it should be felt as in the highest degree an offense against the whole country, and against the colored race in particular, for a colored man to fail to help the officers of the law hunting down with all possible earnestness and zeal every such infamous offender. Moreover, in my judgement, the crime of rape should always be punished with death, as it is the case with murder (Roosevelt 1906).
Although Roosevelt consistently stated Whites should always follow the rule of law, his stigmatization of Blacks and pathological rapists as well as the assumption that Whites were only guilty of using lynch mobs and not the courts to obtain justice for White women victims provide the federal government with justification to protect Black individuals and communities from mob violence.

Like Roosevelt, President Wilson was a progressive president whose racial failings are often attributed to being “a man of his time.” Wilson scholar Scott Berg (2013) agreed that Wilson was both a progressive thinker and a racist. Berg explained Wilson’s attitudes as a product of his Southern, post-Civil War upbringing. He also stated Wilson did not want to subjugate Blacks in society (Berg 2013). Berg’s views on Wilson’s racial attitudes were contradicted by the president’s words and actions. Researchers who examined Wilson’s writings on the South reported that he described Blacks in stigmatizing terms, such as “ignorant and inferior,” “dark minded,” “uneducated,” “menace,” “dangerous,” “shiftless,” “indolent,” and “incompetent.” While he advocated for the expansion of democracy around the world, Wilson acquiesced to the demands of Southern Democrats to remove Blacks from the federal workforce by enacting Jim Crow policies in federal agencies to enforce segregation. He signed a law to make interracial marriage in Washington DC illegal. Finally, Wilson hosted a viewing of the pro-Klu Klux Klan film Birth of a Nation in the face of calls from Blacks who sought relief and justice from lynchings and race riots across the country (Keene 2013, 135 and 147; McWhirter 2011, 108). In spite of the widespread violence and rioting, Wilson regularly ignored calls to use his pulpit to condemn lynching.

In 1919, the incidents of lynchings were at their worst and included Black soldiers from World War I. These veterans returned from the war with demands for respect, better working conditions, and an end to Jim Crow laws and customs. They were not given the respect due to them as war heroes. Instead of recognizing them for their service, politicians warned the public that Black soldiers’ patriotism and military service posed a threat to White society. Therefore, it was dangerous for Black soldiers to wear their military uniforms in public. At least 13 Black veterans were lynched in 1919 (Equal Justice Initiative 2017). These men were often tortured, beaten with hatchets, and burned alive. The story of the
Johnson brothers illustrated the depth of cruelty that characterized the World War I era. The four Johnson brothers, which included one veteran and one lawyer, were victims of White mob violence. They were rounded up with sharecroppers who had organized a protest to demand fair prices for their contracts. The Johnson brothers were not part of the protests. However, they were bound together, shot multiple times, and left on the side of a street in a lump. The brothers were shot so many times that their corpses were unrecognizable (McWhirter 2011, 213 and 2019).

The story of the Johnson brothers was not an aberration. Often, soldiers were targeted with violence because Whites from across political ideologies equated all self-defense actions taken by Blacks to mean racial revolution and rebellion (McWhorter 2011, 209). Wilson not only overlooked calls from Americans to intervene, but he also dismissed demands from the international communities demanding that the American government protect black men from violence. Though Black soldiers made major contributions during War World I, Wilson publicly voiced his distrust of the veterans. He stated the soldiers’ calls for racial equality had not only caused the soldiers to become arrogant, but they also made them a threat to American society. He stated Black soldiers were gullible and likely to support communism and anarchy (McWhirter 2011, 56).

Wilson’s admonishment of what he called the arrogance of the Black veteran acknowledged the attitudes of Black men had changed. Wilson’s admonishment of the soldiers was emblematic of White resentment for Black veterans that erupted across the country. Black newspapers, such as The Chicago Defender, documented the violence and advocated for reform. These publications served as a voice for the victims whose lives were marginalized in the White press and the government. The Chicago Defender was one of many papers that stated Black veterans would no longer submit to lynching, riots, and social ostracism in their homeland after defending the country in Europe against the Germans. The fight for freedom would continue in the United States (The Chicago Defender 1917, 1918, 1921; Wynn 1993, 12).

In spite of the extreme violence, the years between World War I and World War II witnessed a high level of activism from Black men and women for the cause of equal rights. As the Klu Klux Klan
revived and developed a presence across the nation, Black activists continued to push the racial boundaries of Southern institutions and demanded that the Federal government support their demands for racial equality. The Republican administrations of Presidents Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover also remained unengaged in civil rights and did not make efforts to support reforms and programs for Blacks. Nor did they act to support anti-lynching legislation or condemn the actions of the Klan (Kirby 1980, 5-7, and 10). Further, White liberals who disagreed with segregation did not engage with Blacks who believed in directly challenging racial barriers and remained distant from interracial organizations. The opportunity for Black Americans to demand social and economic equality expanded with the implementation of the New Deal and the political activism of returning World War II veterans. In the coming decades, their contributions to the Civil Rights Movement were central to ending legal, state sponsored discrimination.

**The Greatest Generation**

The term “greatest generation” generally is associated with Tom Brokaw’s 1998 best-selling book *The Greatest Generation* (Brokaw 1998). Brokaw recounts the contributions of the predominately White men and women who served in World War II and bestows the moniker of the “greatest generation” to these veterans for two distinct reasons. First, they sacrificed their lives to defeat the fascist governments and end the inhumane treatment of the people in Europe, North Africa, and Asia. Second, they are recognized for the actions they took to transform the United States into an exceptional, economic superpower in the 1950s and 1960s. Brokaw specifically credits the government’s investment directed at the development of pathways to the middle class as a key factor to the ability of these veterans to build the economic and intellectual infrastructure needed to support the growth of an expanding middle class. He states:

They became part of the greatest investment in higher education that any society ever made, a generous tribute from a grateful nation. The GI Bill, providing veterans tuition and spending money for education, was a brilliant and enduring commitment to the nation’s future. Campus classrooms and housing were overflowing with young men in their mid-twenties, many of whom never expected to get a college education. They left
those campuses with degrees and a determination to make up for lost time. They were a new kind of army now, moving into the landscapes of industry, science, art, public policy, all the fields of American life, bringing with them the same passions and discipline that had served them well in World War II (Brokaw 1998, xix-xx).

Brokaw also states this generation was not perfect. It made the mistake of allowing discrimination to continue (Brokaw 1998, xix-xx). The majority of White voters and elected officials, including White veterans, did not apply the same moral framework that justified their fight to end totalitarianism in Europe to address the totalitarianism that suppressed African Americans in the United States. The Black veterans of the World War II era would lead the charge to advance racial equality against totalitarianism on American soil.

The “Other” Greatest Generation and the Formation of the Civil Rights Movement

The origins of activism of the mid-20th Century directly relates to the activism of World War I and World War II veterans. These activists were influenced strongly by their belief that they sacrificed their lives for their nation and deserved to receive equality at home. Black World War II veterans who returned from war motivated by their victory with a sense of patriotism to return democracy to Europe committed to continue the efforts of World War I veterans to fight for Black equality at home. The “New Negro,” as they were called, organized Black veterans into social and political organizations with a clear agenda to end racial discrimination. Unlike old-guard leaders such as W. E. B. DuBois, who believed in building Black communities that were separate from Whites, these veterans directly challenged White supremacy and the White establishment by writing and speaking on the hypocrisy of American democratic ideals. They encouraged their fellow brethren to fight against the violence and discrimination they continued to face across the country (Williams 2007, 352-355).

President Roosevelt’s words set the stage for Black World War II veterans to force America to meet the standards of equality that our government requires of other nations. On January 6, 1941, Franklin Roosevelt delivered an address before Congress titled “The Four Freedoms.” In his speech,
Roosevelt spoke about the American ideals and values that would guide the American people and military to victory in Europe and the Pacific. He stated:

Just as our national policy in internal affairs has been based upon a decent respect for the rights and dignity of all our fellow men within our gates, so our national policy in foreign affairs has been based on a decent respect for the rights and dignity of all nations, large and small. And the justice of morality must and will end at the end.

Additionally, Roosevelt declared that Americans would seek to make the world more secure based “upon four essential human freedoms:”

The first freedom of speech and expression -- everywhere in the world. The second freedom of every person to worship God in his own way -- everywhere in the world. The third is freedom from want, which translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants -- everywhere in the world. The fourth is freedom from fear, which, translated into terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor - anywhere in the world (Roosevelt 1941).

The principles outlined in Roosevelt’s *The Four Freedoms* speech served as the basis for activism by Black veterans. However, World War II veterans suffered from the same violence and discrimination for engaging in activism that their brethren suffered in the years following World War I. Again, the soldiers remained undeterred and unwilling to accept racial subjugation. They continued to fight for their rights in spite of the increasing backlash growing across the country.

**The Double V Campaign**

Black activism during the World War II years rose to new heights. However, just as World War I veterans became disenchanted with America’s double standard that allowed them to contribute to the fight for freedom abroad but were prevented legally from receiving freedom at home, Black World War II soldiers actively engaged in civil disobedience as a means to fight for equality (Theoharis 2013, 17). In addition, Black newspapers across the country followed the *Pittsburgh Courier* and its launch of the Double V Campaign. This campaign called for Blacks to fight for victory over fascism abroad and against discrimination at home. The paper’s editorial board wrote that this fight was to “wage a two-pronged attack against our enslavers at home and those abroad who would enslave us” (Equal Justice
Institute 2017; Estes 2005, 22). The Double V campaign was also a fight to have the dignity to be treated as a man. Critics of segregation in the armed forces argued the military had nurtured Black soldiers to challenge discrimination against Black Americans. The military taught them to be strong and dignified. Their exposure to the military culture also provided them the opportunity to believe they could defeat discrimination at home.

Although the New Deal provided few benefits to Blacks, there was growing resentment among White planters in the South who believed the benefits distributed allowed Blacks to have confidence, independence, and economic choices beyond agriculture. They also were becoming more politically aware of the freedom movements developing across the country. Risa Goluboff (2007) discussed how White farmers and landowners linked the changing attitudes as well as the disturbance to the Jim Crow hierarchies directly to the New Deal. White farmers and businessmen not only refused to give into the demands for equality, they doubled down on their efforts to enforce social control. Instead of paying the higher wages required by the New Deal, Southern legislatures expanded power to Whites to allow their businesses to be excluded from the requirements of the laws that protected workers’ rights and benefits. Further, White farming interests had persuaded the Federal government to contract to Mexico and the Caribbean as well as prisoners of war from the Axis countries to work in the fields. Goluboff also asserted the exploitation of Black agricultural workers also increased as intimidation and violence were used to discourage political activism and demands for equal rights. Because most of the contracts given to Blacks were oral, conditions essentially perpetuated the same slavery structures present during the 1800s. As a result, Black agricultural workers in the South were unable to own land and were perpetually indebted to White landowners (Goluboff 2007, 54-61).

However, the strength of the returning soldiers continued to be viewed as a real threat to White supremacy. Black soldiers who were making strategic demands to have the right to vote had national ramifications. For example, by the 1944 presidential elections, Roosevelt had lost significant support for the New Deal among Southern Democrats because of a series of legislative attempts to provide the soldiers who were fighting abroad the ability to vote by absentee ballots (Katznelson 2013, 213-216).
These efforts challenged the doctrine of White supremacy and states’ rights by expanding voting rights and providing provisions that would permit absentee, or war ballots, to Black and White soldiers (Bartley 1997, 28-30; Martin 1944, 727-729; Roosevelt 1944).

Segregationists were able to defeat attempts to extend voting rights to Black soldiers by passing legislation that gave states the right to legally assert White supremacy as a means of delegitimizing the rights of Blacks to assert their rights even though they were fighting for the rights of other human beings abroad (Martin 1944, 729). Senator James Eastland (D-MS) argued that the White soldiers were fighting to maintain the rights of the states and, above all, White supremacy and would return home from the war with the expectation that the institutions of segregation would remain intact (Katznelson 2013, 206).

Senator Eastland was not alone in asserting World War II was a fight for states’ rights. Southern conservatives claimed their own Double V battle for Southern rights. James Ward (2012) explained that challenges to voting rights and segregation were met with calls from the Southern states for stronger enforcement of Jim Crow laws as well as demands to remove the South from any outside interference. Southerners reacted by rallying against challenges to end Whites only voting practices as well as to stem the growth in the numbers of Black troops. The fight for freedom abroad was to maintain a White democracy at home (Ward 2012, 22-24). Ira Katznelson (2013) also argued that Whites became increasingly more fearful they were losing control of the social norms and political practices that were effective because they were enforced by the use of fear. Blacks were increasingly more confident and assertive in their demands for equality. They also were advancing moral arguments that contrasted the ideological framework of the treatment of African Americans under Jim Crow to the treatment of Jews under the Nazi regime (Katznelson 2013, 175).

However, as Black activism began to threaten the political efficacy of Southern nullification, a bipartisan coalition in Congress united to impose White supremacy into national politics. While many Southern Democrats began to form coalitions with conservative Republicans to solidify national opinion against progressive racial policies, Southern Democrats supported the New Deal because of its benefits to White workers and the southern economic interests. However, some opposed the agenda from its
inception (Katznelson, Geiger, Kryder 1993, 297). Those who opposed the New Deal began to find shared values with Republicans as a means of reinserting economic conservatism and states’ rights. In 1937, Senator Josiah Bailey (D-NC) and Senator Arthur Vandenberg (R-MI) made an unsuccessful attempt to establish a bipartisan coalition based on a conservative manifesto to join states’ rights Southerners with pro-capitalists Northerners. The document known as “An Address to the American People” proposed a 10-point program that called for the defeat of the New Deal. The proposal failed due to the fact that many Senate conservatives had supported the validity of social spending for the programs (Lowndes 2008, 14; Moore 1965, 34-35). The proved to be a short-term defeat. The conservative faction increased with the mid-term elections of 1938 as Republicans increased their voting power due to Roosevelt’s failed attempts to increase the number of justices on the Supreme Court (Katznelson 2013, 151).

The relationship between these two factions would develop and strengthen through the end of the 1960s. Katznelson, Geiger, and Kryder (1993) argue that for nearly two decades, Southern members of Congress were able to effectively engage in complex negotiations that allowed them to support the New Deal but effectively veto all legislation that would increase the political and economic opportunities for Blacks. As a result, the Roosevelt Administration and Congress developed legislation intended to prevent racial politics from causing divisions within the Democratic coalition. They excluded provisions that would benefit Blacks but would be considered offensive to Southern social and political values (Katznelson, Geiger, Kryder, 1993, 297). These exclusions became the foundation for the economic inequality.

The literature on the New Deal clearly demonstrates that Blacks were systematically excluded from receiving benefits, such as social security and unemployment insurance, on the same level as Whites. Additionally, in the first decade of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration’s existence, the agency severely cut funding to Black sharecroppers and tenant farmers, causing approximately 200,000 agricultural entities to fail. However, during the same time, the number of White tenant farmers increased. In addition, the Department of Labor’s regulations that protected the rights of White workers
to receive fair wages for their labor simultaneously allowed business to disregard the codes and refuse to pay Black workers (Weiss 1983, 55-58). Nancy Weiss (1983) argued that discrimination in the early years of the New Deal served to clarify to Black intellectuals and activists the fight for equality was one of a two-pronged approach based on racial and economic equality (Weiss 1983, 212).

The concerns that guided the Double V campaign proved to be well founded. Political scientists and historians provide evidence that White men benefited disproportionately from the New Deal, the G.I. bill, and home ownership that were central to the ability of veterans to cultivate wealth. Researchers have established the two-tier racial structures inserted by New Deal reformers are largely responsible for the inequalities that remain today. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall (2005), Ira Katznelson (2005), and Jill Quagdano (1996) explained that the New Deal helped to establish a two-tier welfare system. A clear example of this disparity can be found in the legislative history of the Social Security Act of 1935. The law had broad support and provided old-age insurance and unemployment compensation as an earned right (Dowd Hall 2005, 1241; Katznelson 2005, 36; Quagdano 1996, 31). However, while Whites were provided with poverty relief, the same legislation legally excluded occupations disproportionately filled by Black workers, such as agricultural and domestic workers. Southern Democrats agreed to vote for the New Deal on the condition that the legislation did not undermine the Jim Crow (Katznelson 2005, 55). The impact of these laws resulted in 55 percent of all African American workers and 87 percent of all wage earning African American women being excluded from building savings and wealth (Dowd Hall 2005, 1241).

The discussions of the successes of the G.I. Bill in popular literature, including The Greatest Generation, also perpetuates the mythology that Black and White soldiers were provided with equal opportunities for economic growth after World War II. This frame prevents Americans from knowing about the moral failings and contradictions of the “Greatest Generation.” This generation failed to apply the moral imperative for freedom and human rights they fought for abroad to the marginalized, suffering citizens at home. Black veterans joined other civil rights activists for the toughest and, often times, deadliest era since the Civil War.
The Emergence of the Second Reconstruction

Just as the first reconstruction evolved after the Civil War and included decades of small, incremental victories to expand rights for Blacks, so did the second reconstruction that yielded incremental victories during the World War II years. The political activism of the modern Civil Rights Movement evolved slowly. Manning Marable (1984) and Joseph Lowndes (2008). President Harry Truman did not support political and social equality for Blacks. During the 1948 presidential campaign, Truman found that he could not win without the support of Black votes in the North. In an effort to gain Black votes, he made a campaign promise to promote fair employment procedures and require federal government agencies to comply with desegregation. His overtures to civil rights groups, such as the NAACP, and announcement to support civil rights reform angered southern Democrats. In 1948, he faced a Dixiecrat Revolt. Southern Democrats threatened to leave the party if Truman undermined segregation with his civil rights legislative proposals became law. Truman’s reelection was challenged by the candidacy of Senator Strom Thurmond (D-SC). Although Truman won the election, he had difficulty in holding the Democratic coalition together. After the election, Truman made only modest efforts to support civil rights. As a result, Blacks and liberal Whites began to form coalitions to develop political movements and push for reforms across the country (Lowndes 2008, 27-30; Marable 1984, 23-24).

Civil rights coalitions during this era began to successfully challenge Jim Crow within the courts. For example, the NAACP ended the practice of all-White primaries in the Smith v. Allright (1944) decision. This victory was significant because it helped to register more Black voters. Also, Blacks were elected to state legislatures in the North and West. Every victory was met with a new set of restrictions that served to effectively nullify the court's decision. Anti-communist sentiments and totalitarian movements, such as “anti-communist” campaigns like McCarthyism, made it difficult for reform movements, including activism for civil rights, to exist without suspicion (Day 2014, 13; Marable 1984, 19). Blacks who attempted to vote were confronted by poll taxes, literacy tests and vigilante violence. Senator Theodore Bilbo (D-MS) and the newspaper The Jackson Daily News openly threatened Blacks with violence if they voted. Once again, Truman remained silent as the vigilante violence, including from
the KKK, erupted across the nation. The era of massive resistance had spread across the nation to defeat every demand of civil rights activists for equal citizenship (Manning 1984, 26-27).

**The Challenge of Massive White Resistance**

One aspect of history that needs to be integrated better into the discussion and literature on the Southern Strategy is the discussion that explains that White massive resistance began long before Whites organized against school desegregation. Massive resistance is linked to images of Whites violently protesting desegregation at Little Rock High School in Arkansas or protesting the University of Alabama and University of Mississippi (Branch 1988, 167, 223-224; Lesher 1994, 228). Additionally, one of the most well-known images of White resistance is pictures of Bull Connor ordering the Birmingham, Alabama, firefighters and police officers to unleash fire hoses and dogs on Black youth protesters (Branch 1988, 757). Americans may be more informed of these events because they are taught in history books and shown during celebrations of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday or Black History Month.

However, massive White resistance was present long before these events occurred. Vincent Harding (1987) argued that the memorialization of King as a national holiday caused a “massive case of national amnesia,” which means Americans do not know who King really was, what he stood for, and how he was disliked by so many Whites while he was alive (Harding 1987, 469). In short, many of King’s current supporters would not have approved of his positions on race, poverty, and the Vietnam War (Harding 1987, 469-473). I assert that because the mainstream media portrays the work of civil rights activism primarily through Martin Luther King, Jr.’s philosophy of nonviolence, their efforts are portrayed as passive and not given the credit for forcing those who advocated for moderate changes or insisted in keeping the status quo to resolve the problems of racism. Therefore, it is easier to relay overly simplified stories that portray the federal government as rescuing the “good” Black people from the “bad” White people in the South and wholly misunderstanding how race has informed and influenced our national politics and government policies.
The Influence of Working Class Black Activism

The advances of the Civil Rights Movement would not have occurred without the decades long efforts made by working class Black men and women who sacrificed their safety and economic security for the cause of civil rights. Their ability to organize and sustain mass protests provided them with the political power needed to force change. Often, the power of the Black working class is marginalized with overly simplistic narratives that fail to convey the long term activism that paved the way for the successes of the mid-20th century activism of Martin Luther King, Jr.

The story of Rosa Parks provides an example of the contributions working class Blacks made to the cause of Black equality. Parks’ contributions are minimized by the promotion of the narrative that portrays her as a meek seamstress whose physical exhaustion encouraged her to refuse to give up her seat to a White patron; this act sparked a massive bus boycott that ended segregation on Montgomery, Alabama, busses. However, Parks was not an accidental activist. Born in 1913, Parks grew up during the height of the lynching and race riots crisis. She was raised in the political philosophy of Marcus Garvey and his principles of racial pride and independence from Whites. Prior to the boycott, Parks had a long history of civil rights activism. While Black men were being lynched on false charges of raping White women, Parks investigated the rapes of Black women by White men as early as the 1930s. Parks and her husband joined other Blacks to register voters as early as the 1940s. In addition, she made three attempts to register to vote before she passed the literacy test that was designed to keep Blacks off of the voting rolls (McGuire 2010, 8, 11-13, 22).

Yet, in spite of her remarkable, lifelong contributions to the Civil Rights Movement, Parks’ public record is reduced to an inoffensive story of a solitary act that reassures Americans that segregation is well in the past. To this day, Parks continues to be mischaracterized as a meek woman who never raised her voice and was never angry. While Rosa Parks became famous for her role in the Montgomery bus boycott, her political activism was not unusual, nor was her refusal to give up her seat to a White patron accidental. She was part of a planned strategy to disrupt the Montgomery bus system. Theoharis (2013, 2018) asserts that Parks was never given proper recognition for her 20 years of political activism.
because she was a Black working class woman. The public is unaware of the fact that she organized voting drives and worked tirelessly on behalf of Black men falsely accused of rape and murder. Parks also vocally advocated for Black women who were raped by White men to receive justice.

Jeanne Theoharis (2013) concludes that the omission of Parks’ full story also marginalizes the work of countless, working class African Americans who fought for civil rights and human rights in the decades between Reconstruction and the Brown vs. Board of Education decision, which laid the groundwork for the successes of the legal and legislative battles for equal rights in the South and across the United States (Theoharis 2013, viii-ix and 45-47). The trope that the Montgomery bus boycott started because Parks refused to give up her seat to a White patron demonstrates the unwillingness of Whites to acknowledge that anger was a motivating factor for working class Black activists to demand civil rights. They were angry and stood up against government sanctioned humiliation, violence, and domestic terrorism by White segregationists. One reason Rosa and other activists began the protests was because they were no longer willing to be fearful and subjugated to the daily humiliations of White bus drivers. However, the fundamental reason for the protests was every White person had the ability to enforce Jim Crow and take away the humanity of any Black person in the country without impunity.

Parks was inspired to join the bus boycott as a result of the lynching of Emmett Till in Money, Mississippi. In 1955, 14 year old Till was kidnaped and murdered for whistling at a 21 year old White woman named Carolyn Bryant. Later the same day, Till was kidnapped in the middle of the night from his uncle’s home, tortured, and murdered. Till’s body was found in the Tallahatchie River with his legs wrapped in barbed wire to a 150 pound fan. He had suffered a gunshot wound to the head, and his skull was crushed. Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam were tried and acquitted of Till’s murder by an all-White jury (Boyd and Wright 2010; 79; Lee 1999, 39-41; Tyson 2017, 13 and 68-69). The event essentially resulted in the Black Lives Matter movement of the era; historical events such as the Till murder shaped the motivations of activists to demand legal and human rights. The simplistic narratives that suggest Rosa Parks’ activism was sparked by her tired feet serve to minimize the importance that abject cruelty and humiliation played in motivating the working classes and poor to force needed political changes in
America. As the Civil Rights Movement progressed, White racial conservatives in the North and South resented activists because they continued to persist in spite of extreme violence and intimidation.

**Black Activism and Persistence in the Face of Fear and Starvation**

The persistence of civil rights activists permanently unsettled the racial hierarchies of the South and the nation. In this instance, the source of White backlash was broader than the actions taken by Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. During the 100 years after the end of slavery, Southern Democrats asserted social control by the use of fear. However, due to the significant mass of Black activists engaged in protests to end segregation, White segregations were unable to use intimidation to end the sustained challenge to end Jim Crow.

In many ways, the pattern of violence paralleled the post-World War I era; violent crimes were committed against Blacks without impunity. Countless men and women were beaten and killed or had their homes firebombed because they applied for the right to vote; children were fire-hosed by firemen and policemen. Dogs were ordered to maul citizens engaged in nonviolent protests. Little girls were murdered as they prepared for Sunday school in Birmingham, Alabama; college students were beat by mobs as they attempted to desegregate lunch counters. The buses of freedom riders were bombed and the riders were beaten by mobs. The violence occurred because of the resentment White racial conservatives held against working class activists for undermining the power structure of segregation. The forgotten black men and women demonstrated they had confidence in their own political agency that the system of Jim Crow could be broken (Asch 2011, 191 and 224; Rolph 2018, 160; Theoharis 2018, 232-236).

**Fannie Lou Hamer and the Mississippi Democratic Freedom Party Activism**

Scholars such as Numan Bartley describe how the Civil Rights Movement and Black political participation grew in the South but were not socially or politically significant (Bartley 1997, 6, 9-10). However, the significance of their impact is measured differently depending on where one sits in society. The increasing levels of activism demonstrated Blacks could feel their actions were making a difference and forcing the United States to extend democracy to protect their political and social interests.
Therefore, Blacks activists such as Fannie Lou Hamer were willing to come forward to challenge the segregated power structure, no matter how much violence and fear they faced because they believed they had nothing to lose and everything to gain in their fight for freedom.

Due to the unravelling social order of day to day life, the historical narrative also should include loss of control within the state political parties by giving ample consideration to the actions of Fannie Lou Hamer and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). In 1964, the Democratic National Convention (DNC) challenged the segregated state party and demanded to be seated at the convention. The actions of Hamer and the MFDP contributed to the narrative of White resentment within the Democratic Party (Lee 1999, 86). The story of Hamer’s speech at the convention is a well-known, often told story of the 1960s. However, the significance of the story is much deeper than that one incident. Her story represents the poor and working class Black men and women who served as the foot soldiers of the movement. Hamer was one activist whose persistence and audacity were instrumental in unsettling the racialized political structure of the South.

In a comprehensive biography of Hamer’s life and political activism, Chana Kai Lee (1999) describes how Blacks in Mississippi faced extreme indignities and violence as a punitive consequence for demanding equal rights. For example, the state law required the names of all persons who attempted to register to vote be published in the newspaper for two weeks. Black registrants and their family members would lose their employment and face imprisonment and violence. As Hamer’s activism increased, carloads of White men with rifles repeatedly circled her home, yelled obscenities, and threatened to kill her and her family. On one occasion, local law enforcement raided her home during the middle of the night with cocked guns while Hamer and her husband watched their house be unlawfully searched. One policeman was S. L. Milam, brother of J.W. Milam, the man charged but not convicted of lynching Emmett Till in 1955 (Lee 1999, 40).

Hamer and her colleagues continued to push forward and challenge the pro-civil rights establishment that believed their activism harmed the cause. Additionally, her family endured significant consequences for her activism. Hamer was unemployable, and her family was often homeless. Civil
rights activists in Mississippi also faced starvation in retaliation from segregationist Senators James Eastland (D-MS) and John Stennis (D-MS). In an attempt to crush activism, they claimed that New Deal era welfare programs promoted communist and civil rights activities. These anti-poverty programs served as lifelines to the activists. The lack of employability of civil rights activists necessitated the need to apply for federal programs and allowed Black citizens to organize for a broader agenda of economic equality. However, the withdrawal of federal support of these programs was used as a weapon to attempt to suppress political activism (Asch 2011, 270).

In spite of living under the constant threat of violence, starvation, and strong opposition from President Johnson, Martin Luther King, Jr. and the NAACP, Hamer defied the Mississippi Democratic Delegation at the DNC and testified before the Credentials Committee to demand that the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party be seated at the convention (Lee 1999, 99 - 100). Her testimony included graphic detail about the beatings and torture she received while jailed in 1963 for registering Black citizens to vote. She concluded her testimony with the statement:

All of this is on account of we want to register, to become first-class citizens. And if the Freedom Democratic Party is not seated now, I question America. Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we have to sleep with our telephones off the hooks because our lives be threatened daily, because we want to live as decent human beings, in America (Fannie Lou Hamer 1964)?

Hamer’s actions are historically significant as the Dixiecrat Revolt of 1948. The MFDP’s actions at the convention signaled that the Black political activists in Mississippi were not backing down and were unwilling to be subservient to the White power structure of Mississippi, the strongest White power structure in the United States. The political successes of Black Americans significantly impacted Southern Democratic voters who were angry that racial submissiveness that controlled every aspect of Southern life was eroding; the discourse changed from overt racism to covert racism.

Racial politics and discourse changed to meet the new social norms. The politics of colorblindness transformed presidential politics for Democrats and Republicans for the next 50 years. As civil rights victories changed the lives of Black Americans, the Democratic and Republican parties began to react to the growing resentment of White Americans. Civil rights advocates could not find a
dependable ally in the institution of the presidency. In spite of Lyndon Johnson’s previous support for
civil rights, he voiced his political fears about losing White voters in private. White voters across the
country expected limitations for the expansion of civil rights. The advancement of full equality for
Blacks was a political proposition that was too dangerous to partake.

**LBJ: A Reluctant Advocate in Private, An Ally in Public**

President Johnson is correctly credited for promoting the successful passage of the 1964 Civil
Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Yet, he was a politician afraid of losing his White political
base. His advocacy had limitations in spite of the extreme violence that activists continued to face across
the nation. During a recorded phone call on August 24, 1964, between Johnson and Walter Reuther,
president of the United Auto Workers, they discussed the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party’s
challenge with the official delegation from Mississippi to be seated as a legitimate delegation at the
Democratic National Convention. The conversation revealed Johnson understood the increasing
influence of White resentment and anger among Democratic Party members from around the country.
The conversation between Johnson and Reuther also revealed the perception that while many Whites
supported some racial reforms, they believed there was a limit to what could be done before the reforms
were perceived as going too far. Johnson also shared his frustrations with Black activists and his concern
that Whites were becoming resentful of the political demands of Blacks:

> Hell, these folks got everyone in the North. Hell, the Northerners are more upset
> about this. They call me Walter. They wire me and write that the Negroes are taking
> over the country. They run the White House. They run the Democratic Party. And it’s
> not just Mississippi and Alabama anymore. Hell! You’re catching hell from Ohio,
> Michigan, Philadelphia, and New York. And they [negroes] don’t understand that every
> White man in this country would be frightened if they thought that the Negro was taking
> over. And they don’t understand that but the television is showing it (Johnson and

Johnson’s major legislative victories and his rhetoric about American racism give some the sense
that he had an indisputable record on race policies and racial relations. The 1965 speeches may be
considered to be one of the few times that an American president has spoken honestly and frankly about
the causes and impact of racial discrimination that contribute to the economic inequality of African
Americans. Yet, the nation’s focus on Southern racism allowed the country to focus on White racial resentment in the South and not on the nation as a whole. Johnson’s March 15, 1965, speech before Congress on voting rights discussed the problem of racism as a national problem instead of a “Negro” or “southern” problem. He provided a compelling argument and asked Congress to vote to end the humiliating, inhumane practices that Black men and women faced because they were not treated as American citizens. The president explained that the fight for the right to vote for Negroes was just one step in an effort to allow them to enjoy equal rights. Johnson also stated: “Their cause must be our cause must be our cause too. Because it is not just Negroes, but it is all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice. And we shall overcome” (Johnson, 1965).

Johnson’s commencement speech at Howard University on June 4, 1965, provided a frank explanation of the government’s justifiable role in the efforts to establish programs that help Blacks to close the economic gap and find social parity with Whites. Johnson stated that the history of discrimination was an impediment:

> Freedom is the right to share, share fully and equally, in American society - to vote, to hold a job to enter a public place, to go to school. It is the right to be treated in every part of our national life as a person equal in dignity and promise to all others. But freedom is not enough. You do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying: Now you are free to go where you want, and do as you desire, and choose the leaders you please. You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and say, “you are free to compete with all others,” and still justly believe that you have been completely fair (Johnson 1965).

Johnson’s public, honest, and high-minded speeches of 1965 gave a perception that America was making significant progress in changing laws that maintained racial Jim Crow racism, and with the exception of Southern Democrats, the Democratic Party fundamentally held more progressive racial values and generally supported social and political reform for Black Americans. The manner in which overt racism was expressed in the public domain was changing. Yet, the conversation between Johnson and Reuther showed that the country was not, as Johnson suggested in his 1965 speeches, looking inward to examine its racial attitudes, but holding onto the structures that contributed to the systems of racial and economic inequality. The country witnessed the violence occurring in Black neighborhoods across the
nation that was largely caused by Black residents reacting to police brutality and economic distress. Black poverty and inequality were explained not as a problem of systemic racism caused by Whites, but as a failure of Blacks to follow the cultural norms of White middle class standards. Democrats, even those considered liberal such as California Governor Edmund “Pat” Brown and Patrick Moynihan, attributed the unrest to social pathology (Patterson, 2010, 82-83). The policy focus turned from establishing equal rights under the law to debating whether or not the problems rooted in poverty were caused by social pathologies specific and unique to the Black community.

1965 and the Emergence of the Culture Wars

An important concept for understanding why the Southern Strategy has maintained its influence. The term “culture war” was first defined by James Davison Hunter (1991). Hunter defines the term in two parts. First, he provides an explanation of the underlying phenomenon “cultural conflict.” This describes the political and social hostilities that are revealed due to differences in moral and social beliefs. The anger that arises from the cultural conflict often manifests as divisive political activism in which the opposing sides are claiming that their side has the moral authority over the position of the other. Second, Hunter states that the basis of the disagreements about how Americans should live and order their lives. Therefore, the “culture war” is revolves around the right to claim social and political rights related to topics such as reproductive rights, multiculturalism, sexual orientation, and economic equality (Hunter 1991, 42).

Lyndon Johnson’s comments to Walter Reuther and Reagan’s rise to power foreshadowed the culture wars.

Public opinion on civil rights issues were starting to change. Non-southerners largely opposed Jim Crow racism in the South. However, the polling data from 1965 showed they were much less supportive of the Great Society programs structured to advance social and economic equality (Patterson 2012, p. 84). Historian James Patterson suggested that the urban unrest in cities across America was central to the unease and outright anger of White voters who believed that the country was fundamentally
changing for the core values that were central to defining what it meant to be an American. The riots that occurred in the second half of the 1960s aggravated the fears and racial polarization Americans felt about Black political interests changing from non-violent, religiously based tactics to the emergency of militant groups that openly rejected Martin Luther King, Jr’s leadership (Patterson 2012, 88 and 272).

Though King’s political strategies and views were losing fear among some segments of the African American community, he was clear that what was happening in Watts was symptomatic of the social and economic inequalities caused by the persistence of racial barriers in the country. King stated: “The explosion in Watts reminded us all that the northern ghettos are the prisons of the forgotten man” (Honey 2011, 107).

The Watts riots served as a transformative event that changed how Blacks were viewed. It changed the way many Whites, including those who actively supported civil rights reforms, viewed the moral arguments used to challenge racism. It became clear that the expansion of civil rights alone could not address the issues of economic inequality. Instead of being the victims of White oppression, Blacks began to be viewed as the aggressors. This change in perception marked a significant shift in the focus of government policies and the tone in conversation regarding the policies directed to African American communities. The discussion of the racial inequalities in the South became secondary to the problem of urban poverty in the North and West (Chappell 2012, 56; Garey 2015, 88 and 91; Patterson 2010, 86).

The Watts riots was ignited by the arrest of a Black man, but was aggravated by a long history of police brutality in Black neighborhoods in Los Angeles (Garey 2015, 90-91). However, the media, politicians, and social scientists did not focus on the violent action of the police or policies that created economic and social inequities. The focus returned to the social pathologies of Black families. The War on Poverty would end before it had any opportunity to make change. The debate that centered on the breakdown of Black families began and would begin a new proliferation of policies that started the War on Crime.
The Influence of the Moynihan Report

The Moynihan Report was a high profile study that has had a long term impact on the way Americans have linked the issues of poverty, culture, and personal responsibility to the causes and persistence of poverty in the African American community. Alternatively, Moynihan delinked the history of the policies that perpetuated structural inequality and institutional racism from the contemporary conditions of poverty. The Moynihan Report, formally titled the “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action,” was published in 1965. Its author, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, was a Democrat who worked in the Johnson Administration’s Department of Labor. He was also the author of President Johnson’s 1965 commencement speech at Howard University. The report was written as a policy document to address critical issues, such as the impact of past discrimination that criticized the family for the cultural practices or pathologies, that prevented Black families from escaping poverty. The report discussed the problems of teenage pregnancy, unmarried parenthood, and absent fathers. It also criticized the prevalence of female-headed households as an emasculating impediment for Black men. Moynihan argued the structure of the Black family was out of line with the standards and structures of White families. He concluded the Black family was trapped in a “tangle of pathology;” therefore, it was a problem that required national action (Chappell 2012, 56; Greenbaum, 2016, 10; Kendi, 2016, 408; Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor, 1965, 5).

The Moynihan report was popular and highly controversial. Civil rights advocates were particularly critical of the way Black women were portrayed as overtly dominating, emasculating family figures who undermined Black men’s ability to be employed and therefore, be the head of the household. One of the most lasting legacies of the report is Moynihan’s assertions that the failure of the Black family contributed to the social ills that were frightening or angering Americans. Family dysfunction was attributed to the increase of welfare dependency and juvenile delinquency (Quagdano 1996, 135). These assertions fed into the belief that Blacks fundamentally behaved differently from Whites, yet received preferential treatment they did not deserve.
The report provided conservatives and liberals with an intellectual justification to criticize the programs intended to support economic development. It also served as the foundation and justification for other government agencies, journalists, and organizations to study the problem of pathology of Black families. These reports generally concluded that the breakdown of the Black family was responsible for the crime and violence in poor neighborhoods (Chappell 2012, 56; Patterson 2010, 87). Further, the social pathology of Black families, not systemic racial discrimination, was the primary reason Blacks could not break out of poverty and enter the middle class (Gearey 2015, 123-124; Greenbaum 2015, 43; Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor 1965, Chapter IV).

The mainstream popularity of the report allowed Moynihan to be considered an expert on the subject of Black pathology. However, he had no expertise in sociology or anthropology. His dissertation, three years before he was assigned to write the report was published, focused on the relationship between the United States and the International Labor Organization (Gearey 2015, 25-25, 249). Yet, Moynihan’s report was promoted as a credible study to explain how failing family structures caused the economic and social disparities between Blacks and Whites. As an aide to President Nixon, Moynihan continued to develop a neoconservative approach to the issue of inner city poverty. He became highly critical of the continued calls by Blacks for anti-poverty reforms and was blamed by civil rights activists and their political allies for the political tensions. As a result, he advocated for a policy of “benign neglect,” which meant the problem of racial inequality and discrimination would be harder to discuss within the contest of structural racism (Garey 2015, 18). Jill Quagdano argued the War on Poverty transformed to policy of benign neglect. She interpreted this statement to mean the social safety net was transformed from an equal opportunity welfare state to one that facilitated racial isolation and made permanent concentrations poor Blacks in the inner cities (Quagdano 1996, 216). However, the words “benign neglect” signified the policies neither harmed nor hurt Black Americans, so it was best to do nothing at all. Yet, the failure to continue to examine and promote anti-poverty policies allowed the perpetuation of inequality for the Forgotten Black Man. Although significant progress had been made to establish citizenship rights, economic equality was still out of reach for working class Blacks.
Conclusion: 1968 - I Am A Man

Martin Luther King Jr.’s final campaign was to advocate for Black sanitation workers in
Memphis, Tennessee. The plight of the sanitation workers symbolized the paradox of freedom that Black
Americans faced as their constitutional rights were expanded. The establishment of rights on paper did
not mean Whites would accept demands for economic equality. The working conditions were poor due to
the refusal of the city to buy modern sanitation trucks. Therefore, the men were forced to haul garbage on
their backs, which caused many to be injured on the job. The wages of Black sanitation workers were
significantly lower than the wages of their White co-workers because of the open, systematic
discrimination of managers in city government. Their earnings were so low that 40% of the men were
employed in second jobs and still needed welfare to live (Estes 2005, 133).

The men fought for their right to press for legitimate grievances as the forgotten man. As they
protested, they wore placards that declared “I Am a Man.” Those words declared that Black men had a
right to be treated with the same dignity and respect given to White workers in Memphis. The call
mirrored the demands of the former slaves after Emancipation. However, their demands for equal
treatment were met with White resistance and backlash. The Memphis police inflicted brutal beatings and
verbal abuse to the strikers. As was the case with the men and women who were lynched and beaten as
they demanded equal treatment under the law during Reconstruction, World War I, World War II, and the
modern Civil Rights Movement, these workers found their government would not stand by their side and
declare their demands were legitimate and their right to physical safety was as precious as the physical
safety of their White counterparts.

On April 3, 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. made his final appeal to the Civil Rights Movement.
He spoke of the deep resistance of America to acknowledge the hard won rights of African Americans
that resulted from their persistent political activism were intrinsically connected to government actions to
mitigate their political power. King declared that even after 100 years since Emancipation, America
continued to allow systemic racism to repress the political rights of African Americans. He called for
African Americans to keep moving forward and demand that America treat them with the full citizenship rights outlined in our nation’s founding documents.

All we say to America is, "Be true to what you said on paper." If I lived in China or even Russia, or any totalitarian country, maybe I could understand the denial of certain basic First Amendment privileges, because they hadn't committed themselves to that over there. But somewhere I read of the freedom of assembly. Somewhere I read of the freedom of speech. Somewhere I read of the freedom of the press. Somewhere I read that the greatness of America is the right to protest for rights. And so just as I say, we aren't going to let any injunction turn us around. We are going on (King 1968).

The fight for the Forgotten Black Man that King spoke of in 1968 continued through the 21st Century.

The demands for equal rights and treatment under the law remained stigmatized and treated with hostility by White voters, politicians, and U. S. presidents.

This chapter places the fight of the “forgotten Black man” as a central component of American politics. It demonstrates that the fight for Black equality had been met with racial resentment and backlash since the end of the civil war. While the classic definition of the Southern Strategy focuses on the racial resentment of the 1960s, this chapter explains that African American progress has always been met with rage, resentment, and at times, extreme violence and terrorism. It is also clear that the fight for racial equality and dignity was also not one that has had broad political appeal either inside or outside of the South. In addition, the attitudes and the political will of American president from slavery and through the Civil Rights movements have either reflected the anti-equality attitudes of White Americans or as reluctant or hesitant advocates for full racial equality.

Chapter Three discusses the evolution of White resentment in presidential politics. It will demonstrate that the political patterns of the post-1968 presidency reflects the political patterns that were detailed in Chapter Two. More specifically, it notes how presidents adopted their rhetoric and social policies to mitigate the anger of White voters to changing social orders as a result of the Southern Strategy and continued efforts of African Americans and other racial minorities to obtain full equality with White Americans.
Chapter 3

Literature Review

The Southern Strategy: the Great Unsettling of America’s Political Order

Introduction

This chapter examines the literature related to the Southern Strategy on three specific areas. First, the focus turns to the political environment of the 1960s and describes the impact of the civil rights movement on national and presidential politics. Second, the discussions provide an overview of the development of a coalition of Southern Democrats and Republicans from the North and West to oppose the expansion of the New Deal and maintain the South’s right to impose Jim Crow laws against African American citizens. Third, the chapter begins with a discussion that challenges the current assumption that the Southern Strategy can be defined as a political phenomenon that originated with the 1968 and 1972 presidential campaigns and ended with the election of Bill Clinton in 1992.

I. The Origins of the Classic Definition of the Southern Strategy

In the years since the 1968 and 1972 presidential election cycles, the Southern Strategy has been defined by a straightforward, classic narrative. Political scientists, historians, and the media describe it as the political strategy that began with Richard Nixon’s 1968 presidential campaign’s ability to capitalize on the anger and resentment of White voters who were angry with the “excesses” of the 1960s. The term “excesses” is viewed as a negative reaction to the passage of civil rights for African Americans due to the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act. However, this definition also specifies Whites were also resentful of what was viewed as the pathological behavior of Blacks, such as unwed motherhood, inner city riots, a rise in crime in Black communities and welfare dependency. Also, Whites believed this pathological behavior came at the expense of White taxpayers (Edsall and Edsall 1992, 48-49). The success of the strategy was based on the use of covertly racist rhetoric and symbolism used as a tactic by the Republican Party to signal to White conservative voters they would protect and stand against the

This narrative also perpetuates the belief that the Southern Strategy and the backlash that fueled it was a direct result of the laws that ended segregation and expanded voting rights. For example, the beginning of the Republican Party’s focus on winning the South is often explained through Barry Goldwater’s 1962 statement that the Southern Strategy was a concerted effort to “go where the ducks are” (Manley 1962) In other words, Republicans should cultivate conservative votes among the Southern electorate who opposed the expansion of civil rights. Also, they should abandon Republican efforts to campaign in Northern cities where Black and White ethnic voters strongly supported the Democratic Party (Kabaservice 2011, 69; Manly 1962). Goldwater had supported the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the past as well as the civil rights laws of 1957 and 1960 and vigorously claimed he was not prejudiced. However, he strongly opposed the passage of the Civil Rights legislation of 1964 because he considered it to be an infringement on states’ rights. His call for states’ rights allowed Goldwater to join in alliance with Southern Democrats and ethnic Northern Democrats who feared integration was a threat to their all-White communities (Gould 2003, 261-262). Additionally, the narrative of the Southern Strategy is also strongly connected to the statement Lyndon Johnson made to his press secretary, Bill Moyers, after he signed the Voting Rights Act. Johnson’s prediction that the Democratic Party may “have lost the South for a generation” is routinely integrated into the explanations of the political risks and the change in party affiliation within the Democratic Party (Nichols 2014; Melber 2015, 207; Obama 2014). These quotes help to explain the political climate in the 1960s. However, these explanations also justify a strict interpretation of the Southern Strategy as a political phenomenon solely related to the Johnson era federal actions that prevented states from imposing discriminatory laws against non-Whites.

Both narratives demonstrate how the classic view of the Southern Strategy emphasizes the development of a “top-down” coalition of conservative voters. Edsall and Edsall explain in their book, Chain Reaction, that the Democratic Party built the New Deal in a “bottom-up” coalition that relied on
high levels of support from multiracial and mixed income voters who supported social spending. Since
1964, the coalition aggressively supported liberal, racial, cultural, and social policies (Edsall and Edsall
1992, 13-14). Conversely, the “top-down” coalition of the Republican Party is often described as the
party’s effort to build a national party by breaking up the Democrats’ New Deal Coalition and focus on
winning top-tier, statewide offices with tactics and political language that capitalized on White backlash
against liberalism. More specifically, they held the view that liberal policies were directly responsible for
socially unacceptable behavior and contributed issues associated with social decay in the Black
community, such as crime and violence, welfare dependency, poverty, laziness, and out of wedlock

The classic narrative also narrowly focuses on the White backlash evident in late 1960s. The
theory explains the development of this phenomenon as “threat hypothesis,” which proposes the increase
in African American political power threatened the political dominance of Whites. In turn, Whites who
feel threatened vote for conservative candidates and policies that are intended to contain or reduce Black
political power (Lublin 2004, 147). The concept of White backlash was first associated with Southern
Whites who were angry about the successful challenges to Jim Crow segregation. However, Lassiter and
Crespino (2009) argue that the concept of White backlash, and more specifically, the reaction of non-
Southern Whites to the elimination of legal racial restrictions, did not become a part of the national
dialogue until the mid 1960s. In part, this delayed addition was due to the focus of early civil rights
battles occurring in southern states with overtly segregationist practices. However, the pervasiveness of
the “threat hypothesis” and White backlash became evident as a national phenomenon during the late
1960s when covert segregation, such as laws and practice that prevented Blacks from employment or
living in White neighborhoods without using “no Negros allowed,” was challenged. Efforts by Whites,
who opposed the end of discriminatory practices that restricted Black access to the same economic
opportunities became known as “the Silent Majority.” The coalition gained its support from voters across
the nation who accepted the color-blind rationale of racism. “Silent Majority” voters outside of the South
became increasingly angry with policies they perceived as intrusive government actions that interfered
with their private and free market choices, such as housing, employment, and school desegregation (Lassiter 2010, 27). In other words, the government threatened their fundamental rights to legally discriminate against Blacks and other non-Whites.

The Silent Majority

The discussion of the “Silent Majority” in Southern Strategy literature is essential to understanding how color-blind and racially stigmatizing language has provided a pathway for conservative Republicans to transition from overt to covert racism. The shift in language provided a means to gain public support for eliminating social spending programs among working and middle class White voters. Richard Nixon appealed to conservative voters in his 1968 campaign and paid tribute to “the forgotten Americans,” who were identified as the White, hard-working taxpayers who did not protest the war in Vietnam, and who felt their values were being marginalized. The actions of the rioters, criminals, anti-war protesters, and liberal activists, and politicians who supported social spending programs were linked to the marginalization of the “forgotten Americans” (Lassiter 2011). Nixon later inserted the term “Silent Majority” in November 1969 in a televised speech to the nation to gain support for the increasingly unpopular Vietnam War (Nixon 1969). However, as Nixon’s first term progressed, he used the term “Silent Majority” as a means to distinguish Nixon supporters as upright and patriotic citizens who stood up against the misfits that held un-American and unpatriotic values (Perlstein 2014, 200-201).

Matthew Lassiter argues Nixon’s rhetoric was carefully designed to appeal to voters in the “Silent Majority” to unify middle and working class Whites and to embrace the principle of color-blindness. Lassiter also states Nixon would directly address “the great silent majority of Americans,” suggesting the poor and racial minorities were taking advantage of government largess and racial quota programs at the expense of White workers. (Lassiter 2006, 5). In his 1968 speech to accept the Republican presidential nomination, Nixon framed his opposition to government spending and made binary arguments that described how unfair and inhumane these programs are to taxpayers and the beneficiaries, who he
identified as Black. He discussed how programs for the poor, such as housing, welfare, and job training, wasted billions of dollars and resulted in violence and failure in poor communities throughout the nation. Nixon further clarified that policies eliminating social spending would instill valuable personal characteristics. His words convey that individuals who used welfare were hurting their sense of dignity and lacked a sense of individual responsibility (Nixon, 1968).

The “Silent Majority” frame Nixon established in his 1968 campaign demonstrates how he was able to take advantage of the fear and discontent that occurred inside and outside of the South. The fear and discontent was generated by the assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X; riots in major urban cities in 1967 and 1968 from Los Angeles, Detroit, Chicago, Newark, NJ, and Washington, DC; and civil rights and Vietnam War protests. These historical demarcations remain at the center of the conversation about the Southern Strategy for two reasons. First, these events, which were recorded on film, provided visual explanations of what the upheaval of the 1960s looked like and established the concept of moral decay in the collective American memory. Second, because the Southern Strategy remains a current topic of discussion, there is an overreliance in the literature to use events from the 1960s to simplify the complex history of the rise of massive resistance of White conservatives.

The examination of the Southern Strategy literature should begin with a discussion of the racial politics of the Great Depression and World War II. Narratives that start the focus on White backlash with the 1960s legislative changes fail to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the anger of White voters, who opposed the expansion of civil, social, and economic rights of Blacks, have influenced the American presidency specifically and prevented equal access of Blacks to program and policies that developed the White middle class. This viewpoint explains the White backlash that formed the foundation for the Southern Strategy is much broader than the political convergence of Democrats in the South who opposed desegregation and legislation that provided Blacks access to the New Deal and anti-New Deal Republicans in the Northern and Western states. At its core, the Southern Strategy is a political
strategy to maintain racial stratification that would make true equality between Whites, Blacks, and racial minorities extremely difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

**Challenging the Nixon-Era Backlash Theory**

The classic definition of the Southern Strategy has served to undermine the public’s understanding of the history of racial backlash as a national phenomenon in many ways. The Southern Strategy has impacted American politics beyond the South well before the formal end of Jim Crow in 1965. Scholars have re-evaluated how racial policies and Black civil rights activism in New Deal era politics served as the foundation for the Republican Party’s ability to use White resentment of Southern voters in the Democratic Party into reliable and loyal Republican voters (Haney-Lopez 2013; Katznelson 2005; Lowndes 2008). This re-evaluation is important for two specific reasons. First, it fully examines the impact of the collaboration between Northern Republicans and Southern Democrats to provide legislative pathways that enabled low income and working class Whites to leave poverty and enter the middle class. These same pathways legally excluded African Americans from accessing the same programs. The Southern Strategy fails to explain how policies, not personal choices, created income inequalities between Blacks and Whites (Katznelson 2005, 11).

Secondly, the narrative fails to incorporate the civil rights activism prior to the Martin Luther King, Jr. era. White resentment of Black activists and their demands for equality contributed to the addition of voting restrictions and the insertion of legislative provisions that prevented Blacks from accessing housing, education, social security benefits, and other wealth building mechanisms essential to building the middle class after World War II (Katznelson, 2005, 10-12). Therefore, White resentment should be recognized as a phenomenon that occurs every time Blacks challenge the racial hierarchies of American society.
II. The Unsettling of American Racial Politics

A common misperception is the Southern Strategy was developed by the Nixon campaign. Placing the focus on 1968 negatively contributes to the lack of understanding Americans have regarding the racial history of the United States. As I discussed in Chapter 2, White resentment has influenced American electoral politics and policies since the slavery era. However, the political circumstances of 1968, which included anger from the end of Jim Crow and expanded voting for Blacks, provided the Republicans with pathways to increase their base of support in the South. The campaign was able to take advantage of the long standing defections from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party that were impacting national voting patterns well before the 1960s. The shifts in party affiliation can be directly connected to reforms that originated from the New Deal (Phillips 2014, 14). From my perspective as an African American female scholar, it appears there is an overemphasis on using Johnson’s actions as the impetus that encouraged White voters to leave the Democratic Party. With no doubt, Johnson’s actions prompted conservative White Democrats to become Republican voters. However, the Southern Strategy alone does not account for the sustained political pressure from working class and poor Black activists, both men and women, and civil rights organizations efforts to break the authoritarian system of social and legal subordination. The system was maintained, in large part, through terrorism and fear. Therefore, the literature on the Southern Strategy must include a discussion on how Whites reacted to the unwillingness of Blacks to be afraid and openly defy the rules and expectations of segregation. The defiance of Blacks is just as important to the development of the Southern Strategy as Lyndon Johnson’s support for civil rights. The refusal of African American defiance to conform to the government sanctioned discrimination of American racial politics served to change political patterns of the nation.

White Racial Unrest in the Post World War II Era

Classic and recent political science and historical literature explain the “solid” Democratic South was experiencing changes in voting patterns that would facilitate the ability for Republicans to convert
formerly loyal Democratic Party voters into their ranks. V. O. Key argues the Republican ascendancy can be traced back to the Dixiecrat Revolt, which signals the refusal of southern states to join northern Democrats in their efforts to allow Blacks to participate in social and electoral reforms (Key 1964, 239; Key 2006, 329-332). Key also argued the New Deal served as an impetus for Blacks and progressive southern Whites to increase voting registration and to align themselves with pro-New Deal reformers in the 1940s. Blacks in the South were developing cohesive efforts to make demands for economic and civic equality that posed a threat to the White caste system. Segregationists reacted to this activism by enacting laws that enforced severe restrictions on voting rights (Key 2006, 644-651).

Additionally, Kevin Phillips’ research describes the changing voting patterns in the 1960s supports Key’s analysis that the South and West had begun to shift toward the Republican Party since the New Deal presidential cycle of 1932. Phillips’ book, originally published in 1969, has been credited as the blueprint the Nixon’s campaign used to build support in the South. The book provides a detailed and historical analysis of the regional and cultural shifts that influenced the electorate for a 25 year period. Also, it explains the gradual shift of Southern voting patterns and incremental support for the Republican party. This shift in support was evident long before the 1964 and 1968 presidential elections (Phillips 2014, 16 and 27).

Lowndes supports Phillips’ assessment that the realignment was a long-term process. He suggests there has been an overreliance of attributing the changes in White voting patterns due to anger and resentment about what they perceive as excesses of the 1960s. The term “excesses” was used to describe the disapproval of the civil rights and the anti-Vietnam movements. These issues provided conservatives with the political ammunition to convert conservative Democrats to the Republican Party (Lowndes 2008, 3).

Scholars who specialize on the development of the Republican Party generally agree the social progress made to end Jim Crow and to expand political rights to Black Americans served as a major turning point for Whites to leave the Democratic Party (Black and Black 2002, 75-77; Lamis 1990, 26-27). The literature on the Southern Strategy also discuss the racially based resentment of White voters
who were angry about the perception that they were being forced by the government to pay for the safety net of the undeserving and poor minorities (Chappell 2012, 121; Edsall and Edsall 1991, 9; Haney Lopez 2013, 20). Finally, the literature includes discussions on the Dixiecrat Revolt of 1948 that was fueled by Southern Democrats who protested President Harry Truman’s policies to desegregate the armed forces (Lowndes 2008, 26-30).

**White Supremacy as a Political ideology: The Influence of Charles Wallace Collins**

The opposition that the Southern Democrats launched against the Truman Administration was based on the political ideology of White supremacy. According to Lowndes (2008), Southerners had assumed Truman would maintain segregation because he came from the conservative southern state of Missouri. This assumption changed when President Truman strengthened the Federal Employment Practices Commission (FEPC). Under the Roosevelt Administration, Southern opposition prevented the agency from enforcing anti-discrimination policies that would provide Blacks with opportunities to work within the defense industry. However, Truman was able to overcome the Southern opposition and make the FEPC a permanent agency (Lowndes 2008, 24). Additionally, Truman established a civil rights commission to examine the impact of racial discrimination on Black lives in 1947. A recommendation in the report was to end governmental and private segregation and supported the integration of the military. The Democratic Party’s 1948 platform also advocated for progressive policy changes to move civil rights forward (Bartley 1999, 33). Truman’s policies on race provided the impetus for Southern segregationists to withdraw their support for the Truman’s presidential nomination in 1948 (Lamis 1980, 8).

The literature on the Dixiecrat Revolt begins with the narrative of Senator Strom Thurmond’s (D-SC) 1948 presidential campaign (Edsall and Edsall 1992, 34; Philpot 2010, 2-3). Thurmond’s campaign energized and organized the development of White supremacy as the political doctrine that connected the anti-New Dealers in the North and West with segregationists of the South through the shared goal of weakening the power of the federal government. However, the Dixiecrat agenda framed the New Deal, social spending, and the centralization of government as assaults on the freedoms of the South.
Thurmond was one of many Southern politicians who organized their opposition to Harry Truman and the expansion of civil rights by using Charles Wallace Collins’ book, *Whither Solid South*, to develop their strategy for massive resistance. Collins’ writing is significant for two specific reasons. First, Collins is credited for developing code words used to justify the South’s resistance to the federal government’s efforts to nationalize civil rights. He wrote that Southerners should be educated on how words, such as “freedom,” “liberty,” “security,” “rights,” and “protection,” had been used to support the liberalizing of American social values (Lowndes 2008, 16). Collins’ writing used the “us vs. them” frame to connect the programs that provided advancement for Blacks during violent attacks on the Southern way of life. Collins was able to broaden the “us vs. them” frame as the “southern dilemma.” This frame created a significant breach between the Northern and Southern wings of the Democratic Party based on irreconcilable positions on racial equality (Collins 1947, 254-255).

Collins was able to expand the South’s opposition to liberal New Deal programs, such as the Federal Employment Practices Commission (FEPC), to race by finding political alliances with Northern conservatives. Collins had determined the opposition of the FEPC would promote unity among Southern Democrats and conservative Republicans. This alliance would provide conservative Democrats with the opportunity to continue to exclude Blacks from legislation that had the potential to provide racial equality and employment rights. The support would be offered to conservative Republicans legislation that promoted free enterprise, deregulation, and undermining policies of the Federal government that political factions claimed threatened their dignity, freedom, and individual rights (Collins 1947, 236-257). The text of *Whither Solid South* served a dual purpose for Southern Democrats. Collins provided an extensive discussion on how the liberalization of New Deal legislation harmed Whites. He also provided extensive strategies for racial conservatives to fight effectively on behalf of White supremacy. For example, Collins stated:

> The FEPC bill can be by no means be characterized as conservative. It is one of the most radical bills ever introduced in the Congress. It was a states’ measure that would turn over to a Federal bureau centralized control over employment, promotions, seniority rights and working
conditions throughout the country wherever Negroes are employed. Conservative Republicans should not in all conscience support this measure. This bill is an illustration of how the Negro question - a carryover from slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction - still prevents a rational approach to the political issues before the country today (Collins 1947, 256).

*Whither Solid South* also had a significant role in the 1948 Dixiecrat Revolt. The author provided an intellectual foundation for segregationists to build a national movement based on Southern resistance. The language used to describe the opposition to Truman’s 1948 candidacy was tempered in way that avoided the use of racial epithets and bigotry, but focused on the platform of states’ rights. Southern Democrats, also commonly known as Dixiecrats, seceded from the party that year to protest Truman’s liberalization of segregation laws. Strom Thurmond, the Dixiecrat nominee for president, argued the South wasn’t fighting to maintain White supremacy. He claimed the fight was for State sovereignty and free-market conservatism. Although Thurmond was unable to win significant electoral support, he had successfully recruited business associations across the South to promote his campaign (Lowndes 2008, 30).

The politicians and business organizations that supported the Dixiecrat Revolt would serve as the foundation for the organization of mass resistance in the 1950s and later Movement Conservatism in the 1960s and 1970s. Numan Bartley describes how the election trends of the Eisenhower era demonstrate conservative voters in the South were becoming increasingly disenchanted with the Democrats and began to leave the party. He discusses the growing dissatisfaction with the national Democratic Party’s positions on domestic policy. For example, Dixiecrats were supportive of the Eisenhower candidacy. Southern businessmen shared conservative values on Communism, corruption, and the role of government. Additionally, Republicans were gaining support in urban areas of the South. Bartley explains that while the Republicans made significant gains in the 1952 presidential election, the Democrats were able to hold off some defections because they had made concessions at the Democratic National Convention to pacify members of the Southern delegations (Bartley 1999, 47-52).
This conservative insurgency was a national phenomenon. The historical narrative does not reflect this trend because racism and White resistance during this era is often taught by showing photographic images of working class, undereducated Southerners engaged in racially motivated vigilantism and violence. Blacks in these photos and newsreels are shown as the victims of the Klu Klux Klan, who are yelling racial slurs and carrying racist signs as well as the Confederate flag. This depiction is only a partial representation of White resistance because it inaccurately describes Southerners as different and uniquely unaccepting of liberal or progressive values (Lassiter and Crespino 2010, 6). A more accurate depiction of massive resistance requires a discussion of how the American experience of racism has been reframed and explained by political and corporate interests to limit focus on the ugliness of racism to the deep south, and transform the heroes of the classic Civil Rights era into simplistic and non-threatening historical figures.

This narrative has also impacted how Americans and academics view the efficacy of the Southern Strategy and massive resistance solely as a product of Southern racism and its inherent belief racial stratifications should be legal. Americans are often told southern society will never accept racial equality. The resistance some academics may have to broadening the definition of the Southern Strategy exists because Americans have largely accepted the view that the problem of entrenched, inhumane, and violent forms of racism, which includes massive resistance, is uniquely Southern. Lassiter and Crespino argue the American memory is shaped with the promulgation of incomplete descriptions of the horrors Blacks and Whites met while challenging segregation in the South. In other words, Americans believe in the myth of southern exceptionalism. The term describes a mythology that racial backlash and ideology is a uniquely Southern phenomenon (Lassiter and Crespino 2010, 7). However, these accounts of America’s racial past largely exclude the violence and discrimination that occurred when segregation was challenged in the North and West. For example, Americans are familiar with the story of the nine African American high schoolers in Little Rock, Arkansas, who were met with violent, White mobs as they legally integrated Little Rock High School in August of 1957. The story of the Little Rock Nine was widely covered by the American press. Often, it is credited for awakening the American conscious of the race
problem in the American South. Yet, Whites in the North were also forming mobs to intimidate and exclude Blacks from integrating White neighborhoods and schools in their towns. The racial eruptions in the North were largely ignored. Lassiter and Crespino discuss the mob violence that occurred in Levittown, Pennsylvania, in August of 1957 when a Black family attempted to live in a newly constructed neighborhood. William and Daisy Myers’ home was surrounded by 400 Whites, a Confederate flag, and a burning cross on their lawn. Rocks were hurled into their home. Although these incidents happened weeks apart, it is the story of Southern and not Northern mass resistance that is counted as a significant event in American racial history (Lassiter and Crespino 2010, 4-6).

Lassiter and Crespino state the continued misinterpretation of American history has reduced the understanding of the Southern Strategy and massive resistance to an overly simplified, popularized trope. Primarily, modern conservatism and White backlash, can be traced directly to the advances Blacks made during the classic era of the Civil Rights movement and a rejection of New Deal liberalism. Additionally, the misunderstanding is perpetuated with the explanation that Barry Goldwater invented the Southern Strategy, which was accelerated by Nixon, and perfected by Ronald Reagan. However, these same explanations fail to include information about the increasing numbers of Outer South, or border states, such as Virginia and Kentucky, in the 1950s that supported President Eisenhower. In the 1952 election, Eisenhower won four Southern states and narrowly lost two (Bartley 1999, 47). Further, Nixon and Reagan did not develop their conservative platform in the South, but in California (Lassiter and Crespino 2010, 6). They were able to develop a base of power at a time that conservatism was taking hold in communities experiencing visible changes to the social order.

The historical emphasis on the Southern wing of Democratic Party opposition to integration in the mid-20th century is more apparent because of the Southern Democratic governors, such as George Wallace of Alabama and Ross Barnett of Mississippi. They had the media’s attention and served as representatives of political obstructionists who supported the racial restrictions imposed by Jim Crow and the South’s tradition of interposition (Theoharis 2018, 135). The insertion of federal power provoked Democratic politicians across the South to roll back federal policies and court orders as if they were
engaged in war. As groups, such as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, worked through the judiciary to dismantle the caste system, White organizations, such as the White Citizens Council, strengthened their opposition to ensure the courts could not enforce desegregation by reasserting their right to oppose federal actions they believed encroached on states’ sovereignty. John Kyle Day explains how the White Citizens Councils, composed of White middle class professionals, controlled Southern politics. After the Brown decision, they undertook a public campaign to organize and prevent schools from admitting Black students. Although these organizations stated they did not advocate violence or illegal actions, they provided tacit support for segregation. In the years following the Brown decision, these organizations fought a political war against the federal government’s intrusion and were responsible for the passage of 450 statutes used to obstruct segregation (Day 2014, 18).

The narratives of civil rights history often simplify the role of White opposition and Black activism. The era is described as a clash between the “good Whites,” who opposed segregation, and the “bad Whites,” who were steadfast in their efforts to maintain Jim Crow. Blacks are described as somewhat passive fighters. The reality is the civil rights victories would not have been possible without the sustained political pressure Blacks placed on the power structures. Often times protesters, such as the Freedom Riders, were severely injured or lost their lives before the activists received support and protection from the federal government for their struggle to end Jim Crow (Higginbotham 2013, 148).

The lack of vocal support from White middle class moderates negatively impacted the efforts to follow through with the federal orders to integrate. In spite of the sustained activism and incremental judicial victories, it was very difficult for the civil rights movement to secure support from moderate Whites, who could have provided the political support needed to enforce the civil rights victories that had been won through court action. In his 1963 essay, “Letters from a Birmingham Jail,” Martin Luther King, Jr. expressed his deep disappointment that moderate Christians continued to ask the Negro to wait for the right time for their civil rights. He continued to ask the moderates how can they continue to stay silent and watch the Negro be subjected to humiliation and abuse, lynch mobs, and live in poverty solely because they are Black (King 1964, 81). King’s letter helps to us to understand the victories were made
were in large part due to the persistence of everyday African Americans to adhere to their principles and overcome the insertion of interposition, White resentment, and place pressure on the racial moderates to demand the enforcement of desegregation legislation and court decisions. The role of Black resistance is just as significant as Johnson’s signing of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965, and must be included in the narrative of the development of the Southern Strategy.

The “Excesses” of the 1960s: The Growth of the Conservative Political Landscape

Often, it is common to hear political analysts explain Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan were able capitalize on the Southern Strategy because voters had focused their anger on the “excesses” of the 1960s. In other words, the voters were angry with the high crime rates, protests against the Vietnam War, and the liberalization of social and sexual norms between men and women. This research asserts the term “excesses” had a more subtle political meaning that included the anger and resentment towards Blacks and national Democrats for their efforts in legally ending the Jim Crow system of government. Essentially, it was about the loss of political and social control that had structured society since the beginning of slavery. The shift in power provided the Republican Party with the opportunity to cultivate Southern Democrats, whose base of power eroded after a decade of federal intervention, and were looking for a political venue to reassert White economic and social control. This environment would transform American presidential politics and allow the racially charged rhetoric to successfully build the foundation for the Republican Party based on racial resentment for the next fifty years and likely beyond.

The Southernization of the Republican Party

The designation of the term “southern” in the Southern Strategy allows the focus of American conservatism and White resentment as phenomena to be on the 11 former Confederate states. Airstrip suggests this designation does not accurately portray how the states, such as Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, Texas, and Tennessee, evolved differently from states, often called the “old South” such as South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. These states, often called the “new South,” had urban
centers with large populations of White collar, highly educated, wealthy, and upper class Whites. The political philosophies of new South voters shared the same social values on individualism. Their economic beliefs regarding business and taxation were in tune with Republican values (Aistrup 1996, 21). Conversely, Louis Gould argues the Republican Party was becoming more conservative in the early 1960s as Whites witnessed the acts of civil disobedience and heard aspirations of Black civil rights activists. Their fear and resentment increased with the belief that their way of life and hard-earned economic status were threatened (Gould 2003, 352).

The turn toward conservatism was occurring well beyond the South and much earlier than Nixon’s presidency. Jeanne Theoharis’ research on the civil rights struggle outside of the South discusses how non-White communities organized for several decades before the mid-century activism to end Jim Crow segregation in the northern, urban cities (Theoharis 2014, 2010). For example, although the public’s focus on the Brown vs. Board of Education (1954) was in the South, the decision had national implications. The busing of Black children to White schools was a highly contentious flashpoint for conservative politics. While the racial tensions of the Boston busing crisis became a national issue in 1974, the controversy began 25 years earlier and prior to the Brown decision, when the city’s Black parents launched protests to desegregate schools, acquire up to date textbooks, smaller class sizes, and safe buildings (Theoharis 2005, 43).

The history of school desegregation in Boston also provides evidence that the stigmatizing coded language associated with the Southern Strategy was present in a state known for its liberal political values. The politics of pathology framed the city’s busing debate. The term “busing” was used in Boston politics as a racialized word as early as 1963. Phrases, such as “culture of poverty” and “ghetto behavior,” were used in debates to keep the city’s schools segregated. The protests in Boston were occurring concurrently with the protests in the South to end Jim Crow in public schools (Theoharis 2005, 41). We know from historical films and news accounts the protests in Boston were just as contentious as school desegregation protests in the “old South.” However, Americans viewed these events differently because of the regions in which they occurred. For example, Theoharis argues the Watts Riots and other
urban disturbances are not linked to other civil rights battles. They are not discussed within the historical context of police brutality and political disenfranchisement. She states the racial conflicts between Blacks and Whites are described differently depending on their geographic location. Historians treat southern segregationists as “evil” and Black southern activists as “kind.” Whereas northern segregationists are not labeled as segregationists. Their opinions are described as “backlash.” Their language of social pathology is described as “cultural deprivation.” The terms “busing” and “forced busing” became more divisive when political candidates cultivated voter support against integrating the public schools. The anti-busing sentiments of Whites were accepted and the government did not have a legitimate interest in integrating schools by bringing Black students who lived outside of the White school districts. Therefore, these voters and protesters are not racists (Theoharis 2010, 51). During this frame, “White backlash” provided racial conservatives a shield to nationalize what has been widely considered southern political values.

The increased visibility of racism outside of the South and its impact on presidential politics are best explained by examining Lyndon Johnson’s and Ronald Reagan’s political bases of power during this era. The eruption of racial politics during the mid 1960 made it difficult to portray racism as a uniquely Southern problem. Racism and the racial resentment relegated to the South were just as influential in the West and the North. The declining power of Lyndon Johnson after 1965 and the increased power of Ronald Reagan during that time demonstrates that presidents would have to cultivate or mitigate racial resentment to manage their political power and their legislative agendas.

**Lyndon Johnson and Ronald Reagan: Presidents from the New Deal Generation**

Due to the time span between the Johnson and Reagan presidencies and the philosophy that guided domestic policy development under their leadership, it is not apparent these two presidents are products of the New Deal generation. Johnson and Reagan were born three years apart and their politics were influenced by the New Deal era. Johnson made the Great Society program his signature domestic policy program. Therefore, it is easy to see Johnson believed in the same social welfare policies as Roosevelt. However, Reagan’s political transformation is not as clear to public. Generally, it is
understood Reagan was once a Democrat. He discussed his political conversion in his *A Time for Choosing* speech (Reagan 1964). However, few are unaware that he idolized Roosevelt and supported the New Deal, and the spending associated with those policies (Darman 2014, 12). Looking back, it is less apparent how they approached the issue of race and their decision whether to manipulate the politics of racism to advance their political agendas. Their decisions would influence their respective parties through the 21st century.

Reagan’s opposition to social spending and policies to expand racial equality are clear. Reagan never made a serious effort to cultivate Black votes as part of his base. Matthew Dallek argues that as early as his 1966 campaign for governor, Reagan did not pretend racial equality was his priority. While he understood some Americans would believe his opposition to the 1964 and 1965 civil rights legislation was considered too extreme, he would take a strategic approach to race. He would denounce and distance himself from right-wing racists, but discuss civil rights laws as unnecessary and intrusive burdens to Whites. Reagan states racism was a moral burden that must be resolved by people and not the government (Dallek 2000, 239-241). His reaction to his critics that he was racist mirrors how Whites generally react when they are challenged for having racist views. Even though he was actively opposed to civil rights, Reagan always denied he was racist and was also able to evoke anger or sadness when he was accused of being racist. He would accuse those who called him a racist as the ones who were actually exploiting race (Reagan 1990, 230-231; Rigueur 2014, 121-123). Reagan’s position on race did not pose a threat to his political base, so he never faced any negative political consequences for his policies.

In contrast to Reagan, there were negative consequences for Johnson. He often approached policies that expanded racial and social policies viewed as a moral imperative. Yet, he often expressed his fear of losing his base of White voters, which was not limited to voters in the southern states; they included those who lived in the northern and western states. Johnson’s statements on the moral case to eliminate racial and economic inequality contradict his actions. His cautious approach to race is similar to the way post-1968 Democratic presidents have treated racial issues. The presidents do not want to offend White voters who do not hold progressive views on race. Even those Americans who believe
The end of Johnson’s presidency would be the last time a racially liberal, Democratic president would have the opportunity to advance significant civil rights policies. The Republican administrations of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan would begin to reverse the social and economic liberalization that began under the New Deal. As a result, the Carter, Clinton, and Obama Administrations would take cautious, if not conservative, positions on race and social equality as a means to maintain influence and political support among moderate White, voters. The next section explores the evolution of racially coded language within the context of the racial politics during their presidencies.

III. From Nixon to Trump: Presidents and Racial Politics Since 1968

Introduction:

This section examines the ways in which Republican and Democratic presidents, beginning with President Nixon and ending with President Trump, have used coded language to respond to racial controversies as presidential candidates and as President of the United States. The reader will learn how most presidents, with the exception of Donald Trump who uses overt racial terminology, used covert racially coded words to garner support for their regressive policy positions on social spending programs.

The Influence of the Southern Strategy on the Post 1968 Republican Presidential Rhetoric

Introduction

The Southern Strategy is generally accepted to be a Republican Party phenomenon. Scholars and journalists have extensively discussed how the Republican Party manipulated the fears and anger of Whites to convert Southern White voters and build national support for conservative social policies from 1968 to 1992. Since 1968, Republican presidents have inserted a broad range of racially charged language from mildly covert wording, such as George H. W. Bush’s “kinder and softer nation” and
George W. Bush’s “the soft bigotry of low expectations,” to overt inflammatory language, such as Reagan’s “welfare queens” and Trump’s declarations of Mexican rapists and gang murderers (Haney-Lopez 2013, 19; Kendi 2016, 470; Trump 2015). The discussion regarding Republican presidents will examine how racially coded language has been manipulated based on the reaction of White voters and fellow party members during their presidential campaigns and as President.

**President Richard Nixon: “A Colony in a Nation” Frame for Social Spending**

After Nixon entered the White House in 1969, his political advisors defined the term “Southern Strategy” as the “silent majority” to appeal to Northern working class White voters. Also, there was an intentional effort to cultivate a Republican coalition of blue collar workers who were of Catholic, Polish, Italian, and Irish ethnics. His speeches intentionally articulate his appreciation for the plight of the working man. Nixon continued to build his working class base of support under the label of the “Blue-Collar Working Group.” In 1970, his political advisors led weekly discussions to learn about the social and economic issues of importance to lower-middle class workers. Nixon’s team uncovered resentment these voters held against welfare programs for the poor and black voters. Scott Spitzer argues Nixon’s Southern Strategy evolved into a new kind of racial conservatism. For example, people who wanted to be viewed as racist could embrace his positions. More importantly, those voters who wanted to avoid being called racist could also be attracted to the subliminal racial appeals (Spitzer 2012, 462-466).

The political environment of the 1970s post-Civil Rights era was conducive to the evolution of the Southern Strategy, as it used color-blind rhetoric. This strategy and rhetoric appealed to conservative leaning voters. Dennis Deslippe (2008) described how the political views of White ethnics during the post-Civil Rights era were based on two distinct themes, and articulated their feelings of political and social disadvantage, resentment, and insularity. The 1970s marked a decade of economic decline that was particularly difficult for White working class families. Ethnic activists were fighting to define which individuals should be included in the constituency of the disadvantage. Deslippe also discussed how the White ethnic social scientists and political activists began to classify the White ethnic groups as
economically disadvantaged. The activist groups needed sympathy for the conditions of poverty they faced. Additionally, they needed to develop an enemy upon which the White ethnic could place the blame for these conditions. The media, government, and corporations were the elites these voters blamed and demanded empathy and sympathy for their lack of economic progress. White ethnic social scientists and political activists promoted the belief that the lack of progress of the “forgotten man” was directly related to the policies that provided economic assistance to Blacks at the expense of White ethnic Americans (Deslippe 2008, 152-154).

When Nixon entered the White House in 1969, he reversed the policies of previous administrations that served as models of reform for imposing regressive and punitive policies. The policies included the promulgation of heavy-handed sentencing reforms and the placement of local, state, and harsh federal policing policies in American cities. Elizabeth Hinton stated the policies were so harsh and expansive that there were concerns White youths were entering the justice system at high rates, which startled Whites. However, Congress intervened and decriminalized policies associated with White youths. At the same time, Congress also implemented new laws focused on the social policies and issues that disproportionately impacted the poor and communities of color. The individuals targeted were those who had members of their families with criminal records, attended public schools, lived in public housing, and received welfare benefits. In other words, poor people of color were targeted in ways that created a two-tier justice system. One system was for Whites and the other system was for non-Whites (Hinton 2016, 10).

Nixon’s policies on crime forced Black and Brown people to live in “a colony in a nation” (Hayes 2016, 17). Chris Hayes (2016) argues that when Nixon used the term in his 1968 Republican convention speech, he was asking voters to imagine how African Americans were trapped in their neighborhoods as a result of the welfare system, and unable to take control of their own lives. Their inability to escape poverty prevented them from engaging in mainstream, middle class American life. Hayes states Nixon was re-enforcing the “colony in a nation” frame with the establishment of policies that served as the framework for mass incarceration while he eliminated programs and pathways for Black
Americans to leave poverty and enter the middle class. The implementation of a two-tier justice system enforced policies that supported two sets of racial standards (Hayes 2016, 17).

As Nixon was doubling down on the “War on Crime,” his administration, under his direction, was actively weakening Johnson’s “War on Poverty.” Hinton supports Hayes’ claims the Nixon Administration was rewriting legislation so block grants intended for anti-poverty programs were used to expand a system of incarceration and support the building of new prisons. Additionally, Congress and the Nixon Administration were enacting policies that allowed the use of unprecedented police surveillance to target Black radicals and those who were believed to be engaging in militant activities. The result was that the police state increased the opportunities for Black residents to be arrested and provided state, local, and federal agencies the opportunity and justification to place entire Black neighborhoods under police supervision (Hinton 2016, 22).

The Watergate scandal effectively ended Nixon’s domestic policy agenda. However, the Southern Strategy was on a trajectory to transform American presidential politics. Those who opposed the political interests of Blacks continued to use the frames of social pathologies and the imagery of crime, fear, and disgust. The efforts to expand racial and economic equality would continue to be difficult. The fight against government support for reform would be based on the argument that there was no longer a need for the government to invest in and support programs and laws that promoted equality between the races. American presidents, regardless of their party affiliation, would continue to frame their policy perspectives on economic rights, crime, and punishment through the lens of racial pathologies. Republican Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, George W. Bush, and Donald Trump would blame personal behavior and the lack of personal responsibility as the cause of African American poverty. Democratic presidents Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama would advocate for racial equality while concurrently signaling to White middle class voters that they were keeping African American issues and political demands at arm’s length. While each president faced the issue of race, Ronald Reagan’s management of race and poverty issues would transform how presidents for the next generation would frame these issues.
President Ronald Reagan: The Elevation of Dog-Whistle Politics

In the three decades since he left office, polling indicates Ronald Reagan’s popularity has increased significantly among Americans (Gallup 2004, 2011). He is viewed as an amiable and measured leader whose brand of conservatism was significantly more reasonable, if not moderate, than the conservative ideology of today. He is credited for showing the country conservatism was the only way of reordering America’s racial structures after the liberalization of state and federal laws and the social unrest of the 1960s. The strength of Reagan’s brand of conservatism has sustained for two distinct reasons. First, there has been a continuous, concerted effort by conservative authors, former White House staff members, think tanks, and political television analysts to memorialize him as a venerable American hero. For instance, Craig Shirley and Peggy Noonan wrote several volumes of best-selling books to show Reagan’s presidency as an exceptional period in American history (Noonan 1990, 1999, 2001; Shirley 2010, 2014, 2015). The Heritage Foundation has employed several specialists who have written numerous position papers promoting Reagan’s legacy (Edwards 2003; Hayward 2013; Meese 2008). Americans for Tax Reform has dedicated promoting his image through the Ronald Reagan Legacy Project. The mission of this project is focused on “preserving the legacy of one of America’s greatest presidents throughout the nation” (Americans for Tax Reform 2017).

During recent presidential election cycles, journalists and pundits argue Reagan could not be elected as president in the current manifestation of conservatism. The reasoning was that he was too moderate when compared to Republican Party members with far right, extremist ideologies that were elected in the Obama era (Bartlett 2012; Devine 2016; Wehner, 2016; Weisberg, 2016). The misinterpretation of Reagan’s conservatism is largely due to the conflation of his alleged passive temperament, joviality, and glamorous image with the idea he really was the “savior of the western world.” As a result, the harsh vitriol and race-based policies directed at the poor and to Black Americans are marginalized, if not erased, from American memory.
Ronald Reagan’s conservatism was always based on the ideology of states’ rights. His opposition to the expansion of civil rights demonstrated he was as dedicated to states’ rights as was Strom Thurmond and George Wallace. However, because Reagan was considered “the Great Communicator” and an exceptional public speaker, his rhetoric, and actions he took to make his support for states’ rights more palatable among non-Southern Whites, his legacy is treated differently from the overt segregationist views of Thurmond and Wallace. Generally, Reagan scholars assess his rhetorical skills to evaluate how he cultivated his national political base in two ways. For example, H.W. Brands asserts that in addition to his ability to convey his patriotism and appreciation for the nation, Reagan told Americans the responsibility for the country’s problems were directly due to government actions and not choices made by the voters (Brands 2015, 866-868). Conversely, Toby Glenn Bates argues Reagan was able to insert wording that diffused racial connotations and the history of the states’ rights issue. He connected the concept of states’ rights to the uncertainty voters felt about the failing economy. He also convinced voters to dismiss or marginalize the ugliness and difficulties of Blacks related to the United States’ history of racism. Although it was considered unfair and inappropriate to question the imperfections of the nation’s democracy, there was an expectation that the nation must move past its history and forget the contributions and sacrifices paid by the civil rights activists in their quest to advance democracy for all Americans (Bates 2011, 6 and 23).

Bates explains pro-Reagan scholars have been able to minimize the significance of “dog-whistle” events in Reagan’s rhetorical history. The pro-Reagan literature supports Reagan’s assertions that he was not a racist (Cannon 2009, 329 and 575; Shirley 2010, 218; Shirley 2014, 520). Reagan’s critics point to his record of racism by discussing his opposition to the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Critics also discuss the 1980 rally in the Neshoba County Fair in Philadelphia, Mississippi. The town gained historical infamy for the 1964 murders of civil rights activists by the Klu Klux Klan as punishment for their participation in Freedom Summer (Philpot 2010, 47). During his speech at the rally, Reagan stated he was for states’ rights. His comments focused on the issue of race in conjunction with
the issue of welfare reform and government overreach (Reagan 1980). His decision to make a speech about states’ rights in the town where the notorious murders of civil rights activists occurred was widely criticized as being racially insensitive. Additionally, Reagan insisted supporting states’ rights was not a code for racism, but a call to end the overreach of the Federal government and to honor the 10th Amendment of the Constitution (Shirley 2014, 532).

The negative publicity Reagan faced after his appearance in Mississippi created an image problem for his campaign. His role as the leader of Movement Conservatism and his record as governor of California left the public with the perception that he was a right-wing extremist. As he entered the 1976 and 1980 campaigns, Reagan was forced to confront the perceptions voters had that he was cruel and politically extreme (Stuckey 1989, 52-53). Mary Stuckey argues he was able to overcome voter misgivings when he used language that portrayed him as a unifier of American value. Thereby, presenting a moderate face when he gave his arguments to explain why the New Deal and welfare were an affront to American values. Reagan’s form of conservatism was directed solely at White middle and working class voters who did not want to be associated with overt racism, but remained angry with the federal government’s role in ending Jim Crow. His mild mannered, jovial temperament and rhetoric was instrumental in convincing White working class Americans to abandon their formerly positive views towards social spending.

Reagan and the Influence of Anti-Big Government Philosophy

Ronald Reagan is primarily identified as an anti-big government president. The anti-big government philosophy, defined by Movement Conservatives, is often referred to as a political philosophy that believes in limiting the role government plays in constructing American society and influencing the lives of individual Americans (Davenport and Lloyd 2013, 52). Anti-civil rights Republicans inserted their anti-big government philosophy as the justification for the insertion of policies intended to impede and reverse the racial progress of the Lyndon Johnson era. Feagin argues the
conservative movement was interwoven with the Southern Strategy as an electoral tactic and a means for conservatives to re-establish White supremacy and a legitimate racial caste system (Feagin, 2012, 124).

One of the key goals of the conservative movement was to remove the protections the federal government and the Supreme Court extended to African Americans. The application of the Southern Strategy was a means to a broader end game. Henry Giroux states the 1970s marked the beginning of changes in the public discussions on democracy that began to dispute the view that government had a role in maintaining the public good. Additionally, Reagan advocated for “market fundamentalism” and proclaimed, “There was no such thing as society and that government was the problem, not the solution.” His brand of market fundamentalism subordinates promotes self-interest and individualism over the collective needs of society. Giroux continues to explain how ideological extremism that placed the emphasis on deregulation and giving power to corporations over citizens had a very important role in the destruction of the American democracy. The changes allowed for the federal government to provide a pathway to mass incarceration. This pathway also gave way to the criminalization of social issues, a rejection of equal rights for people of color, women, low income communities, free speech, and protest. Clearly, it was an attack on the welfare state and on the social contract between the government and its citizens (Giroux 2014, 25 and 54-56).

The conservative view of market fundamentalism Reagan articulated and implemented trivialized democratic values and public concerns (Giroux 2014; 51-54). Movement Conservatism success at resetting the American racial caste system has always required members of the society, specifically the voters, justify their support for policies that removed political power and social and economic support from African Americans. The justification would be made through the proliferation of political propaganda and rhetoric, which portrays Blacks in ways that undermines the argument that there is a fundamental right for Black people to receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law as White Americans. Reagan’s language encouraged White Americans to adopt the anti-big government philosophy by tapping into an increasing level of anger that discouraged voters’ empathy for the
economic and social conditions of low income and people of color. Instead, these voters accepted political language that exposed their revulsion and disgust for Americans who lived in poverty.

**The Criminal Imagery of Welfare**

Hancock’s (2004) theory on the “politics of disgust” provides additional explanation demonstrating how Reagan used the Southern Strategy to cultivate racial resentment among voters. The politics of disgust allows voters to delegitimize the concerns of the marginalized and claim they are standing for American values of individualism. The social group consistently targeted by Reagan has been welfare recipients. Of this group, Black welfare mothers have been one of the most marginalized segments of society and blamed for the social ills of society. Even though Black women have never constituted the majority of welfare recipients, for decades the public view of welfare consolidated all of the negative stereotypes Americans had about those who live in poverty, including the face of Black women. The welfare mother, also called the “welfare queen” by Reagan, was portrayed as a single, lazy Black mother who was a bad mother with no control over her children. The stereotype allowed voters insert their racist, sexist, and class values that Black women are morally inferior to White woman. Therefore, the government was justified in denying anti-poverty benefits to Black families (Hancock 2004, 36-40).

Ronald Reagan’s campaign rhetoric and policy discussions largely focused on the Black welfare mother from his time as Governor of California and throughout his presidency. Feagin describes Reagan as “a master” of White framing. However, the words he used to describe poor African Americans were hardly covert. Clearly, the terms “welfare chiselers,” “law and order,” and “get tough on crime” were directed at voters who believed Blacks should be kept in their place. He also stated Reagan mischaracterized the urban unrest of the 1960s. Reagan told audiences the White community had not harmed Black communities, even though there was undisputed evidence that Whites, including White police officers, injured or maimed Black activists (Feagin 2012, 223-225). During his 1966 campaign for governor, Reagan told supporters he would “throw the welfare bums back to work” (Kendi 2016, 441).
Reagan’s rhetoric that linked poverty with crime would reinforce the view that the conservative agenda would ensure Whites would remain as the “deserving,” and political interests of Blacks would remain subordinate to Whites. As the 1970s progressed and negative opinions about welfare increased, Reagan blatantly used false depictions of Blacks criminally manipulating the welfare system. He appealed to voters with stories about women with untrustworthy values in Pasadena and Chicago who were able to game the welfare system and defraud the government out of hundreds of thousands of dollars. As governor, Reagan inserted these stories into the welfare debate when he was accused of using social spending cuts to harm the poor. Marisa Chappell states arguments against welfare included claims that the recipients were undeserving, even if they were not receiving the benefits through theft and fraud. The arguments and combined assertions of rampant fraud welfare benefits were not going to those who were “truly needy.” The lack of support for anti-poverty programs eventually allowed states to advocate for legislation that would permit policy makers to reduce or eliminate financial assistance administered for the “Aid for Dependent Children” program to the “truly needy” (Chappell 2012, 215 and 218).

As a presidential candidate in 1976 and 1980, Reagan’s attacks on poverty programs frequently focused on criminalized images and sexual stereotypes of Blacks that have been used throughout history to cultivate fear among Whites. He would contrive stories intended to pit the White working class against Blacks when he questioned voters about how they would feel if they were watching a “strapping young buck” purchasing a T-bone steak with food stamps while White families were struggling to buy hamburger meat for their meals. The image of a strapping young buck was used to suggest the man was not just Black, but a threatening man who spurned authority, predisposed to criminality, lazy, and had an animal-like, sexual craving for White women (Greenbaum 2015, 71; Haney-Lopez 2013, 73-74; Rowan, 1976). Reagan’s stories about “welfare queens” also capitalized on the long-standing disdain Whites have held since the Civil War that Black mothers who were widows were undeserving of public assistance while White widows were deserving of the benefit. Reagan’s “welfare queen” was embellished to include claims they were living in luxury, driving Cadillacs, and committing crimes because they were too lazy to work while hard working taxpayers were getting “ripped off” (Alexander
Reagan’s stigmatizing language was not just significant because he normalized racially stigmatizing language as a campaign tactic. His rhetoric had broader implications during his presidency. His “wars” against the undeserving poor who were largely viewed as people of color, would provide the justification for federal and state governments to develop laws that would effectively roll back many of the legal and social gains won during the Civil Rights movement.

Racial conservatives, who supported his presidency, did so with the expectation that Reagan would promote policies to weaken federal civil rights laws and regulations. Reagan’s war on drugs was the fulfillment of campaign promises to gain control of the “undeserving” and “out of control” Black communities. Michelle Alexander argued the war on crime took place during a time Black communities suffered from the impact of the recession and failing economies caused by companies and employers who moved from cities to the suburbs. The lack of job opportunities, along with the inability to secure transportation that accessed jobs in the suburbs, effectively trapped individuals from employment opportunities in these communities. Additionally, the problems of crime, violence, and addiction within Black communities became a national obsession. Alexander argued these factors and the decisions made by federal and state governments to significantly reduce investment in education, housing, and transportation led to the further destabilization of these communities. The racially stigmatizing imagery was often heard in Reagan’s speeches became normalized as thousands of media stories flooded the American media to describe the prevalence of “welfare queens,” “crack babies,” and “gang bangers.”

Ibram Kendi supported Alexander’s argument and explained how Reagan and the Republican Party continued to frame the leading cause for the problem of poverty with the problem of crime to “dangerous Black neighborhoods” (Kendi 2016, 456) The challenges of the inner city were linked to individual pathological behavior instead of the multigenerational policies that intentionally failed to support investment in areas where non-Whites lived as a leading cause for the problem of poverty. As a result, the Reagan Administration continued the practice of disinvestment by continuing to focus on crime
control in low income areas. The focus remained on the War on Drugs and invested the development of mass incarceration. Reagan also divested inner city neighborhoods with legislation that cut funding for schools and nutrition programs for poor children. Black professionals also suffered disproportionately from the job training cuts and massive elimination of federal jobs (Kendi, 2017, 455-456). Carol Anderson argued the 1980s demonstrated the economic vulnerability Black Americans faced after 350 years of slavery and Jim Crow (Anderson 2016, 120-121).

Kendi noted that social problems were racialized during this era. For example, during the Reagan era, the United States had a serious problem with drunk driving. White males constituted 78 percent of the DUI arrests in 1990. In 1986, 1,092 people died from cocaine overdoses and 20,610 deaths were contributed to homicide. However, 23,990 deaths were caused from traffic related accidents. He further stated drug dealers and gang members primarily kill each other. Yet, the victims of drunk drivers are mostly random innocent victims. As a result, the non-stop accounts of the criminal elements of Black neighborhoods, Whites were far more afraid of losing their lives to gang violence than to drunk drivers in their neighborhoods and towns (Kendi 2016, 454-455).

As the government continued to invest in the wars on drugs and crime, the Reagan administration began to dismantle the civil rights protections won in the 1960s. The administration appointed conservatives to judgeships and federal agencies opposed to enforcing civil rights laws and regulations (Feagin 2012, 125-127). Reagan’s appointments loosened the standards needed to claim and receive remedies for discriminatory practices that restricted voting rights (Berry 2014, 89). The challenges for African Americans to improve their economic and social conditions would continue under the George H. W. Bush Administration as racial conservatives would be more emboldened to exploit the racial frames of the Southern Strategy as the predominant political ideology of the United States.

III. President George H. W. Bush - The Kinder, Gentler President

George H. W. Bush’s path to the presidency was very different from Reagan’s. Unlike Reagan, he was not a movement conservatism. He was not guided by the politics and policies directed at
reshaping the American society. Bush was staunchly against “big government” and he was opposed to increasing spending directed at fixing the social ills of society. Bush’s view of a conservatism meant his administration would encourage society to stop complaining about greed, materialism, and self-centeredness, and encourage Americans to volunteer and fix the problems of society without government intervention and interference (Mervin 1996, 29-30). However, his political messages in both the general election campaign and as President would demonstrate Bush was willing to engage in the politics of disgust to affirm his support for White racial conservatives.

**The Menacing Imagery of the Black Male Rapist**

The 1988 campaign marked the beginning of racially stigmatizing imagery that would influence his years in office. The Bush campaign had begun to lose ground to the Democratic presidential nominee, Michael Dukakis. Bush’s campaign manager, Lee Atwater, had launched an attack to shape voters’ views that Dukakis was weak on crime. Two advertisements were used by the Bush/Quayle 1988 campaign to exploit White voters and evoke fear and anger with menacing images of Black men. The most notorious campaign advertisements featured Black prisoners. The commercial focused on the case of a Massachusetts prisoner, Willie Horton, who was convicted of first-degree murder of a 17-year old gas station attendant. As the governor of Massachusetts, Dukakis vetoed a bill that prohibited furloughs of first-degree murders on the basis it would undermine the ability for inmates to be rehabilitated. In 1986, Horton escaped from prison while on his tenth furlough. Less than a year later, he broke into the home of a White family in Maryland. The couple was severely beaten and the woman was bound and repeatedly raped over a four-hour period. The crime resulted in a major controversy in Massachusetts. Additionally, as governor Dukakis did not apologize to the couple or take requests from the press to discuss the case (Edsall and Edsall 1992, 222-223).

In the ad, explicit images of Horton showed a picture of a dark-skinned Black man with a large, overgrown afro. Scholars discussed the Horton commercial as an explicit racial appeal that exploited the racist fears that Black men were rapists and had insatiable sexual urges for White women. The Bush
campaign denied the ad was meant to exploit the fears of White voters. Instead, it was to show Dukakis
was a liberal Democrat who was “soft on crime.” The campaign claimed that if Horton was White, the
ad would have shown his face. The campaign deflected any criticism of the ads and refused to admit any
racial intent in the image used to discuss the furlough (Alexander 2012, 74; Black and Black 1992, 317;
Buell and Sigelman 2008., 86; Haney-Lopez 2013, 120-121; Kendi 2016, 458; Mendelberg 2001, 139-
142). The impact of the Willie Horton ad was compounded with the “Revolving Door” ad released later
in the campaign to discuss the Massachusetts furlough program. The ad did not discuss Horton’s case,
but it featured actors going around a revolving prison door. While it is not clear that all of the men in the
commercial are White, there is a African American man with the same features and afro as Willie Horton.
The commercial does not use traditional “code words.” However, the images are meant to connect with
White voters who view images of Black men as dangerous prisoners (Mendelberg

**From Kinder and Gentler to Disgust and Condemnation**

From the beginning of his term in office, Bush and his cabinet engaged in several racial
controversies related to civil rights protections, judicial nominations, and civil unrest that would
demonstrate the racial divisions that were visible in the United States during the Reagan era would
influence the Bush presidency. Even Bush intended to move away from racial issues his time in office;
he faced several racial controversies that challenged his ability to build his presidency without the social
divisive issues that shaped Reagan’s tenure. The Willie Horton controversy demonstrated Bush, his aides,
and political allies were willing to engage in the “politics of disgust.”

After his inauguration, Bush developed an agenda that exploited racially polarizing policies. He
declared drug use to be the most serious problem in America. Michelle Alexander argues Bush’s
emphasis on drugs was part of a broader, more deliberate political campaign to use the war on crime to
build support through “tough on crime” initiatives that mobilize voters and manipulate White resentment.
She states this focus was geared towards swing voters who were leaving the Democratic Party and
supporting Republican candidates (Alexander 2012, p. 75). In the late 1980s, Americans were also
focused on the crack and “crack babies” epidemics. The media reported on the crisis of the inner city Black neighborhoods with stories that claimed there was scientifically based evidence that crack babies were born crack-induced and neurological impairments made them “subhuman.” Further, there were claims the babies would grow up to be saddled with numerous social problems. News outlets promoted stories of research study claims that babies born to crack users had diminished brain functions and would grow up without the ability to function as normal human beings. The studies also promoted the view that “crack babies” would likely face life-long health and social problems. In recent years, these studies were debunked and medical researchers admitted the claims made about “crack babies” never existed (Alexander 2012, 24; Kendi 2016, 459).

Bush’s focus on “crack babies” and other pronouncements that correlated crack addiction to poor parenting helped solidify the negative imagery Black children were largely neglected, severely misused, and mistreated. His rhetoric reinforced assumptions Black communities suffered from social pathologies, and therefore, shaped the debate related to urban policy development and spending. Ange-Marie Hancock states Bush introduced the concept of cross-generational dependency into the political dialogue. His discussions on the urban poor encouraged Democrats, such as Daniel Patrick Moynihan, to call for bipartisan consensus on finding solutions for the broken families as a means of dealing with the problem of poverty and crime (Hancock 2004, 61-62). Bush blamed the civil unrest that erupted after Los Angeles police were cleared for police brutality in the Rodney King case on the failure of the liberal social programs of the 1960s instead of police brutality (Quagdano, 1995, 14). Additionally, Bush emphasized his commitment to repair the problems of drug abuse, crime, welfare dependency, and out of wedlock births in his 1992 State of the Union Address. His call for welfare reform was intrinsically linked to unwillingness and the failures of low income and inner city residents to willingly disobey the law, have children outside of marriage, and their refusal to work (Bush 1992). Bush’s remarks demonstrated his belief that culture, liberal policies, and personal decisions were the cause of inequality instead of structural racism.
This belief system was apparent in the decisions his administration made to structure the policies. The laws had a clear impact on the civil and economic rights of African Americans, and strongly contradicted any illusions he would be “kinder and gentler” to the policy priorities of African Americans. Scholars, such as Edsall and Edsall (1992), believe Bush presented a more moderate image to appeal to voters who were did not approve of the hardline racially charged policies of the Reagan era. In particular, he urged for the continued support for the renewal of civil rights regulations in 1990 and 1991, as long as it promoted the use of quotas (Edsall and Edsall 1992, 230).

In general, Bush and the Republican Party raised the issue of affirmative action and the deliberate attempts to provide people of color and women professional and economic opportunities in areas formally closed to them. The language assured their base that they placed the economic priorities of Whites before the “undeserving” minorities. Conservative White voters had blamed the “quota system” for their economic difficulties since the 1970s. Additionally, the 1984 Republican platform called quotas and reverse discrimination, or racial discrimination against Whites, as the most egregious injustice of all (Haney-Lopez 2013, 85; Kendi 2016, 442).

The Bush Administration continued Reagan’s efforts to weaken civil rights laws and the racial progress made in the 1960s and 1970s. He was also accused of exploiting racial tensions for his political benefit because for two years, he refused to sign proposed revisions to the Civil Rights Act even though the legislation had bipartisan support. Bush stated the legislation was a “quota bill” that would force employers to make their hiring decisions based on race. He finally signed the bill in October 1991 when the issue proved to be a serious political problem for the Bush Administration. At the time, he stated the quota provisions were removed. However, neither the 1990 or 1991 legislation had the quota provisions that were disputed by the president (Barilleaux and Rozell 2004, 36).

Although the Bush Administration ultimately agreed to support the Civil Rights Act of 1991, the “quota” issue was a prominent topic in political races across the country. The most visible contest was the race for Jesse Helms’ Senate seat in 1990. Helms faced a strong African American Democratic challenger in the general election. Harvey Gantt was the former two-term mayor
of Charlotte, North Carolina. Helms used Gantt’s support for the Civil Rights Act in a commercial that exploited the opposition to quotes in a commercial that featured the hands of White man in a flannel shirt, to symbolize the White working class man, crumble up a rejection letter. The voice in the ad gave a narrative that the man was unfairly denied a job, even though he was the most qualified, because the quota system awarded the job to a less qualified minority applicant (Black and Black 2002, 108-109).

Authors argue pressure from the right to support conservative justices and anti-civil rights legislation, and voter support for the Klu Klux Klan candidate David Duke in the primary for the governor of Louisiana, signaled to Bush he needed to run on a racially conservative platform in advance of his reelection campaign. Bush also continued to voice his opposition to quotas through his quota nomination of Clarence Thomas to fill the vacancy of the first African American Supreme Court justice, Thurgood Marshall (Barilleaux and Rozell 2004, 36-37, Mervin 1996, 22). Thomas was widely considered to be highly unqualified to serve as a replacement to Justice Marshall. However, he had a long record of opposing racial quotas that allowed him to garner support among conservatives. As a result of the Thomas nomination, Bush was accused of being a racial opportunist. Thomas’ weak judicial record, combined with sexual harassment charges from former employee Anita Hill would have disqualified him from consideration in other administrations. However, his record on affirmative action and quotas allowed Bush to support his confirmation (Barilleaux and Rozell 2004, 36-37; Edsall and Edsall 1992, 191).

Although George H. W. Bush was a one-term president, his presidency has had a lasting impact on racial policies. The idea that presidents had a role in discussing cross-generational poverty and “politics of disgust” frame carried on as a part of the anti-drug and welfare reform debates were part of the domestic platform of his successor, Democratic president Bill Clinton (Hancock 2004, 62). Additionally, Clarence Thomas joined with other conservative anti-civil rights judicial activists on the court to vote against efforts from states and public and private entities to protect the civil and economic interests of African Americans (Anderson 2016, 123 and 149). Between the end of George H. W. Bush’s presidency and the beginning of the George W. Bush presidency, the racial climate in the country would
become even more contentious. The Republican Revolution, under the leadership of Newt Gingrich, caused the party and the country to move further to the right. George W. Bush’s presidency ushered in another administration in which the economic, social, and political interests of African Americans would be further marginalized.

IV. President George W. Bush - The Compassionate Conservative

George W. Bush’s record on race during his 2000 and 2004 campaigns demonstrated he was willing to use racial cues to gain political advantage. Due to the increasing influence of the Latino vote and the impact of September 11th on his presidency, Bush often engaged in racial politics broader than the Black versus White dichotomy that shaped past presidencies (Suro, Fry, and Passel 2005). He made very few remarks that alluded to the social pathologies of the poor and poor Black communities. Bush ran on a new reiteration of conservatism. Unlike the conservative movement of the past, he was a “compassionate conservative.” His new label was intended to signal he was a conservative who believed in racial inclusion. Therefore, he could appeal to both White middle class women and people of color (Hutchings, Valentino, Philpot, and White 2004, 514).

Bush’s 2000 campaign demonstrated he was playing two sides of the race card. His campaign was widely criticized when he began his campaign for the South Carolina primary with a speech at Bob Jones University. The university was known for its deeply anti-Catholic views and hard right positions on race and social progress. Once, it had a policy that prohibited students from interracial dating. During the Reagan Administration, the Supreme Court sided with the IRS and its decision to deny the university tax exemption because of its discriminatory policies. Past Republican presidential candidates, including Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Bob Dole, went to Bob Jones University as part of their presidential runs (Eilperin and Rosin 2000). After his appearance, Bush apologized to the Roman Catholic Cardinal of New York, Cardinal John O’Connor, and asked forgiveness for his insensitivities to Catholics. However, he did not apologize to African Americans, even though many of the institution’s discriminatory policies were viewed as anti-Black (CNN 2000).
A second incident in South Carolina was considered a dog-whistle attack against Bush’s primary rival for the Republican nomination, John McCain. Bush’s campaign manager, Karl Rove, was suspected of orchestrating push poll calls that asked voters if they would support McCain if they knew he had an illegitimate Black child. The dog-whistle was part of a smear campaign that exploited McCain’s eight year old, dark-skinned, adopted daughter from Bangladesh. Although members of the Bush campaign consistently denied Rove was responsible for the calls, Bush’s victory signaled they benefited from the racial conservatism of South Carolina voters (Banks 2008; Steinhauer 2007).

The Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations

Outside of the race baiting during the South Carolina primary, Bush distanced himself from using racial words associated with blatant racism. He spoke of compassionate conservatism when he discussed the plight of the inner city and those living in poverty. Bush described the occurrence of low testing scores and high dropout rates in inner city schools as problems perpetuated generation after generation because there was a “soft bigotry of low expectations” (Bush 2000). He stated this type of bigotry was equivalent to racial discrimination. When Bush talked about the pathologies of a failing society, he would also advocate for private and religious institutions to step in and to engage in social services. His remarks included references to single mothers, gangs, welfare reform, and homelessness. Bush’s call for compassionate conservatism was rooted in the anti-big government philosophy and a call for the privatization of services that were once the responsibility of the government (Bush 2000; New York Times 1999).

As president, Bush largely ignored racial issues while allowing his administration to take hardline positions on social justice and economic issues that disproportionately impacted the minorities and low income individuals. He declined five invitations that the NAACP extended to speak at their national convention as the 2000 Republican presidential nominee and his first term as president. He was the first president in 80 years not to address the organization (Fletcher 2005).
In many ways, he had a “hands off” approach to domestic policies. This approach meant the policies that had the most impact on African American workers and families were parts of larger programs to privatize and deregulate programs aimed at minorities and the urban poor. Feagin argued Bush came from a neoliberal, White perspective that avidly supported private markets and the privatization of government social programs. The claim was evident as he pressed for privatizing schools with voucher systems to send children to religiously based schools and his advocacy for the privatization of social security accounts (Feagin 2012, 162 and 165).

Bush’s proposals and policies to help low income populations were often connected to religious programs. The administration argued such programs with strong religious values were needed to encourage individuals in the programs to behave morally. For example, the Bush Administration proposed to use Section 8 vouchers to improve the moral behavior of those living in poverty. The proposal was to give block grants to the state and permission to direct recipients to private housing instead of public housing. The administration cut the budget for public housing while making a moral argument that Section 8 reform discouraged homeownership. Although there was no overtly racial message, the underlying messages of the programs was homeownership would promote marriage, personal responsibility, responsible fatherhood, hard work, reduce shame, and promote community involvement (Hendrickson 2004, 74-75; Wenzel 2004).

The administration’s education reform policies under the No Child Left Behind Act were promoted to enforce higher educational standards and force states and school districts to enforce policies without the funding to do so. The law required federal and state governments to punish schools that failed to meet the regulatory standards (Drier 2004, 61; Bush 2004; White House 2001). In spite of significant policy concerns, Bush turned down multiple invitations to address the NAACP until 2006 (Bush 2006). Likely, this rejected appearances was due to Bush’s focus on garnering Latino votes, for which he gained 44 percent of the total Latino vote for his 2004 reelection (Suro, Fry, and Passell 2004).
The Refugees of Hurricane Katrina

The Bush Administration’s response to Hurricane Katrina exposed the disconnect between the philosophy of “compassionate conservatism” and the disparity in the government’s willingness to invest and protect the interests of predominantly low income Black communities. The aftermath of the August 2005 hurricane demonstrated how economically vulnerable African Americans became a symbol of the “forgotten man.” The Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans was disproportionately devastated from the flooding when the city’s levee system failed. Even before the storm, the Lower Ninth Ward was a low income and predominantly Black area of the city. Many of the residents did not have the ability to evacuate and find safe shelter and food. As a result, hundreds drowned and their dead, bloated bodies floated in the streets without any effort to pull them out of the water. Those who survived were stranded in their homes or sitting on top of their roofs in dire need of food and water while suffering from extreme heat exhaustion (Dyson 2006, 21). The news outlets reported the residents who evacuated to the Superdome were living in chaos and squalor, and there were accounts of assault, rape, illegal drugs and violent crime. Hundreds of people stood outside of the Superdome begging the media to bring them food and water (Burnett 2005; Gold 2005). Further, the press began to label the Black victims who were displaced by the flooding as refugees instead of as evacuees. Those who criticized the misuse of the word refugee argued a refugee is a person who crosses an international border to find refuge from war and political persecution. The term had racial undertones because they connoted that the victims were not viewed as American citizens (Alfano 2005; Associated Press 2005; Pesca 2005).

While the chaos of the flood captured the attention of the nation, Bush remained on his ranch in Texas for his annual summer vacation. Michael Eric Dyson argued that although the state and local governments were widely criticized for the treatment of the Lower Ninth residents, the inadequate response to the disaster was attributed to Bush’s failure to lead his administrators and demonstrate a sense of urgency. He did not organize his cabinet in the White House Situation Room to respond to the obvious humanitarian crisis that unfolded on live national television. Bush’s first in-person view of the destruction came when he flew over New Orleans in Air Force One on his way back to the White House.
As a result, Bush’s response was criticized widely and he was accused of showing extreme indifference and insensitivity to the plight of African Americans. Bush later claimed the worst moment of his presidency came when entertainer Kanye West insinuated he was a racist and declared he did not care about Black people during a live telethon to raise funds for the victims (Laurer 2010; Webster 2015).

Historian Douglas Brinkley argued Bush’s response to Hurricane Katrina was significantly different from his resolute response to the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, or as Commander-in-Chief and wartime president for America’s involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. In that capacity, Bush called himself “the decider.” However, during the most significant humanitarian crisis of his presidency, he failed to show decisiveness or compassion to the suffering residents of the Lower Ninth Ward (Brinkley 2015). David Gergen, presidential advisor and political commentator, stated Bush’s inept response, combined with the images of Black residents suffering without government assistance, ended the possibility Republicans could expand their base of support among African American voters (Bloomberg 2015). In the weeks after Katrina, a survey found that 63 percent of Blacks believed the Bush Administration’s response reflected the persistent problem of racial inequality in America (Fletcher and Morin 2005). A month after the hurricane, Bush’s approval rate among Blacks fell to two percent (Froomkin 2005). Relations between the Republican Party and Blacks worsened during the Obama administration. The disconnect between Black policy interests and Republican presidents would reach new lows under the presidency of Donald J. Trump.

V. President Donald J. Trump - The Triumph of Overt Racism

The presidential campaign and subsequent election of Donald Trump revealed the White American electorate are willing to condone the use of overt racism by the President of the United States. Also, it unmasked an uncomfortable, and arguably ugly, truth about the United States. In spite of Barack Obama’s two successful presidential campaigns and the significant progress that resulted from the Civil Rights activists’ battle for racial equality, White supremacy continues to influence American presidential
politics. The use of Trump’s racialized rhetoric is starkly different than Ronald Reagan’s use of coded language. Reagan’s rhetoric gave him the ability argue that his critics did not have any justification to call his rhetoric or policies racist. In fact, he argued in his autobiography that any criticism of his actions as governor and president that people perceived as racism was based on myths and not grounded in fact (Reagan 1990, 231 and 414-415). Scholars can argue Reagan voters were aware the language Reagan used was racist. However, his use of coded language provided his supporters with the veneer that if Ronald Reagan or his policies could not be called racist, they could not be racist or harbor racist views.

Trump’s campaign gave no such pretense. He demonstrated there was no longer a need to pretend a candidate must stand for racial equality to win the presidency. In fact, Trump proved a presidential candidate can openly embrace White supremacy with impunity.

Trump was not the candidate the Republican establishment believed they would need to win the 2016 general election. After the back to back losses the Republican Party suffered in the 2008 and 2012 elections, the Republican National Committee (RNC) published a report, the Growth and Opportunity Project, that examined why they lost and what reforms would be needed to win in 2016. The RNC acknowledged the decline of their traditional electoral base of White middle and working class voters. Also, fewer married and rural voters identified as Republicans. These factors, along with the increasing number of educated and racially diverse electorate, contributed to the party’s demographic challenges that would make it difficult to win future presidential elections (Lewis 2016, 174-176; Republican National Committee 2013, 13). The RNC’s report did little, if anything, to anticipate the impending takeover of Republican extremists that paved the way for Trump’s 2016 campaign.

Scholars and members of the Republican Party establishment are reflecting on the transformation of the Republican Party from the Reagan era through Trump’s election. Specifically, they are examining the declining influence of Movement Conservatism and the rise of Tea Party politics and “Trumpism.” The rise and success of Trumpism is a product of White identity politics. Trump has embraced formerly fringe White nationalism movements, such as the Alt-Right, that have increased political influence during the Obama and Trump eras (Lewis 2016, 8; Sykes 2017, 159-160). In their book, One Nation After
Trump, Dionne, Ornstein, and Mann (2017) argue Trump maintains his base of power by promoting a “phony populism.” In other words, he has developed a platform that shows voters he understands the needs of working class White Americans. His appeals address legitimate economic concerns without discussing the policies responsible for the declining level of economic mobility that have impacted millions of Americans. They counter the attempts to separate Trump’s racist appeals from legitimate economic concerns of the voters who supported his candidacy (Cohn 2016; Tankersley 2016). However, Dionne, Ornstein, and Mann (2017) also argue that while it is important to be sympathetic to the economic concerns of Trump voters, it is essential that racism that has elevated Trumpism should be condemned and confronted (Dionne, Ornstein, and Mann 2017, 143).

Even if the Republican Party made a concerted effort to condemn and apply penalties to Trump for his racist rhetoric, there is no indication that the party’s condemnation would impact his behavior. Trump’s rhetoric and responses to racial controversies during the 2016 campaign and as president demonstrates he is supportive of overt racism. For example, in the week following his inauguration, Trump began to unveil policies that demonstrated he had no interest in fostering racial inclusion. Trump issued an executive order to ban Muslim citizens and refugees from seven nations, called the Executive Order Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States. The order, also known as the Muslim Ban, prohibited refugees from Iraq, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, and Yemen. The policy called for “extreme vetting” to prevent terrorist acts on American soil, like those committed on September 11, 2001 (The White House 2017). The order was extremely controversial and protests erupted across the country. Although the policy has been litigated in the federal courts, it remains a policy priority of the Trump Administration (BBC 2017; Sheer and Cooper 2017; Wang and Werbach 2017).

Policies such as the Muslim ban reflect the political interests and ideological beliefs of not just Trump, but the people he chooses to lead his agenda in the White House. As president, Trump demonstrated he was willing to have White supremacists in his inner circle and provide vocal support for policies and actions that marginalized non-White communities. He cultivated his affiliations with White
supremacists leaders in the years leading up to his presidential campaign. His racialized attacks on President Obama helped him to earn credibility among racial extremists (Mathis-Lilly 2017). Trump employed Steve Bannon as his campaign manager and senior White House advisor. Bannon was the former chairman of Breitbart News, which was a website that proliferated White supremacy and anti-Semitic propaganda and ideology (Tuttle 2016; Wall Street Journal 2017). Trump also granted a pardon to Joe Arpaio, a controversial sheriff in Arizona who was convicted of illegally detaining people solely on the suspicion they were undocumented immigrants. He was also found guilty of inflicting inhumane conditions on prisoners in jail (Hirschfeld Davis and Haberman 2017).

Additionally, Trump’s reaction to neo-Nazi and White nationalist protests against the removal of a Confederate monument at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville in August 2017 demonstrated that he refused to condemn racist organizations. The protesters used anti-Semitic slurs, wore swastikas, and Confederate flags, along with Trump/Pence campaign signs. In spite of the violence that ensued, which included the murder of a counter protester who was mowed down by the car of a neo-Nazi protester, Trump refused to condemn the group. Instead, he placed the blame for the violence “on many sides.” His statement suggested there is a moral equivalence between the neo-Nazis and the anti-racism protesters. David Duke, a nationally recognized Klu Klux Klan activist, lauded Trump for his refusal to condemn the actions of the White supremacists (Stirin 2017; Thrush and Haberman 2017).

In spite of the numerous protests and rebukes Trump has received from critics across the nation and around the globe, he continues to demonstrate his disregard for people of color. In January 2017, reports surfaced that Trump was angered by Congressional efforts to protect the immigration status of immigrants from African countries and Haiti. He asked Congress members, “Why are we having all these people from shithole countries come here?” He also added the United States should admit more people from countries like Norway, which is an all-White nation. The White House press office denied Trump made the comments. Additionally, Trump refused to make a statement to say he did not make the comments (Dawsey 2018, Hirschfeld Davis and Stolberg 2018).
The State of the Republican Party in the Trump Era

As the Trump presidency progresses, Republicans are reluctant to publicly admonish him for his racist policies, rhetoric, or the personnel in the White House with proven ties to White supremacy. The refusal to condemn Trump included the Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan (R-WI). Ryan condemned White supremacy after the protests in Charlottesville, but he did not condemn Trump. Nor did he condemn Trump for calling Black majority countries “shitholes” (Green 2017; Matthews 2018). Few elected Republicans were willing to challenge Trump’s comments. Retiring Senator Jeff Flake (R-AZ) was one of the few members of the Republican Party to make a public statement to oppose the president’s use of racially degrading and inflammatory language. Although Republican members of Congress are retiring in 2018, no one has followed Flake’s lead and made a statement on the floors of the House of Representative or the Senate to condemn Trump’s behavior and rhetoric (Hosking and Felton, 2017; Petulla and Hansler 2018).

This study of evolution of the Republican Party’s use of the Southern Strategy explains how White supremacy controls American politics. Even though the Goldwater and Nixon campaigns developed the strategy as a means of manipulating conservative Democrats to vote Republican, White supremacy is the dominant political ideology of the nation. The ideology is always present and encourages politicians to appeal to racism since it is a reliable source of anger and resentment. The party’s continued use of racially coded language has cultivated a political base dependent on racial extremism. The continued use of racially stigmatizing racism has created a political environment in which Republican voters do not see that they have common interests with non-White Americans because they do not want to be associated with policies negatively correlated with race. As a result, the contemporary Republican Party cannot promote or support moderate policies that promote social change or development because racial fears and anger control the policy priorities of the party. Yet, the Democratic Party’s history and use of coded language had led the party into a difficult place as well. Although the Democratic presidents have generally supported civil rights and social reforms, their efforts to maintain White middle class voters has led them into a racially charged environment that undermines
difficult policy discussions that address poverty and the social safety net. The next section discuss how Presidents Carter, Clinton, and Obama navigated race during their presidencies.

**Part II. The Influence of the Southern Strategy on the Post 1968 Democratic Presidents**

**Introduction**

In spite of having a record of progressive positions on policy issues, such as affirmative action, civil rights, and voting rights, Democratic presidents have faced legitimate criticism on the ways they have exploited race or, at times, failed to take a position on major racial controversies to assure Whites voters their social and economic needs will remain the priority. Presidents Carter, Clinton, and Obama appear to have used elements of the Southern Strategy, such as the politics of pathology, as a means of providing distance between their political interests and the policy interests of African Americans. The Democratic Party is currently a center-right party that embraces conservative values and rhetoric at the cost of protecting the needs of those living in poverty, and neglects the structures that perpetuate racism and class inequality (Reed 2014). In other words, the party is more focused on securing the votes of middle class suburban Whites who consider themselves liberal on social issues but politically conservative on economic issues. This right turn has meant the party is hesitant, if not averse, from supporting legislation that has the appearance of favoring the interests of Blacks and minorities over the interests of Whites. Consequently, it does not directly address the political issues and interests that will improve the economic and social status of Blacks and other people of color. The examination of the three Democratic presidents’ legacy in this study demonstrates a hesitancy, if not outright refusal, to support policies that may be perceived differently by White voters as going too far to support the interests of non-Whites.

**I. President Jimmy Carter: Setting the Limits for Racial Liberalism**

The political history of all three Democratic presidents demonstrates they were willing to depart from traditional party positions to appear more conservative. Jimmy Carter’s 1970 campaign for the
governor of Georgia demonstrates how he wavered between gathering support among Black voters while simultaneously signaling to conservative White voters that he shared their social views. Randy Sanders explains how the Carter communicated to Black voters that he supported their interests. His campaign created a fake interest group, the “Black Concern Committee,” that sent flyers to Black voters saying his opponent, former Governor Carl Sanders, had not kept his promise to support civil rights. The pamphlets also falsely stated Sanders was responsible for the death of a Black prison inmate. Carter concurrently used the media to appeal to the segregationists who voted for Lester Maddox and George Wallace when he incorporated the same slogan as Wallace’s 1968 presidential campaign. Carter inserted Wallace’s slogan, “our kind of man,” into his speeches. Additionally, the “silent majority” recognized he favored anti-integration policies in his statements on private schools and crime control. During the campaign, Carter successfully secured the endorsement of Roy Harris, the former chairman of Georgia’s White Citizens Council and the 1968 state chair of George Wallace’s presidential bid. At the end of the campaign, Carter had transformed Sanders’ moderate image and legislative record with statements that manipulated racial sentiments to make him into an unacceptable candidate for Blacks and Whites (Sanders 1992, 628-629, 631).

As president, Carter regularly promoted government efficiency instead of economic equality. He was critical of what he considered “ill-defined” special interests intended to promote the common good. Leo Ribuffo explains how Carter was very liberal when he addressed civil rights issues while simultaneously advocating for conservative views such as having a “tight management” of the federal government as a means of increasing control to local governments (Ribuffo 1977, 9-10). Stone (1977) warned that Black voters should not expect the administration to provide significant support for changing their economic conditions. He stated that although 93 percent of Black voters supported Carter, he needed to increase his political base of Whites, whose support for programs that advocated for equality among the races, had begun to shrink (Stone 1977, 9-10). Carter’s record of support for economic mobility demonstrates the concerns Stone voiced in his article were correct. The administration’s welfare reform program was widely criticized by liberal and civil rights organizations. In spite of strong pressure
from African American groups to provide stimulus funds to improve their communities, his administration made significant budget cuts to programs intended to help the poor climb out of poverty by claiming the cuts were needed to reduce inflation. He followed the Nixon Administration’s reasoning that increasing social spending leads to higher inflation. Carter stated that financial support for programs, such as food stamps, welfare, and unemployment insurance, “damaged the recipient’s incentive to work.”

He also made cuts to Historically Black Colleges and Universities while failing to provide additional aid to Black students (Booker 2014). Stone’s warning to Blacks that they could not expect progressive policies from the Carter Administration proved to be correct.

Undoubtedly, Carter’s administration would not have produced racially liberal policies. Marisa Chappell discusses the political environment of the late 1970s that is likely to have reinforced Carter’s hesitancy to address the issue of welfare reform in any meaningful way. Movement conservatism had increased its focus and the belief of the traditional family. The Carter Administration was unable to navigate the tensions between liberal organizations willing to discuss issues, such as divorce, single-parent families, and out of wedlock births. There was significant political pressure from traditional conservatives who believed in and justified maintaining male-dominated households as a means of preventing moral deprivation and confusion. Further, they contended female headed households were the cause for criminal behavior, drugs, and violence. The conservatives during the Carter era dominated the discussions related to poverty. They advocated against any expansion of welfare spending. They believed federal payments encouraged irresponsible and immoral behavior and promulgated the position that poor single mothers were undermining marriage and were less responsible for their children. Chappell contends the majority of liberals, including Walter Mondale, also believed the unraveling of the two parent household was at the root of other social problems, such as crime and out of wedlock births (Chappell 2012, 176-177).

Democrats were amenable to accepting the frame that family breakdown was the cause for poverty and crime. Not surprisingly, Jimmy Carter’s loss to Ronald Reagan in 1980, the chosen candidate for Movement Conservatives, marked a significant shift within the Democratic Party to move away from
the traditional liberal values that guided the party from the Great Depression through the Lyndon Johnson Administration. A series of presidential losses from 1968 through 1988 served as the impetus for the Democratic Party to leave their New Deal liberalism policies and ideology behind and embrace a significantly more conservative, or neoliberalism, ideology. The success of the Republican Party with the aid of the Southern Strategy caused liberalism to lose support among White voters. The ideas associated with liberalism were used by conservatives as a tool for stigmatizing the Democratic Party.

The Democratic Party’s Transformation into a Center Right Party

Reagan’s electoral success provided Republicans with an opportunity to weaken the Democratic Party’s support among White voters. Ornstein and Mann (2012) recount how Newt Gingrich spent 15 years before becoming the Speaker of the House in 1994 making speeches on C-Span that characterized Democrats with socially stigmatizing terminology. During the 1994 midterm elections, he provided talking points for Republican candidates that encouraged them to use words that portrayed Democrats as enemies of the American people. Campaign advertisements associated Democrats with words such as betray, bizarre, decay, anti-flag, anti-family, pathetic, lie, cheat, radical, sick, and traitors (Ornstein and Mann 2012, 37 and 41). Such terms alienated White voters and fewer believed the Democratic Party represented their values. In response to the electoral losses in 1980, 1884, and 1988, and the Republican Party’s success in stigmatizing liberal Democrats with labels, such as weakness, special interests, and identity politics, Democrats rebranded themselves as neo-liberals. Neo-liberalism was designed to acquire the votes of middle class Whites who were concerned with economic issues, but were conservative on social issues (Reed 1999, 4; Ribuffo 1997, 8-9).

One significant factor for this rebranding was caused by Reagan’s successful recruitment of Reagan Democrats in the 1980 and 1984 elections. These voters were White, working and middle class Democrats who believed the national party had become too liberal. The voters were angry and believed the focus on the programs, such as affirmative action, welfare, and food stamps, were unfairly redistributing wealth solely on the basis of race (Borquez 2005, 2). Edsall and Edsall stated the topic of
the urban underclass was at the center of the “values” debate of the era. More specifically, the debate centered on the Black underclass and the need to address the problems in these communities, such as joblessness, crime, poverty, out of wedlock births, and welfare dependency. As a result, these issues became highly charged and controversial, and people voted with the view that it was necessary to enforce traditional values (Edsall & Edsall 1992, 28).

An article written by Brookings Institute fellow William Galston in 1985 demonstrated the Democratic Party was assessing how identity, or racial politics, negatively impacted the efficacy of the party’s coalition. Galston offered many reasons for the party’s decline, including the weakness of Jimmy Carter’s presidency and the strength of Reagan’s foreign policy messaging. However, Galston emphasized the problems of the party are related to two distinct areas: fighting for racial equality in the North and social welfare spending. He made the claim that the party’s efforts to establish civil rights in the North damaged the party.

In addition to his claims regarding civil rights priorities, Galston also argued the party’s priorities for the poor and minorities meant they had nothing to offer middle class Whites. In other words, the party did not address the issues of economic security, such as full-employment, job security, and help for family farmers. Galston determined the problem with the Democratic Party was that it could not find the proper balance between advocating policies for the poor and minorities and policies for the middle class. He suggested Democrats needed to focus more closely and carefully on public opinions of the people, rather than fighting too vigorously for what is right (Galston 1985, 16-24).

Galton’s article was indicative of how the Democrats could reinvent the party to regain their political strength within the middle class. In 1985, the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) was established to shed its liberal identity and become a base of support for neo-liberals, or progressives, in the tradition of Republican President Theodore Roosevelt. The DLC disassociated itself from liberal policies, such as affirmative action, labor, and feminism. Also, it embraced conservative positions like the death penalty. Following the Democrats loss in the 1988 presidential campaign and in his role as a scholar for the DLC’s Progressive Policy Institute, Galston argued the next Democratic party nominee for
the presidency must focus on the moral demands of the average middle class voter. Therefore, the candidacy should focus on middle class values, upward mobility, and individual effort (Ribuffo 1997, 15).

In many ways, the DLC agenda co-opted the conservative values and policy initiatives of the Republican Party. For instance, the DLC called for welfare reform and a smaller, less intrusive government. John Hale (1995) argued the DLC was signaling to White, middle class voters under the banner of “New Democrats” and the Democratic Party held broader interests beyond those voters who are Black, feminist, gay, and liberal. The organization was closer to financial organizations than to unions and civil rights organizations. The DLC formalized its platform in 1992 and declared their values were centered on expanding economic opportunity that demanded greater levels of individual responsibility and restoring community (Hale 1995, 226-227). These principles would guide the Clinton Administration’s policies on welfare reform and crime control. This right of center vision and use of stigmatizing language and frames would be the source of tension in the Clinton Administration and African American citizens. Also, it would demonstrate that the application of the Southern Strategy shaped the Democrat’s approach to racial and social policies.

II. President Bill Clinton: The Success of the New Democrats

Bill Clinton began his rise to the White House in 1988 when he delivered the keynote address at the Democratic National Convention. He built his political platform on speeches that demonstrated his sympathy to the overly burdened middle class. His wording foreshadowed his center right positions on welfare reform and social spending as he explained that Americans had not embraced the Democratic Party, because they did not trust its leadership to defend their economic policy interests or to spend their tax dollars wisely. As a presidential candidate, Clinton stayed away from traditional liberal Democratic values. Haney-Lopez argued Clinton and the Democratic Party used Edsall and Edsall’s book, Chain Reaction, to design a campaign strategy that would mitigate the negative impact of White backlash on a Democratic candidate. The Clinton campaign used racial issues to distance itself from African Americans
so that he was not perceived as being too closely associated with their interests. Clinton’s policies would have long-term negative consequences that would further deny large segments of the African American population from reaching middle class equality. He ran as a New Democrat on a platform called the “New Covenant” that emphasized the use of code words, such as “opportunity,” “responsibility,” and “community,” would help him to campaign and govern with a right of center social agenda (Durant 2006, 359).

The 1992 Campaign: Putting Blacks “in their Place”

During his 1992 campaign, Clinton aggressively recruited Black voters while he simultaneously kept them at a distance. He was also able to garner significant support from prominent African American leaders and politicians of the time (Ifill 1992). However, his campaign used coded language to signal to White voters he was not going to be beholden to traditional civil rights interests and constituencies. For example, in an effort to show he was tough on crime, Clinton left the campaign trail to oversee the execution order of Rickey Ray Rector, an African American man. According to scholars such as Haney-Lopez such an episode was used as a dog-whistle tactic (Haney-Lopez 2013, 124). Rector was convicted of murdering a police officer. During the commission of his crime, Rector turned the gun on himself, became mentally impaired, and consequently, no longer understood the concept of death. Before his execution, Rector asked that the pecan pie given to him as a part of his last meal be kept safe for him so that he could eat it later (Applebome 1992; Butler 2017, 21; Klinker 1999, 16; Fournier 2015).

The Clinton campaign also inserted a politically calculated argument to use in a speech that he delivered at a meeting for Jesse Jackson’s National Rainbow Coalition. He denounced rap lyrics by Sista Souljah to emphasize his views on urban violence and the need for Blacks to assume responsibility for the social problems in their community. Clinton had been criticized for his attendance at a White-only golf club. As he explained to the audience that he had made mistakes in his life related to race, he incorporated Sister Souljah’s rap lyric, which was a protest against police violence, into his apology. Clinton asserted Sister Souljah’s music and her associations with other rappers were equally offensive and
needed to be condemned by the Black community. He also said if the words “White” and “Black” were interchanged in her lyrics, one could think it was David Duke, the former leader of the Louisiana Klux Klan, giving the speech. His actions were intended to signal he was willing to exercise a degree of independence from African American politics (Kendi 2016, 469-470; Klinker 1999, 17; Pilawsky 1994, 5; Rule 1992). The events support Ian Haney-Lopez’s claims that Clinton proved to be highly adapt and very aggressive in using dog-whistle politics (Haney-Lopez 2013, 67). The Clinton administration would use coded appeals to justify policies and actions on crime control, civil rights, and welfare reform throughout Clinton’s presidency. The policies and actions would demonstrate Clinton maintained his distance from Black political interests.

Keeping “Black” Issues at Hands Length

As president, Clinton appeared to be highly sensitive to Republican and conservative criticism of his policies and political appointments. After his election, he vowed to appoint a cabinet that “looked like America.” However, his management with one nominee demonstrated there were political limits to the level of support minority nominees would receive from his administration. Early in his administration, his nominee to head the Justice Department’s Division of Civil Rights, Lani Guinier, was labeled the “quota queen” by the Republican opposition. As a law professor, Ms. Guinier had an extensive history of research on voting rights and voting reform. The term “quotas” had become a highly toxic word in the 1980s and early 1990s (Klinker 1999, 12 and 19). Clinton determined he would rather avoid the racial controversy than to defend his nominee or discuss the significant problems related to minority voting. When he withdrew her nomination, the President stated Guinier’s writings, which he claimed he did not read before her nomination, would serve to further polarize the nation. He did discuss the Republican opposition and his inability to defend the issues regarding voting that were raised in her writings (Clinton 1993).

The two most successful social policies of the Clinton Administration, welfare reform and the war on crime, sharpened the division between the interests of Black Americans and middle class White
Americans. The political language in the early years of the administration was focused on the term “personal responsibility.” More specifically, the language was meant to target poor Black people and hold them accountable for their conditions of poverty. Conservatives writers, such as Charles Murray and Dinesh D’Souza, as well as Republican leaders, such as Newt Gingrich (R-GA) and Richard Armey (R-TX), advocated Blacks should be held responsible for their station in life and stop placing the blame on policies for their lack of economic and social mobility (Kendi 2016, 478-479).

The political environment of the United States was well primed for this language. During the 1980s, the conservatives had made welfare reform a popular political position. Welfare was increasingly believed to be a program that created dependency. Americans also believed welfare was to blame for persistent poverty and a dangerous underclass in the inner city. As both a candidate and President, Clinton embraced pro-welfare reform terminology in his speeches and branded them as New Democrat ideology. When he spoke of welfare reform, Clinton used statements such as “mend it, don’t end it” and “end welfare as we know it” (Clinton 1996). He also described his welfare strategy as ensuring recipients could no longer “get something for nothing.” Once again, Clinton signaled to the middle class that their economic needs and values came first (O’Conner 2002, 399-400).

Kendi (2017) argued Clinton made a campaign promise to voters that no Republican would be tougher on crime than him. At his first State of the Union, Clinton announced “The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement” bill (Clinton 1993). This legislation ushered an unprecedented level of mass incarceration in the history of the United States and provided billions of dollars in spending for new prisons and larger police forces (Kendi 2016, 472). Alexander (2012) stated Clinton’s war on crime resulted harsher consequences than Ronald Reagan’s drug policies of the 1980s (Alexander 2012, 77). Ronald Kramer and Richard Michalowski (1995) argued Clinton was able to sell the massive expansion of the criminal justice system by combining “an iron fist with a velvet tongue” (Kramer and Michalowski 1995, 88). Clinton developed the political support for these policies by using terms and concepts intended to address the fears of White Americans and provide comfort that their safety was his priority. The terms included “three strikes and you’re out,” Youth Violence Prevention Initiative, Ounce of
Prevention Program, Gang Resistance Education and Training Project, Police Corps, and the Seed and Weed Program. Even though the Kramer and Michalowski article was written in 1995, it foreshadowed the influence Clinton’s language would have on future Democratic presidents to express progressive or liberal policies. In other words, Clinton’s appeal to conservatives and White middle class voters would transform the frame for which issues of poverty and crime are debated within the Democratic Party (Kramer and Michalowski 1995, 88, 93-94, 97).

In many ways, the Obama presidency would continue the right of center policies and views of the Clinton era. In some ways, the liberal values of the Democratic Party were abandoned. However, the public’s reaction to the first African American presidency would impose additional constraints on President Obama’s ability to advocate for moderate policy changes that provided social and legal relief through reform previous Democratic presidents were able support and pass during their terms in office.

III. President Barack Obama: The First African American President

The presidency of Barack Obama challenged the ideals of American exceptionalism. Obama’s two terms in office demonstrated there are limits to the American creed that this is a country where “anyone can grow up to be the President of the United States.” Obama’s candidacy and tenure as President of the United States would show his two elections to the presidency did fulfill the ideal that “anyone” could grow up to become president. However, the tenure of the first African American to hold the office demonstrated how the values of American exceptionalism are entwined with the American experience and history of racism. Many Americans were proud that Obama’s election broke a racial barrier considered unbreakable. For them, this achievement meant race was no longer the barrier that would divide the country. The work of civil rights activists of the 1960s had provided the foundation for the ultimate racial barrier to fall with Obama’s victory. The media and political commentaries regularly assert America has become “post-racial.” Those who used the term incorrectly assumed that since the ultimate racial barrier had been broken with Obama’s election, race no longer hampered American society (Sugrue 2010, 12). Conversely, for those Americans who believe in White supremacy, the Obama
presidency was wholly unacceptable. Anderson stated the election of a Black man to the highest office was both the "ultimate advancement and the ultimate offence" (Anderson 2016, 9). Those who believed Obama’s election signaled the United States had placed racism in the past would find the racial divisions had not gone away.

**The Quest for a More Perfect Union**

In this book, *The Audacity of Hope*, Obama places his philosophical leanings as a centrist, if not right of center Democrat. In the chapter titled, *Values*, he argues Democrats have avoided engaging in value debates to avoid losing electoral support from working class voters. He continues to say people use the "language of values" to order and structure their lives (Obama, 2006, 50). Obama also acknowledges that striking the right balance between the competing values and interests of America is particularly difficult. As the media and voters focused on Obama as a viable presidential candidate, he found the balance was particularly difficult to strike.

As a candidate, he tested this frame during the 2008 presidential campaign when Jeremiah Wright’s, his former pastor, sermons on Black nationalism surfaced in the press. News outlets and political ads repeated Wright’s comments, “God Damn America.” The intense focus on Wright forced candidate Obama to distance and neutralize himself on the issue of race so that he could continue to be viewed as an acceptable candidate for White Americans (Sugrue 2010, 117). As a result of the Wright controversy, Obama was forced to deliver a speech that contained rhetoric intended to mollify centrist White voters who had never considered voting for an African American president. In "A More Perfect Union," he explained how his White grandparents grappled with race, even while they raised an African American grandson. Obama’s tone showed he was empathetic to Whites who were ambivalent, or uncertain, about the racial issues that challenged the nation. He also acknowledged and condemned Wright’s speeches as unnecessarily inflammatory and divisive. Yet, he also recognized the complexity of Wright’s ministry that, in many ways, mirrored the life experiences and the ideology of African American Christians and socially engaged members of that community. While he was unwilling to disown
Reverend Wright or the experiences of millions of other Black Americans who have endured humiliating and painful racial experiences for generations, he called for Blacks not to consider themselves as “victims” of the challenges they endure due to racial discrimination. He also professed the history of racial discrimination in America has perpetuated the cycle of poverty, violence, and social pathologies that continue long after the end of Jim Crow segregation. He concluded his remarks by asking Americans to move beyond the entrenched racial attitudes of past for a better future (Obama 2008). As president, Obama would find his election served as a symbol of progress and an indication that large segments of White America were unwilling to accept racial equality.

**Governing Under the Constraint of Race**

In the early months of his presidency, Obama found himself caught in the center of racial controversies framed as “us versus them” and “Black versus White.” Obama’s friend, renowned Africana Studies scholar and Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates, was arrested while breaking into his home after locking himself out. Obama stated the police officer acted “stupidly” when he arrested Gates (Kennedy 2011, 211), who had proof to show he lived in the home. The officer, who suspected Gates of unlawful entry, refused to accept his proof of residency. Although Blacks supported the president’s declaration that the police acted “stupidly,” the statement caused a massive public backlash among Whites. In response to the controversy, the White House organized a “beer summit” with Gates and Vice President Biden in an attempt to quell the racial tensions that resulted from Obama’s frank assessment of the encounter. The meeting was not intended to address the problem of police racial profiling, but to show the matter could be discussed in a civil manner (Dyson 2016, 187; Johnson 2017, 175; Kennedy 2011, 211; Reid 2015, 195).

Members of the Obama Administration further demonstrated their unease and discomfort dealing with racial politics when Shirley Sherrod, an African American employee from the Department of Agriculture, was forced to resign. Right wing activist Andrew Breitbart launched a blatantly flagrant misinformation campaign about her advocacy for White farmers. Breitbart altered a speech Sherrod...
delivered at a chapter branch of the NAACP that made it appear she believed in “reverse racism,” supported racist actions committed by Blacks against Whites. The Department of Agriculture and the White House panicked because of the intensity of the controversy and its coverage by mainstream and conservative press. As a result, Sherrod was pressured by the White House to resign. Sherrod was vindicated when one of the White farmers came forward to say her actions allowed him to save his farm. Additionally, the press received the speech in its entirety and assessed Breitbart manipulated the speech. The White House was forced to apologize and offer Sherrod a new position. Ultimately, Sherrod declined to continue her position with the Obama Administration (Reid 2015, 205-206; Sherrod and Whitney 2012, 139-146; Stolberg, Dewan, and Stelter 2010).

The Gates and Sherrod controversies demonstrated to African American scholars, journalists, and activists that in spite of Obama’s extraordinary rhetorical skills, he was unwilling to take controversial positions on race. Obama avoided racially charged politics. Randall Kennedy argued he approached race in “the Obama way.” He stated he dodged serious racial issues in his “A More Perfect Union” remarks and he could not condemn Gates’ arrest as racially motivated (Kennedy 2011, 210-211). Michael Eric Dyson wrote about Black political activists who voiced their disappointment that the Obama presidency did not have a clearly articulated policy agenda for Black Americans. Dyson recognized Obama was subjected to levels of disrespect, obstructionism, misrepresentations, and lies his predecessors did not experience. Also, the political climate Obama was subjected to made policies intended to address the needs of low income and working class Blacks difficult to attain. However, he also argued Obama made a calculated judgement in his first campaign that he would straddle the race issues in ways that would prevent his White supporters from becoming uncomfortable with his political agenda (Dyson 2016, 16).

As president, Barack Obama governed as a New Democrat who embraced a “lift all boats” philosophy. Such a philosophy was embraced by John F. Kennedy and by conservatives and liberals who believed affirmative action was not an effective policy for uplifting African Americans from poverty. The view holds class immobility is the problem that undermines inequality (Coates 2017, 146). Obama also informed the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) there would not be a specific Black agenda
targeted to address the unique needs of African Americans. His approach was that a strong economy for all Americans would “lift all boats” (Harris, 2012, 187). Further, the benefits to all Americans would have a trickle-down effect that would benefit communities of color (Harris, 2012, 186-187; Reid, 2015, 203). The lack of an aggressive policy that addressed the needs of African American communities was the source of considerable tension between Obama and the CBC. Many CBC members were unwilling to publicly criticize Obama because they did not want to criticize the first Black president who continued to be the source of pride across their community. Yet, they also believed Obama exploited their silence and their pride (Dyson 2016, 28).

**Exploiting the Politics of Pathology from the President’s Bully Pulpit**

Obama’s unwillingness to put forth a “Black” agenda was one of many points of tension that surfaced between Obama and African American constituencies. In addition to the lack of specific political policies for African Americans, Black elected officials, commentators, and activists, were highly critical of Obama’s focus on “respectability politics.” As a presidential candidate and as president, Obama demonstrated a consistent pattern of using racially stigmatizing rhetoric to reprimand Black audiences for alleged stereotypical and pathological behavior. This brand of politics focuses on Black culture as a root cause of poverty and social immobility through the frame of “responsibility politics.” This philosophy makes the assumption that low income Black men and women lack moral standards, having numerous children with multiple partners who do not support their offspring (Dyson 2016, 195; Johnson 2017, 177-179). At the turn of the 20th century, “respectability politics” was a strategy social elite in the Black community employed to show Whites that Blacks could behave respectfully, and therefore, could advance the cause of racial equality. Critics of this philosophy argued the focus of public behavior shifts from policy discussions on the individual failings of low income Blacks on their behavior instead of on the social and economic barriers that perpetuate poverty (Harris 2012, 120).

Obama’s rhetorical focus on “respectability politics” suggested he was unwilling to address the systemic and structural problems that impacted low income African Americans. Obama inserted
narratives in his speeches perceived as delivering “tough love” and long overdue criticism towards Black parents for not raising their children with the same moral standards and discipline as White parents. He often argued individual choices and the lack of personal responsibility, not structural racism, was the source of inequality for Blacks. He focused on Black men and reprimanded them to correct what Whites perceived as the social ills that impact all Blacks, including absent fathers and the lack of commitment to improve the plight of their own neighborhoods (Bosman 2008; Geary 2015, 18; Price 2016, 39 and 43; Reid 2015, 229-231).

Respectability politics remained prominent throughout the Obama Administration. Obama’s 2013 commencement speech to Morehouse College, a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) for African American men whose graduates often come from middle and upper middle class families, contained several passages with coded language about the plight of poverty in Black communities. He made repeated calls for the graduates not to make racism an excuse for challenges and take responsibility for the social dysfunction in Black families (Obama 2013). Essentially, Obama admonished an audience of graduates and family members who had not made excuses and had committed to earning their college degree. Once again, Obama used the commencement speech to show White Americans that he could stand up for the values of White America to exploit the racial stereotypes many voters believe characterize Black Americans.

Instead of proposing legislation to address the problems associated with inequality, Obama organized the My Brother’s Keeper Task Force, an initiative to promote personal responsibility and mentoring. Again, African Americans, and later Latinos, were asked to address social problems also experienced by White Americans, such as the need to connect young men who come from unstable, broken homes that are often without fathers. The ceremony announcing the launch of the task force was designed to broadly appeal to Blacks and Whites, and liberals and conservatives. The event’s participants included executives from Wall Street, civil rights activists, and Black figures held in high regard by Whites, such as Colin Powell and Earvin “Magic” Johnson. The president also invited racial
conservatives Bill O’Reilly and Michael Bloomberg; their participation angered African Americans because of their history of disparaging remarks against Black men (Butler 2017, 131).

The initiative also focused on the development of best practices, mentoring, and interventions to reduce illiteracy and juvenile delinquency (Jarrett and Johnson, 2014). The initiatives were criticized widely across Black America. Kimberle Crenshaw, one of the most vocal opponents of the initiative, argued the exclusion of Black and Latina women demonstrated Obama focused on boys because he could find a middle ground among his opponents and supporters who believe the problems of poverty are exceptionally difficult among Black men and continue to pose a threat to society. This position incorrectly assumed Black women have generally overcome the problems related to systemic racism (Cranshaw 2014; Dyson 2016, 36; McClain 2014). Additionally, critics argued programs focused on Black young men do more harm than good. They perpetuate the view that this segment of the population suffers from social pathologies and is influenced by poor social behavior at an exceptionally higher rate than for Whites. Therefore, these assumptions keep the focus on regulating and policing the behavior of Black men, even when no such intervention is warranted (Butler 2017, 141-143).

The focus on initiatives, such as My Brother’s Keeper, failed to address the political issue at the forefront of African American political activism during the Obama Administration. The killing of African American men and women by police and vigilantes erased any remaining doubt that Black lives continue to be devalued among large segments of White society throughout the nation. The killings started receiving widespread attention with the exoneration of George Zimmerman, a vigilante adult male who killed Trayvon Martin, an unarmed, Black male teenager. Martin’s case was emblematic of a growing number of African American men and women murdered at the point of encounter without the benefit of due process. The accused were usually exonerated, even in cases in which video evidence documented the murders and excessive violence were not justified (Butler 2017, 196). The New York Times reported that of the 15 high-profile deaths of Blacks by the police in the second term of the Obama Administration, the officers involved were held accountable for only two of the cases (Lee and Park 2017).
Obama did not address the impact of racial bias at the root of these murders and subsequent exonerations. Nor did he address the anger Blacks felt and articulated about these issues. Instead, he used the occasion to discuss how the murders of Travyon Martin and Jordan Davis, both African American teenagers, required the development of a structure to “bolster and reinforce our young men, and give them a sense that the country cares about them and values them and is willing to invest in them” (Obama 2014). The stories of those who lost their lives became well known among the public. The victims were not “social menaces.” They were middle and working class, headed to college or college educated, gainfully employed with devoted parents, and civically engaged members of their communities. The problem was not their behavior or life choices, but the fact they did not receive due process and those responsible for ending their lives were not held accountable. Obama demonstrated to African Americans he was unwilling to directly address the problems of racism if it involved the risk facing criticism from Whites.

President Obama’s unwillingness to engage in racial controversies did not produce any benefits for him as he advocated for his “lift all boats” policy agenda. In spite of his efforts to avoid White backlash, the first African American President of the United States would find the highly politically polarized, racially stigmatized environment was extremely hostile to bridging differences in the way he articulated in his pre-presidency writings. The advances he planned for at the beginning of his presidency were racialized in unprecedented ways that were unlikely to have occurred if he was a White man.

**Republican Backlash and Racialized Images of President Obama**

The Republican backlash to President Obama was developed on the premise that because he is Black, Obama’s administration could not be fair to the interests of Whites. Republicans and conservatives asserted Obama’s administration and policies were inherently harmful and against the interests of White Americans. He was portrayed as angry and vengeful. Conservatives, such as Dinesh D’Souza, Rudy Giuliani, and Newt Gingrich, accused him of being unfaithful to America, American goals and values, and not capable of understanding how to behave as an American. Gingrich called him
“the most dangerous President in the history of the United States” (Dyson 2016, 138). The depictions of Obama as the “un-American” president were clearly intended to make him appear as an illegitimate leader of the United States solely because of his race (Chait 2016, 27; Dyson 2016, 135; Rucker 2013, 58-102).

Often, the Republican opposition to President Obama was laced with racial tropes and imagery that would have been considered highly disrespectful if the president was White. Also, there were countless examples of overtly racist, disrespectful treatment from Republican officials and voters. During the 2008 election, a life size effigy of Obama was found hanging from a tree on the campus of the University of Kentucky in Lexington. Representative Geoff Davis (R-KY) referred to the president as a “boy.” During slavery and Jim Crow, black men, regardless of their age, were called boy by Whites of all social backgrounds and ages. A Republican women’s organization promoted fake currency called “Obama bucks” with Obama’s head on the body of a donkey. Images of spare ribs, Kool-Aid, and fried chicken, foods often stereotyped as being the favorites of poor Black people, were included on the “Obama bucks” (Chait 2017, 21; Reed 2015, 187).

During Obama’s presidency, Republican elected officials openly displayed behaviors considered highly disrespectful. Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC) interrupted the President’s speech during the 2009 Joint Session of Congress when he yelled, “You lie!” Governor Jan Brewer (R-AZ) was videotaped yelling at the President with her finger in his face on an airport tarmac in Phoenix while discussing immigration. Former New Hampshire Governor John Sununu stated in a television interview he wished “Obama would learn how to be an “American” (Dyson 2016, 135). The former Speaker of the House and Republican presidential candidate repeatedly called Obama the “food stamp president” (Rucker 2013, 24) Finally, the Speaker of the House, John Boehner (R-OH), intentionally failed to follow long-standing protocol when he invited the Israeli head of state, Benjamin Netanyahu, to address Congress on the dangers of dealing with Iran without informing the White House in advance of issuing the invitation (Abramsky 2013, 46; Samuel 2016, 32-33).
The lack of repudiation from the Republican establishment allowed the conspiracy of birtherism to flourish. In reports, Republican leaders did little or nothing to counter the extensively spread falsehoods and conspiracies claiming Obama was born in Kenya and not an American citizen, making him ineligible to serve as the President of the United States. House Majority Whip Rep. Eric Cantor was asked if he would challenge those who claimed the President was not a legitimate American and that the State of Hawaii created a fake birth certificate to support Obama’s candidacy. Although he agreed those rumors were false, Cantor also stated it was not an issue that needed to be addressed (Chait 2016, 198). President Obama acknowledged his race was central to his opposition. He explained there were factions among the Republicans that suggested he was different and illegitimate with false claims that he was a Muslim, and therefore fundamentally disloyal to America (Samuel 2016, 31).

Mary Rucker argued these images of racism and racial stigmatization defined the opposition. People carried signs to protests with pictures of Obama dressed as an African medicine doctor with bones around his neck. Other signs used the image of the movie character The Joker over Obama’s face to make him look like a sinister criminal. Obama was also depicted on a sign as a chimpanzee with the wording, “Now you know why - no birth certificate” This racist symbol is clearly designed to demean Blacks. Rucker further argued that “The Birther Movement” demonstrated the extreme radicalization of Whites during the Obama era (Rucker 2013, 58).

Obama was unable to advocate for the structural changes and regulatory reforms needed to address destabilization that resulted from the deregulation policies of the Clinton and George W. Bush Administrations. The Republican leadership in Congress consistently blocked his efforts to promote a jobs bill that focused on improving government infrastructure. In addition, due to Republican obstruction, President Obama was unable to work collaboratively with Congress to impose regulatory reforms on Wall Street and prevent a repeat of the Great Recession that cost Americans 8.7 million jobs from 2007 to 2010, a loss of 2.5 million businesses. He prevented the loss of General Motors and saved 1.2 million jobs as a result of the auto industry bailout (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2018, Institute for Policy Research 2018; Kiley 2016; Rucker 2013, 161).
By the end of Obama’s term in office, it appeared Whites benefited from policies he passed when he had the advantage of the Democratic majority during his first two years of his first term in office. For example, by the end of 2015, 640,000 jobs were added to the auto industry (Kiley 2016). According to the research conducted by the Annenberg Public Policy Center, the quality of life for Americans improved during the Obama Administration. For example, 11.6 million jobs were created and unemployment decreased to 4.8 percent. Moreover, the number of Americans who did not have health insurance fell by 15.2 percent (Jackson 2017).

In spite of these gains, Obama never received acknowledgement or respect from conservative populists for his policies that positively impacted the country. The racial tones emanating from the Republican Party and their supporters serve as evidence that his administration would never receive credit for improving the quality of life for those who suffered during the recession. Instead, the message from the opposition was that the American government will always be the “White man’s government.” Obama’s tenure was significantly constrained by racial tensions between Blacks and Whites with him caught in the middle. African American activists would find the first African American president would not be the advocate for Black advancement they had hoped he would be. Obama would keep Black political interests at arm’s length in ways that paralleled his Democratic and Republican predecessors.

Now that the Obama Administration is a chapter in history, scholars have the opportunity to compare his record on racial politics and policies to past American presidents of the post-Reagan era. While many Americans of all races appreciate that Obama’s election to the presidency broke the most significant and difficult racial barrier, there remains significant disappointment that the Obama Administration did not fundamentally improve the political issues and social structures that continue to keep African Americans from reaching social parity with White Americans. An examination of his presidency in the context of the Carter and Clinton eras shows Democratic presidents deem it necessary to distance themselves from racial policies that White Americans believe are offensive or unfair to their sensibilities and interests.
Obama scholars argued Obama has benefited from the progress of the Civil Rights movement, but he did not inherently believe that his role as the president was to correct America’s problems with racism. In other words, he did not center his political identity solely on fighting for racial justice. His comments on racial controversies were always tempered to minimize public anger and scrutiny (Harris 2012, 119-120; Kennedy 2011, 212; Price 2016, 138). Thomas Sugrue noted Obama’s statement in his memoir, *The Audacity of Hope*, in which he claims he serves “as a blank screen on which people of vastly different political stripes project their own views (Obama, 2005). Sugrue argued Obama strategically developed a narrative to explain that he comes not from the Civil Rights experience, but from the conventional narrative of American exceptionalism which frames the United States as a model of democracy and nation that provides all of its citizens with equal opportunity to succeed. He framed the history of race in America not with historic inequality and civil rights, but with optimism and hope that race relations in America is always evolving and improving (Sugrue 2009, 4). In this frame, the focus was on “what can be,” not on the structural racism that is impossible to address without significant political and personal sacrifice. In the end, the presence of a Black president did not fundamentally change the impact of racism on the lives of everyday African Americans. As Price concluded, the same level of protest and political pressure needed to produce change under White presidents was required during the Obama presidency (Price 2016, 138).

**Conclusion**

The actions Carter, Clinton, and Obama took to keep measured and often conservative positions on race demonstrate Democratic presidents are unwilling to risk their political careers on policies and practices that perpetuate racial inequalities. Even though the United States is becoming increasingly more racially and culturally diverse, diversity is viewed as a hindrance instead of an advantage in the political efforts to address difficult social issues, such as poverty, healthcare, and welfare reform. The Democratic presidents’ practice of keeping Black political interests “at arm’s length” reinforces the view that support for issues perceived as unfairly benefiting Blacks over the interests of Whites is a political risk president
of both parties are unwilling to make. Additionally, the evolution of the Republican Party into a nearly all-White and often extremist party removes any incentive for Republican presidents and candidates to encourage conservative voters to see diversity as a benefit and not harmful to American society.

In chapter four, the methodology chapter, a content analysis was used to show how presidents from Reagan through Obama used racially coded words and phrases in their remarks to the public. The accounts discussed in this chapter provide a context for the experiments that will examine the frequency and prevalence of racially stigmatizing code words and phrases into the national dialogue. Also, this chapter provided an opportunity to consider if the use of this rhetoric is the norm and not the exception to the discussion of social inequality in presidential rhetoric.
Chapter 4

Methodology and Research Design

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methodology and research design for this study. It explains why qualitative analysis is the research methodology best suited for this dissertation. And more specifically, the chapter discusses how the case study methodology, and more specifically, content analysis methods such as word frequency and Keyword-in-Context are useful in the measurement of racially stigmatizing code words in presidential speeches from President Ronald Reagan through Barack Obama.

The Benefits of Qualitative Content Analysis for the Examination of Presidential Speeches

This study is structured as a qualitative, content analysis research project. Carol Gribich (2013) suggests that this methodology is most helpful for the analysis of speeches in four specific areas: culture, phenomena, structural processes, and historical changes. She provides the following definitions for each of the four characteristics. *Culture* can pertain to the investigation of behaviors for a particular group of people in a particular setting. *Phenomena* is described as a detailed investigation over time of a particular experience. *Structural processes* may pertain to the investigation of policy change and its influence and impact on a specified setting or group. And historical change shows how groups change their patterns of communication over time (Gribich 2013, 5).

Further explanations of these definitions will show how these four concepts apply to this study. This research examines the political *culture* that cultivates the environment for presidents to use racially stigmatizing code words and stereotypes to frame their arguments for reforming social safety net policies. This culture allows presidents and voters to place blame on racial minorities for the failure of social programs asserting that they harm the poor, while middle-class taxpayers are forced to bear the financial
burden. This study examines the *phenomena* of the development and perpetuation of the Southern Strategy by investigating the prevalence of code words that appear in presidential speeches from Ronald Reagan through Barack Obama. And therefore, it will show how the Southern Strategy influenced the belief that the social safety net harmed, and not helped, the development of the middle class. The research investigates *structural processes* on the impact of how the systematic stigmatization of social spending is applied to normalize negative stereotypes about African Americans and the low-income families. Thereby, manipulating opinions of the social safety net programs so that they remain politically unpopular. These actions have encouraged presidents to argue for the dichotomy of the “deserving forgotten White man” versus the “undeserving forgotten Black man” since 1968. And finally, *historical changes* in this study pertains to the examination of presidential rhetoric that uses modified code words and phrases so that they can avoid the use of offensive words and phrases that the electorate believes have racist meanings and tones. Presidents may modify these words to appeal to White middle-class values that both condemn the use of overtly racist words and the perception that immoral behavior and choices of low-income individuals are the root cause of their poverty.

**Case Studies and Qualitative Methods**

Case studies, when constructed with the development of a strong research design, can provide equally substantive research results that may be used to support research that broadens and enhances the base of knowledge in the field of political science. The case study methodology has multiple definitions. John Gerring (2007) proposes that case studies are often broadly defined due to the variation of characteristics that researchers use to conduct qualitative research. The characteristics that are most commonly associated with case studies are: research based on a small-N data set; it is focused on a comprehensive examination of a specific occurrence; it is an analysis of a specific type of evidence that is non-quantitative such as process tracing, participant observation, or historical; it is an investigation of a single observation; and of a single phenomenon (Gering 2007, 17).
Social scientists often define case studies based on the methods that are employed to evaluate the research question based on whether or not the research is based on small-N analysis, process-tracing or participant observation. Gerring states that the case study as “an intensive study of a singular unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units” (Gerring 2006, 342). In this definition, a case study is a research design in which a unit is examined for a discreet and limited period of time in which an observable political phenomenon has occurred. George and Bennett (2005) provide a similar definition to Gerring’s explanation of a case study. They define a case as a class of events that describes a phenomenon of scientific interest. Units of study in this instance include types of governmental structures, economic and political systems, and leadership models and types (George and Bennett 2005, 18). Although there is not a commonly agreed upon definition for case studies, there is agreement that this method provides valuable insight for social science research. Case studies, if developed carefully, can provide valuable scientific insight into areas of social science research for phenomenon that may not be fully explained based solely on the use of quantitative methodologies.

The Relevance of Case Studies as A Research Method in Political Science

The case study methodology as a research design has been widely criticized by social scientists that question the rigor of the methodology as a means of building and testing theory. Scholars argue that case studies must be constructed to ensure that they are reliable, valid, and well-structured so that they provide comprehensive explanations for political problems and phenomena. Case studies are an essential methodology for political scientists who seek to have a comprehensive understanding of how to examine the social and political complexities of individuals, communities, and collective experiences. Therefore, qualitative research should not be viewed as an inferior research methodology but rather a valid alternative to quantitative research.

George and Bennett (2005) propose specific variables that are central to the research of social scientists that are difficult to measure quantitatively. These variables include the concepts of democracy, peace, and political power. Statistical research has significant limitations in explaining contextual factors
that influence behavior and phenomenon. They state that in an effort to provide an explanation for these concepts, quantitative researchers may unintentionally run the risk of grouping dismissing cases together so that they have the large-N necessary for statistical analysis. However, George and Bennett assert that case studies provide the opportunity for conceptual refinement over a small number of cases (George and Bennett 2005, 19). This perspective provides an understanding that quantitative methodology has shortcomings that can be enhanced by the insertion of qualitative research design. For instance, how does history and culture influence a political phenomenon? This is an essential question because societies change and the demands for democratic access to government process, representation, and social services change. This methodology can help to explain why racial resentment has continued to be a factor in the domestic policy debates since the 1960s.

**The Comparative Case Study Methodology and the Examination of Presidential Rhetoric**

The purpose of this research design is to examine the prevalence, and ultimately the sustained legacy of racially stigmatized language in presidential rhetoric. I determined that content analysis design for the three research questions can best examined through the development of a comparative case study research design. Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (2003) discuss comparative historical analysis as a component of case study research. This methodology is useful for researchers who are engaged in furthering interdisciplinary historical research. They discuss three specific benefits to this type of research. First, the comparative social inquiry focuses on the explanation and the identification of the patterns of causation that produce outcomes of major policy interests. Second, comparative historical researchers analyze specific historical sequences and examine how processes, and for this study, speech patterns, evolve over time. And third, comparative historical research is distinctive because researchers specialize in systemic and contextualized comparisons of both similar and contrasting cases.

The concept of contextualization is an important aspect to understand for this methodology. As I have explained throughout this study, presidents use racial appeals as a means of gaining support for their candidacies and policies. The contents of these speeches, which are considered cases, are used to
measure the inclusion of racially stigmatizing rhetoric. Researchers can also examine how variables have different causal implications across different contexts. Although there are disagreements among social scientists about the small-N aspect of this type of comparative research, there is growing acceptance that comparative historical research servers as a supplement to quantitative studies (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003, 10-17).

The research is confined to five presidents. Each president constitutes one case. Therefore, a small-N case study is most useful for study over the experimental model where cases are randomly selected (Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff 2008, 148). The speeches in this model are selected specifically because they are delivered in front of audiences in which presidents discuss the dichotomy of the “forgotten White man” and the “forgotten Black man” in the “Common Speeches” and the “Social Policy Speeches.” The parameter of speeches is helpful due to the massive volume of presidential remarks that are included in the “Public Papers of the Presidents.” First, the keywords may capture words that are irrelevant to the testing of racially stigmatizing code words. For example, the word “Black” will capture “black lung” and “Blackhawk.” And second, the inclusion of irrelevant speeches will make it difficult to determine the prevalence of code words because the speeches that discuss social spending in general, and the social safety net in particular, is relatively small subset of documents.

**Testing “the Reagan Effect” with Content Analysis**

The foundation for the case studies of the presidents is based on the content analysis of selected presidential speeches. This methodology will be used to determine the prevalence of the “Reagan Effect” be studying the prevalence for racially stigmatizing language in presidential speeches from Ronald Reagan through Barack Obama. These speeches have applied the Southern Strategy by using a colorblind frame and politics of the politics of pathology that Reagan defined as the “forgotten man.” Specifically, the study explores how the rhetorical frame of the Southern Strategy influences how they express their political positions on social spending through the dichotomy of the deserving White forgotten man versus the undeserving Black man.
Scholars define content analysis methodology in multiple ways. Klaus Krippendorf defines content analysis as “a research technique for making replicable valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorf 2013, 24). Carol Gribich states that content analysis provides the researcher with a method for systematically coding and categorizing large quantities of contextual information to determine trends and patterns in words used, their frequency, structure, contexts, and dialogues of communication (Gribich 2013, 189, 293). Robert Weber defines it as a research method that implements a set of procedures that provides a basis for both credible and persuasive inferences about the text under examination (Weber 1990, 98). Matthew Moen (1988) defines content analysis as a form of document study that provides an opportunity for the researcher to convert non-qualitative documents into a quantitative form (Moen 1988, 776).

Moen also asserts that this provides three general advantages. First, it provides the opportunity to study individuals, such as American presidents, who are otherwise inaccessible to the researcher. Second, it eliminates negative reactions from the subject of the investigation because it is an unobtrusive method for examining the research subject. And three, it is conducive to long-term and historical analysis (Moen 1988, 776). Moen’s third point is particularly helpful to this study because it will examine the use of words as set of historical patterns by examining individual presidents Ronald Reagan through Barack Obama as well as the examination of presidents by party affiliation.

In addition, Phillip Weber (1990) describes the uses of content analysis that I believe are particularly useful for the study of the Southern Strategy’s impact on presidential speeches. He states that this method provides researchers with the context to make the following inferences: it detects the existence of political propaganda; it identifies the intentions and other characteristics of communication; it provides descriptions of attitudinal and behavioral responses to communication; and, it describes trends in communications. These characteristics are central to this research project. This methodology will be used to detect the prevalence of racially stigmatizing coded language that is characteristic of the Southern Strategy. And therefore, is useful in testing the hypotheses to determine if racially stigmatizing code
words are used by all presidents to cultivate or mitigate the racial resentment of White voters who believe that social spending provides an unfair economic and social advantage to non-Whites.

While content analysis is generally considered a reliable research method, there are potential problems as well. Gribich states that there are four disadvantages to content analysis. First, the results of the testing may be criticized for providing over simplified analysis, especially if it only enumerative tests such as word frequencies that are used. For example, the high number of occurrences of a word may incorrectly suggest that the word is relevant to the study. However, additional testing with an alternative method, such as keyword-in-context, is needed to determine if results of the word frequency test clearly indicate that the high frequency results accurately reflect the meaning of word and its importance in the text. Second, the limited strategies for building the selection of cases to be tested can lead to bias. In other words, if the researcher selects the test, instead of allowing the program to randomly select the test may lead to bias. Third, the words and meanings for the testing may be limited by the capacity of the program. This means that the computer program itself may not produce the most accurate results. And fourth, the researcher may interpret the results outside a theoretical framework and provide a superficial interpretation of the results by assuming that results alone is all that is needed to interpret the study (Gribich 2013, 4649).

**Research Hypotheses for this Study:**

The hypotheses for this research are as follows:

**Hypothesis 1:** There is a relationship between a president’s political party and the use of racial code words. Democratic presidents are less likely than Republican president to use racial code words.

**Null Hypothesis 1:** There is not relationship between a president’s political party and the use of racial code words.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is a relationship between the president’s race and the use of racial code words.
Null Hypothesis 2: There is no relationship between the president’s race and the use of racial code words.

The Construction of Comparative Case Studies to test the Hypotheses in this Study

Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff (2008) defines a case study as the study of one unit of investigation to explore a specific phenomenon. For example, a case study would be the evaluation of one president’s rhetoric to determine the impact of the Southern Strategy by examining the prevalence of coded language in his speeches. When two or more cases are investigated the research, design is called a comparative case study (Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff 2008, 148). Each president in this study will constitute a single case. The data collected from each president will be compared against the remaining presidents in the study.

This design will allow for the comparison of the use of racially stigmatizing words and phrases to construct their political support for the interests of the forgotten man. This research design is useful because the characteristics that are most commonly associated with case studies are useful for individual and comparative examination of presidential rhetoric over multiple presidencies as well as for political and social changes. The research is based on a small-N data set of selected speeches. The study focus is based on a comprehensive examination of the specific occurrence of racially stigmatizing code words. It is an analysis of a specific type of evidence that is non-quantitative such as process tracing, participant observation, and a historical context. And, the research is an investigation of the singular phenomenon of racially stigmatizing rhetoric (Gerring 2007, 17).

An additional discussion is needed to explain why the case studies in this research will be based on a selected small-N data set instead of a randomly selected data set. Presidents deliver and release thousands of speeches and statements. It appears from my observations that there is a relatively small subset of speeches in which presidents discuss the intersection of race, social spending, and middle-class values when compared to a president’s overall public statements related to domestic policy. In addition, presidents discuss social spending in consistent platforms and public forums. For example, in
the “common speeches” category, these forums include national party conventions, state of the union and inaugural addresses. And for the “stigmatizing policy failures” category, these forums include, civil rights and social justice organizations, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, town hall meetings, and during federally designated commemorations such as Black History Month and Hispanic Heritage Month. A president’s use of these different forums will be described in discussion of the development of comparative case studies.

Sources for the Units of Analysis

The remarks that will be coded for this study will start with Ronald Reagan’s 1979 announcement of his candidacy for the 1980 presidential campaign and end in 2016 presidential campaign with the conclusion of Barack Obama’s second term. All of the speeches in this study were downloaded from the websites The American Presidency Project of the University of California at Santa Barbara: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php This website is linked to the National Archives website Public Papers of the Presidents: https://www.archives.gov/files/federal-register/publications/presidential-papers.html. The American Presidency Project website is particularly helpful for this study. Unlike the Public Papers of the President, this website allows researchers to sort speeches by year and key words. This feature ensures that the speeches are properly identified for each president.

The speeches were selected and sorted into two groups, “Common Speeches” and “Social Policy Speeches.” The first group of speeches under examination is categorized under the title “Common Speeches.” The word “common” identifies the four groups of speeches that all presidents deliver as they campaign for the presidency and address the nation during their administration.

I. Speeches announcing presidential campaign and presidential reelection campaign. These speeches are focused on attracting electoral primary voters. Generally, the policies outlined in these speeches are focused on party loyalists who are focused on social values.

II. National party convention speeches to accept the party’s presidential nomination. These
speeches are nationally televised events that promote the nominee as the party leader. The policies of each party’s platform address the social issues that are prominent at the time. Race and issues associated with race are discussed at both the Democratic and Republican national conventions. The remarks are intended to show how the candidate will move America forward to reflect these values.

III. **Inaugural addresses.** These speeches outline the president’s vision for America which include how they plan to address and represent social values.

IV. **State of the Union and addresses before a Joint Session of the United States Congress.** These speeches are a forum for the president to show the importance and priority of the policies by demonstrating the level of the financial investment of the government. For example, the president will announce the budget allocation that will allow the nation to address social problems such as crime, poverty, health care, and middle-class development.

An evaluation of social policy speeches enhances this study. A research design that is limited to the common speeches may not demonstrate the pervasiveness of the use of racially stigmatizing language. As a researcher, I assume that presidents will use the opportunity to address constituency groups who have a specific interest to either maintain or change the social safety net policies. On these occasions, presidents use racial code words to explain why they believe the social safety net has failed and what is needed to correct such policies. They use this discourse when they are in front of groups of conservative White voters that believe that such policies enable immoral behavior for the undeserving poor. Examples of this type of messaging include a president’s appearance in front of a non-White audience to convince White and conservative voters that he is tough on crime and willing to punish those on welfare. While a president may make statements that allude to these policy prescriptions in a common speech, he may use additional code words or use overt racial and social stereotypes in speeches delivered to these audiences that would be broadly considered offensive and insensitive to constituencies that are more directly impacted by such policy reforms.
The speeches that discuss social policy, welfare and reform are categorized under the title: “Social Policy Speeches.” This category recognizes that there is a significant level of variation of the audiences that presidents address outside of the “Common Speeches” category. For example, presidents may choose to address issues related to race, poverty, and social spending before groups that have an organized mission to support their particular policy initiatives related to poverty and social spending. Their remarks in this category are most likely to be delivered in “friendly” audiences of constituencies that support their political positions. These remarks are delivered in multiple settings including the White House, at commencement addresses conferences at African American and Hispanic serving institutions, conventions sponsored political organizations or special interest groups such as civil rights organization, radio and television interviews and remarks on minority media markets. These speeches include audiences and organizations that have an organizational mission to advance racial equality.

The group of “Social Policy speeches” are sorted by searching for several different terms and names of organizations. I started my search with a search for the words race and racism. Additionally, the names of civil rights groups and minority focused media outlets were also included in a word search. These groups included the following: The National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Black Entertainment Television, Congressional Black Caucus, Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, La Raza, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), National Urban Radio, Telemundo, The Urban League, and Univision. The words “African American,” “Afro American,” “Black,” “Hispanic,” and “Latino” were also sorted to find speeches that were delivered in front of groups that have a mission to address the unique needs of Black and Latino citizens, political, and professional organizations. Additionally, presidential remarks that address domestic spending and social policy development are included. The speeches from this category were identified by conducting a word search to locate policy speeches from the Public Papers of the Presidents by sorting with the following keywords: Afro-American, African American, Black, Civil Rights, commencement (to locate speeches delivered at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions), food stamps, economic, economic recovery,
food assistance, health care, Hispanic, Latino, low-income, minority, poverty, race, racism, urban policy, and welfare reform.

The exact terms for race, policies, and social condition included in this list vary from president to president. For example, ethnic groups and racial minorities have changed their names over time. African Americans have identified themselves as Negro, Colored, Afro-American, and Black. Latinos have used ethnic identifiers such as Hispanic and Chicano. Increased social sensitivities about the social conditions of low-income communities have also changed the words to describe poverty. Words such as “slums,” “ghettos,” “inner-city,” and “poor” may appear in remarks from president from the 1980s and 1990s. Instead, terms such as “low-income,” “urban” are now used to describe poverty-stricken areas of cities. Additionally, political terms also evolve over time or may be adopted by one party before it is used by the other. For example, I found that the term “economic inequality” does not appear in Reagan’s, George H. W. Bush’s, and George W. Bush’s remarks but they appear in remarks delivered by Presidents Clinton and Obama. The different uses of political terms may be due to the differences in policy priorities and perspective of the issues related to social and economic development.

The Management of Irrelevant Speeches

The word search process captured many documents that were not relevant to this study. These documents were labeled as “irrelevant” and were not included in the content analysis database. These speeches included remarks given by each president such as: executive orders, notices and statements related to political nominations and appointments, proclamations, statements regarding appropriations for federal agencies, signing statements for legislation that is not related to keywords for the search such as veterans’ health care, veterans housing, or unrelated to policies related to spending and the poor, and statements made by individuals other than the president such as the press secretary and administration agency leaders. Economic speeches during the Clinton presidency often refer to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Those speeches were removed because they did not focus on social spending. Speeches related to Black and Hispanic history and culture from the George W. Bush and
Barack Obama administration were removed from consideration because they did not discuss policy. Additionally, I also reviewed the entire list of speeches to cross-check titles and ensure that speeches were not left out because the keywords search did not capture them accurately.

In addition, the process of sorting by keywords has the potential to lead to a significant level of sampling errors or Type I errors. This error occurs when speeches are included solely because they contain a word that is often associated with racism. However, the word often has a completely different meaning. For example, the term Black most often refers to African American. However, the word “Black” could also refer to statements and policies related to black lung disease or Blackhawk helicopters. Additionally, commencement could refer to the commencement of military action. And, African, could refer to humanitarian policies and funding for the continent of Africa. To mitigate the occurrence of such errors, all speeches that were sorted by code words were reviewed to ensure that the terms captured in the sort were appropriate for the study. The process of searching speeches by code words identifies speeches that have the correct key word but the wrong meaning. In order to determine if the speech was relevant for the study, the link containing the speech was read to reviewed to determine if the subject matter was related to race and social class.

**Development of the List of Code Words**

When I began this study, I assumed that because the concept of “dog-whistle” or racial code words has a long association with the study of the Southern Strategy, that there was a generally accepted list of racial code words that was used by political scientists and historians. I discovered that such a list did not exist. I sent an inquiry to Susan Greenbaum, a foundational source for Chapter One, for direction on how I may approach this. She did not know of one and suggested that I contact researchers to confirm that I did not overlooked sources and to review words that could be used to construct such a list. Therefore, this study will make an important contribution to the field. This list which will serve as a foundation for scholars to examine how racially stigmatizing rhetoric evolves in presidential politics.
Prior to soliciting contacts with the scholars, I compiled two lists. Therefore, I developed a list of code words that would serve as a foundation for the content analysis study (Figure 1). I assumed that the words are considered socially stigmatizing and are relevant to the political dialogues related to social spending and race. To ensure that the list that I had proposed is a list that scholars in political science and other fields that discuss American racism such as history, sociology, and anthropology would consider as a representative sample of socially stigmatizing words and phrases, I developed a list that would be helpful to share with scholars and get their feedback. I developed a list of words that I assumed could potentially be helpful for this study and organized them establish Figure 1.
To ensure that I captured a significant number of stigmatizing words, I used [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com) to find the synonyms for each word. I listed all words that could be considered a either a positive or negative descriptions an individual, personal behavior, a racially or socially stigmatized group, or descriptors of locations that are associated divided the list in two and designated them as Primary Code Words and Secondary Code Words. I placed the words in the secondary category because I was not sure if the synonyms could be considered racially stigmatizing. The lists were sent to several scholars included in this dissertation. Additionally, an inquiry was sent to the listserv of the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>able-bodied</th>
<th>absent fathers</th>
<th>(welfare) benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bigotry</td>
<td>broken (homes/families)</td>
<td>community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>culture (of dependency)</td>
<td>(welfare) dependency</td>
<td>delinquency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>destruction</td>
<td>dignity</td>
<td>ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(low) expectations</td>
<td>family</td>
<td>food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food stamps</td>
<td>fraud</td>
<td>hard-working (American-taxpayers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low expectations</td>
<td>inner city (destruction/youth)</td>
<td>job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>job creators</td>
<td>job makers</td>
<td>needy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>out of wedlock</td>
<td>(personal) responsibility</td>
<td>(work) requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single mothers</td>
<td>single parents</td>
<td>Taxpayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>truly</td>
<td>unmarried mothers</td>
<td>welfare applicants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>welfare dependency</td>
<td>welfare mothers</td>
<td>welfare rolls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>welfare spending</td>
<td>work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
National Conference of Black Political Scientists to ask for feedback on the lists. The list of scholars who were contacted and provided feedback will be included in Appendix E.

After consultations with several scholars, I determined that it was not necessary to keep the lists divide in two parts. Therefore, I decided to combine these lists under the title: Public Identity Words and Phrases (Appendix D). The words are divided into four categories that reflects the Public Identity theory that racially stigmatizing word create an association between race and policy legitimacy and outcomes. As it pertains to this study, the words provide a structure to examine the dichotomy between the “us versus them, or the “forgotten White man” and the “forgotten Black man” frames.

- **Positive Moral Values:** These are coded words to appeal to White middle-class voters that suggest that the President is enforcing and rewarding individuals and communities that are viewed positively and take personal responsibility for their livelihood.

- **Negative Moral Values:** Coded words that are related to individual behavior and value of personal responsibility. These words evoke the politics of disgust.

- **Racially Stigmatizing Policy Failures:** These are code words that suggest that social spending has resulted in policy failures and unnecessary spending for Black, Latino, and generally racial communities at the expense of White middle and working class communities.

- **Poverty and Impoverished Communities:** These are words that are negatively associated with Black, Latino, and poor communities.

**Interventions: Type II Errors**

The study recognizes that words and phrases related to poverty and race change over time to meet the socially accepted standards of the day. For example, the terms Hispanic and Afro American were frequently used in the Reagan era. However, those terms rarely appeared during the Obama era because Latino/a and African American became the preferred ethic identity terms. Therefore, it is important to
know what words and phrases presidents used to discuss their policy positions and include them in the list of words and phrases in the search categories for the MAXQDA program. For example, George H. W. Bush’s inaugural address included the phrase: “There are those who cannot free themselves of enslavement to whatever addiction—drugs, welfare, the demoralization that rules the slums.” (Bush 1989). Clinton discussed welfare reform differently than Reagan so as to not seem as harsh. He used terms such as, “End welfare as we know it… We have to end welfare as a way of life and make it a path to independence and dignity” (Clinton, 1993; Reed, 2014). George W. Bush used the term “the soft bigotry of low expectations.” President Obama often engages in respectability politics and uses words to criticize the perceived bad behavior of low-income black families.

The ability to account for changes in racially stigmatizing words is important for this study. It is central to the understanding of how racial code words generally, and the Southern Strategy specifically, have remained an influential factor in presidential rhetoric since the 1960s. There is academic support for considering changes in socially acceptable racial terminology as an intervening treatment. Tali Mendelberg (2001) explains that the political elite have cultivated racial rhetoric that accommodates the social norms of racial equality while concurrently developing communication that may be implicitly rooted in racial rhetoric, yet easily deniable as racially derogatory. Further, this type of messaging serves to encourage voters to be more accepting of implicit racial code words because they allow Whites to hold on to their view that they are morally committed to racial equality. And believing that the problem of racial inequality is not due to structural racism but the inability of Blacks to conform to the moral standards of American society (Mendelberg 2001, 112). Also, the need to examine how racial code words impact the audiences of presidential speeches is significant because, as individuals, presidents in the post-Civil Rights era are particularly influential to how social policy and racial dialogue are expressed within American society.

There is an expectation that Americans, and I will also add that American presidents, use racially coded language to manage their word signals that indicate they do not use or embrace overtly racism, because of their principled values in racial equality, and they do not want to be perceived as a racist.
However, the majority of White Americans remain opposed to most or all policies that would make racial equality a viable goal because of the view that the inequality of racial minorities is due to their individual behavior (Bonilla-Silva, 2013, p. 361). Presidents use code words to signal that their policies will be fair and balance. And therefore, will not allow expenditures for social spending to negatively impact the economic status and political influence of White middle-class workers and their family. The presidents’ awareness of the widespread opposition to racial equality suggests that presidents apply the “Reagan Effect” to use the color-blind language of the era to appeal to contemporary White sensibilities who believe in the conservative views of government over the goals of liberal government action.

**Software and Data Analysis:**

MAXQDA Analytics Pro2018 is the software selected for this study. It is a program designed for computer-assisted qualitative and mixed methods data, text, and multimedia analysis in academic, scientific, and business institutions. It is designed for qualitative, quantitative research, and mixed methods research. This software will provide the framework to conduct an enumerative inquiry. The program will list words by the frequency that they appear in the speeches that are useful for the evaluation of my research question (Grbich 2013, p. 18)

I will use coding to determine the presence and frequency of racial word patterns and phrases that use terms associated with pathology and social problems to either justify spending reductions or increase safety net programs. For post-Reagan presidents, the presence of these patterns may suggest the sustained influence of the “Reagan Effect” by demonstrating the presence of racially coded language to develop the Public Identity Theory frame of the racial minorities, specifically African Americans and Latinos, encourage or mitigate racial resentment. More specifically, I will use the enumerative content analysis tools from the MAXQDA program to evaluate word frequency and Keyword-in-Context with the MaxDictio plug-in.
Document System and the Process of Analysis

The coding process will be organized in a three step-by-step process that are outlined in the online document MAXQDA 2018 Manual found at https://www.maxqda.com/help-max18/welcome. All speeches are placed in the “Document System.” This serves as the repository for the speeches that will be tested by the content analysis program. Each president has two folders. The first folder contains the “Common Speeches.” All of the speeches that are listed in this category are placed in this folder. The second folder is the “Social Policy Speeches” and contain folder with the remaining speeches that were collected for this study.

The MaxDictio has two functions that will examine the text in a manner that is helpful to review the influence of racially stigmatizing code words in presidential rhetoric. These functions are used to conduct two specific enumerative content analysis tools: word frequencies and keyword-in-context. The word frequency function provides a word count that provides a breakdown of the number of times that a word appears within a document or a set of documents. The keyword-in-context helps the researcher to identify how the word was used within the document (Gribich 2013, location 4490).

The analysis will begin with the placement of four sets of “go-lists” from the four lists that were developed to examine the dichotomy of the “forgotten White man” versus the “forgotten Black man.” The “go-list” is comprised list of four sets of words that were developed to detect the prevalence of words and phrases to examine code words under the category of “Positive Moral Values,” “Negative Moral Values,” “Racially Stigmatizing Policy Failure,” and “Poverty and Impoverished Communities.” The MaxDictio function allows the researcher to select either the Word Frequency or Keyword-in-Context function. In order to use either one of the functions, the speeches that will be examined are selected or “activated.” The appropriate “go list” is highlighted. Then the researcher selects the drop down menu for the “Word Frequencies (only words on the Go List).” A second box will come up and requires the researcher to select “Documents by Groups.” The program provides the results of the word frequencies by the category that can be exported into an Excel spreadsheet. The results table provides a ranking of the words in the study as well as the number of texts in which they appear.
The Keyword-in-Context searches for words from the “go-list” and provides a presentation of keywords with a definable number (from one to five) surrounding words is activate in a similar manner to the word frequency function. The MaxDictio function tab is used to activate the program that generates the Keyword-in-Context test. The speeches that will be examined are selected or “activated.” The appropriate “go list” is highlighted. Then the researcher selects the drop-down menu for the “Keyword-in-Context”. A second box will come up and requires the researcher to select “Search items in the “go list,” and check the boxes for “in documents,” “find whole words,” and “case sensitive.” Once activated, the program provides the results of the “Keyword-in-Context” that shows how the words in the “go list” category fit within the sentence that the words appear in the speech. The results of both set of tests will be discussed in Chapter Five.

**Conclusion**

The content analysis is designed as a case study to examine how the Southern Strategy has served as significant influence in presidential rhetoric related to the social safety net from Ronald Reagan through the Barack Obama administration. The research design will evaluate how Reagan and post-Reagan era presidents, regardless of party affiliation, framed their statements to explain their position on government social spending with racially stigmatizing language. Further, the content analysis will examine the prevalence of code words used by presidents to cultivate the belief in existence of the undeserving poor. These code words are used to conflate negative racial image of African Americans and other racial minorities with government spending for anti-poverty programs on the undeserving poor. The study will evaluate the results to determine if hypotheses should be confirmed or rejected. The results will be discussed in the upcoming chapter.
Chapter Five: Results

Introduction:

This chapter focuses on the results of the content analysis of the “Common Speeches” and “Social Policy” statements for Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama. “Common Speeches” are remarks that all presidents deliver and are limited to four categories: speeches announcing presidential campaigns and reelection campaigns; national party convention speeches to accept the party’s nomination for the presidency; inaugural addresses and addresses before the Joint Session of Congress of the United States, and the State of the Union speeches. “Social Policy Speeches” are remarks delivered before a broad level of constituencies at the White House and to groups at events, town hall meetings, and conventions to address specific domestic policy interests and concerns to these groups. Each president serves as one case study.

Part I focuses on the individual presidents. The first section of each case will display and discuss the Word Frequency Analysis results of the common and social policy speeches for each president. The second section will discuss the results of the Keyword-in-Context results for both the common and social policy statements for each president. Part II focuses on the combined word frequency analysis of the common and social policy statements of the presidents by party.

Case I: Ronald Reagan

Common Speeches

Table 1.1: Positive Moral Values Summary

The word frequency in this category found six out of 35 words associated with Positive Moral Values appeared in this analysis. The words that appeared in the results are associated with middle class values. These attributes or behaviors are associated with individual morality. One such moral is the expectation that parents delay child rearing until they are married. Middle class values are often viewed
by Whites as quintessentially American and individuals are expected to adhere to these social expectations (Hancock 2004, 43 and 54).

Additionally, Reagan often uses “truly needy” to make a distinction between those who he considers deserving of governmental assistance and those who are he considers to be underserving. “I hope I’ve made it plain that our approach has been evenhanded, that only the programs for the truly deserving needy remain untouched” (Joint Session of Congress 1981). My interpretation of Reagan’s use of the term “truly needy” is intended to signify individuals or families who have fallen into financial circumstances that not attributed to individual failings or stigmatized behavior. In additionally, Reagan may have used “needy” to appear sympathetic to the millions of Americans who were impacted during the long-term recession of his first term in office.

Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>needy</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>38.10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dignity</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28.57</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23.81</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family values</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-respect</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>value of work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2: Negative Moral Values Summary

The word frequency in this category found seven out of 49 words associated with Negative Moral Values appeared in this analysis. The high frequency of the word “unemployment” alone does not necessarily correlate with racially stigmatizing individuals and policies. It could also be associated with the Reagan era recession. The words include: “dependency,” “fraud,” “abuse,” and “immoral,” correlate to Reagan’s statements on welfare, crime, and drug dependency.
Table 1.2

**Negative Moral Values**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29.17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dependency</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fraud</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22.92</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abuse</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.42</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bigotry</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>immoral</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>addiction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1.3: Stigmatizing Policy Failures Summary**

The word frequency in this category found six out of 33 words associated with *Stigmatizing Policy Failures* that appeared in this analysis. The words appeared in the following order: welfare, discrimination, neglect, violence, food stamp, and mediocrity. “Welfare” appeared 25 times in this category. The words included, “neglect,” “violence,” “food stamps,” are words that are associated with race and poverty. The terms “discrimination” and “mediocrity” can be associated with Reagan’s policies related to racial equality such as affirmative action.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>welfare</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>59.52</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>40.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discrimination</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16.67</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neglect</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.52</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>violence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food stamp</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mediocrity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1.4: Poverty and Impoverished Communities Summary**

The word frequency in this category found 13 out of 47 words associated with *Poverty and*...
Impoverished Communities appeared in this analysis which suggests that Reagan’s domestic policy focus was on social spending and welfare reform. The word “poor” appeared 24 times and poverty appeared 21 times. This category yielded the largest set result out of all four groups of Reagan’s statements. While the frequency of “unemployment” occurred 65 times, it may reflect the Reagan era recession. The frequency of the large set of descriptive words that are associated with poverty and impoverished communities suggest that Reagan frequently discussed his policies related to poverty due to his focus on welfare reform.

Table 1.4
Poverty and Impoverished Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>unemployment</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>47.10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>81.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17.39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>59.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poverty</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15.22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>destruction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urban</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>violence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cocaine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ghetto</td>
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<td>inner city</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>4.55</td>
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<td>prison</td>
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<td>0.72</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>4.55</td>
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<td>working poor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ronald Reagan Common Speeches Summary

The words associated with Positive Moral Values indicate strong support for middle class values. There are high word frequencies for the words “needy,” “dignity,” and “moral” that indicate support for middle class values for a type of poverty that is acceptable because an individual’s circumstances are not of their own causing, such as poverty due to an economic recession. Consequently, their poverty is not their fault. Economic stagnation or downturn is responsible for their condition. Therefore, this group of
Americans are worthy of assistance. However, in the three remaining categories, Negative Moral Values, Stigmatizing Policy Failures, and Poverty and Impoverished Communities, indicate Reagan’s focus on social policies due to the high frequencies of the words “welfare,” dependency,” “fraud,” “poor,” and “poverty.” There are high frequencies for other words that suggest that they are included in statements related to racial discrimination.

Ronald Reagan: Social Policy Statements

Table 1.5: Positive Moral Values Summary

The word frequency in this category found 10 out of 34 words associated with positive moral values that appeared in this analysis. Several of the words in this category, such as “dignity,” “moral,” “self-respect,” and “work ethic,” signal to voters how morally centered individual should behave.

Table 1.5
Positive Moral Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
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</table>

Table 1.6: Negative Moral Values Summary

The word frequency in this category found 14 out of 49 words associated with negative moral values appeared in this analysis. The use of words that express stigmatizing values had a significantly higher use in the social policy speeches than in the common speeches. Word such as: “dependency,”
“drug abuse,” “welfare dependency,” and “out of wedlock” are associated with individuals who are not morally centered.

Table 1.6

Negative Moral Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
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<th>Documents %</th>
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<td>14</td>
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Table 1.7: Stigmatizing Policy Failures Summary

The word frequency in this category found 18 out of 33 words associated with Stigmatizing Policy Failures. The top word, “welfare,” appeared 219 times and demonstrates that welfare policy was a significant priority. The next three words, “discrimination,” “violence,” appeared at a significantly lower, if not at a minimal frequency than welfare and can be correlated with other racially stigmatizing policies such as affirmative action and crime. The remaining words and terms seem to articulate Reagan’s views that welfare recipients have a “dependency” and take advantage of the welfare system. The terms “born out-of-wedlock,” and “less in self-respect” are used to depict lazy individuals who are able-bodied but too irresponsible carry their own weight in society. They also do not take personal responsibility for maintaining their family by holding a stable job and be actively involved in their child’s upbringing (Kendi 2016, 485). Out-of-wedlock births are considered a root cause of many of society’s social
problems such: persistent poverty in low income communities; welfare use or dependency, drug usage, and crime (Hancock 2004, 83).

Table 1.7

<table>
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<th>Word</th>
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Table 1.8: Poverty and Impoverished Communities Summary

The word frequency in this category found 17 out of 47 words from the list of words associated with Poverty and Impoverished Communities. The appearance of “unemployment” may be largely related to the Reagan era recession. The database of speeches indicates that Reagan frequently issues statements related to race as well as to constituency groups within the civil rights community.
Table 1.8

Poverty and Impoverished Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
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<th>Documents %</th>
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Ronald Reagan Social Statements Summary

Reagan’s social policy speeches continue to show the words “dignity,” “needy,” and “moral” with high frequency patterns that appeared in the Common Speeches discussion. The categories Negative Moral Values, Stigmatizing Policy Failures, and Poverty and Impoverished Communities suggest that Reagan had a significant focus on using negative words to describe individual moral failings. Further, the results in these categories show a significant increase in these words when they are compared to the Common Speeches results. The results of the Poverty and Impoverished Communities table indicate Reagan’s remarks included discussions on topics related to racial and economic issues that are associated with racial minorities. The high frequencies may also be due to Reagan’s willingness to issue statements related to non-White communities and to address African American and Hispanic audiences and address issues that impact or are associated with these communities. Reagan also had high word frequencies with the terms “poverty,” “unemployment,” “poor,” and “urban.”
Ronald Reagan: Keyword-in-Context Analysis

Common Speeches

The results for the Positive Moral Values analysis was a contrast between Reagan’s vision of acceptable middle-class values of hard work and family cohesion versus the values of the undeserving poor. He made a clear distinction between the elderly, the “truly deserving,” and the “truly needy,” and the “greedy.” His remarks include claims that welfare programs “degrade the value of work” and “destroy self-respect.” In addition, the analysis shows that positive moral values were consistently contrasted with frames that associated safety net programs with greed, fraud, and harmful government policies. For example:

- “the safety net of the truly needy have worthy goals;” (State of the Union 1982)
- “are not taken by the truly needy but to the greedy;” (State of the Union 1983)
- “break up families, and destroy self-respect, are not progressive.” (State of the Union 1985)

The results of Negative Moral Values had words that were not clearly associated with individual moral failings, but rather the economic recession and a general argument for government overspending. However, the words “abuse,” “bigotry,” and “dependency” are laced in the context of Reagan’s description on how government policies for the poor are associated with: government spending, welfare dependency, the lack of personal dignity, and family destruction. This is a continuation of Reagan’s frame that the “underserving poor” are the also “immoral poor.” For example:

- “victims of this kind of abuse. The truly needy suffer;” (State of the Union 1983)
- “goals must be to reduce dependency and upgrade the dignity of;” (Inaugural Address 1985)
- “But policies that increase dependency, break up families, and destroy;” (State of the Union 1985)
- “can be freed from the dependency of welfare and made self...” (State of the Union 1987)

The results for the Stigmatizing Policy Failures analysis demonstrates how Reagan used rhetoric to frame an argument that he is the champion against the failed policies of the past. The word “discrimination” is used broadly to explain how he viewed the tax burden as a discriminatory policy that worked against savings. His primary focus remains on welfare policy. Food stamps are described as a “costly and irresponsible program.” The remarks also continue to argue that welfare traps individuals in
programs that makes it difficult to “escape poverty.” His use of the following statements insinuates that welfare use is both an addiction and a cultural problem:

- “food stamps. This will make welfare less costly and more responsive;” (State of the Union 1982)
- “jobs rather than dependency and welfare;” (State of the Union 1985)
- “freed from the dependency of welfare and made self-supporting;” (State of the Union 1987)
- “poverty harder to escape. Federal welfare programs have created a massive social problem” (State of the Union 1988)

The Poverty and Impoverished Communities results show that the word “unemployment” is used to discuss the recession. However, there are several statements that contain the words “poor” and “poverty.” Regan delineates between legitimate and illegitimate poverty programs. He also described the social safety net as an antiquated government initiative that perpetuates poverty and traps families into a life of despair and dependence. For example:

- “every measure, the position of poor Americans worsened under the leadership;” (Republican National Convention 1984)
- “the legitimate programs for the poor and the elderly;” (Message to the Congress Transmitting the Fiscal Year 1987)
- “work, economic independence for the poor, restoring respect for family life;” (State of the Union 1988)
- “to lift themselves out of poverty…the family. Dependency has become;” (State of the Union 1988)
- “dinosaur and finally break the poverty trap.” (State of the Union 1988)

**Ronald Reagan: Social Policy Statements**

The results of the Positive Moral Values continue to show that Reagan argues his social policy positions by constructing a dichotomy between the “truly needy” and the “underserving.” He also suggests that the government’s actions to support social safety net programs removes the dignity from individuals who use those services. For example:

- “dependency that robs them of dignity;” (Letters to the Nation’s Governors on Welfare Reform 1987)
- “how to provide incentives for dignity instead of incentives for dependency;” (Remarks at a White House Briefing for Supporters of Welfare Reform 1987)
Some well-meaning programs robbed recipients of their dignity, trapped them into a dependency that left them with idle time, less in self-respect, and little prospect of a better future.”
(Remarks at a White House Luncheon for Black Clergymen 1982)

The results for the Negative Moral Values analysis in the social policy statements are closely associated with individual moral failings because of poor parenting and irresponsible and unethical behavior. There are also statements that cultivate imagery that welfare dependency due to: parents lacking personal responsibility; recipients who defraud the government; and abuse and neglect of children. For example:

- “the percentage of babies born out of wedlock has more than tripled;”
  (Radio Address to the Nation on Welfare Reform 1987)
- “our welfare” system has itself become a poverty trap -- a creator and reinforcer of dependency”
  (Radio Address to the Nation on Welfare Reform 1987)
- “Out of wedlock children often suffer from abuse and neglect;”
- “or fraud or stop welfare abuse;”
  (Remarks at a White House Briefing for Supporters of Welfare Reform 1987)
- “problems of poverty and welfare dependency;”
  (Remarks at a White House Briefing for Supporters of Welfare Reform 1987)
- “desire to prevent waste or fraud or stop welfare abuse;”
  (Remarks at a White House Briefing for Supporters of Welfare Reform 1987)
- Mothers are children, fathers don't count, and the street is the strongest school.”
  (Remarks at a White House Briefing for Supporters of Welfare Reform 1987)

The analysis of the Stigmatizing Policy Failures shows how Reagan constructed the imagery of the “welfare queen” without using those specific words. For example:

- “collecting $300,000 in a welfare scheme;”
  (Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session on the Program for Economic Recovery at a White House Luncheon for Congressional Women 1981)
- “You have five children on welfare;”
  (Remarks and Panel Discussion with Community Leaders on Welfare Reform 1987)
- “he got on welfare four times under four different names;”
  (Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session on the Program for Economic Recovery at a Breakfast for Newspaper and Television News Editor 1981)
- “because we don't just want handouts, but we want to help these people help themselves,”
  (Remarks and a Panel Discussion with Community Leaders on Welfare Reform 1987)
- “they become chronically dependent on welfare.”
  (Radio Address to the Nation on Welfare Reform 1987)
- “encourage them to stay on the welfare rolls longer, and discourage work.”
  (Radio Address to the Nation on Welfare Reform 1987)
The results of the *Poverty and Impoverished Communities* analysis demonstrates how Reagan used to express his belief to express his belief that the War on Poverty and social safety net programs fail both taxpayers and low-income individuals. For example:

- “The system itself has become a poverty trap – a creator and enforcer of dependency;” (Radio Address to the Nation on Welfare Reform 1987)
- “creating a permanent culture of poverty as inescapable as any chain;” (Radio Address to the Nation on Welfare Reform 1986)
- “I guess you can say poverty won the war;” (Radio Address to the Nation on Welfare Reform 1986)
- “but counterproductive – the institutionalization of ghetto life.” (Remarks at a White House Briefing for Supporters of Welfare Reform 1987)

The analysis of this category also shows the differences in his speeches between Black and Hispanic audiences. I also included the words “African American,” “Black,” “Hispanic,” “Latino” in the word search to ensure that all speeches related to these communities were captured for the study. The results of the study found that it appears that Reagan discussed social policy in a more negative way when he addresses African American audiences than he addressed Hispanic audiences. Hispanic audiences were often praised for their culture, family values, and positive contributions to the nation.

- “We have many fine Americans of Hispanic descent, like Cathy, who are playing major roles in this administration. The number stands at 125 right now. And don't let anyone tell you these people are being brought on board because of their ethnic background. They are hard-working, competent people, first and foremost professionals. And that's why they're in those positions, because they were the best available for the job. So, we may like to point out that Hispanics are playing a significant role...” (Remarks at a White House Luncheon for Hispanic Leaders 1983)
- “I want to congratulate all of you for your personal standards and for what you've already accomplished.” (Remarks at a Ceremony Honoring Hispanic Excellence in Education 1984)

The statements for Black organizations had a different tone. While Reagan discussed the progress of the civil rights movement with general platitudes, he conflated anti-poverty programs with slavery:

- “And perhaps unintentionally, many government programs have been designed not to create social mobility and help the needy along their way, but instead to foster a state of dependency. Whatever their intentions, no matter their compassion, our opponents created a new kind of bondage for millions of American citizens.” (Remarks at a National Black Republican Council Dinner 1982)
In addition, his remarks to Black organizations on social policy do not discuss the positive contributions that the community has made to the nation, but did focus on the problems of poverty. It is my view that this reinforces the belief that African American communities are viewed as only problems instead of positive contributors to the country.

- “trapped them into a dependency that left them with idle time, less in self-respect, and little prospect of a better future,” (Remarks at a National Black Republican Council Dinner 1982)
- “tackle the problem of urban decay and failed;” and, (Remarks at a National Black Republican Council Dinner 1982)

**Ronald Reagan: Conclusion**

The *Keyword-in-Context* shows how Reagan applied coded language to construct strong associations of race and poverty with welfare. More specifically, Reagan used negative images of individuals who either take advantage of government programs or used such programs, and as a result, were harmed by them. The coded language that he uses to signal to voters that he is sympathetic to racial conservatives are evident in the use of the word “ghetto” and descriptions of immoral values such as “out-of-wedlock” births.

The term “ghetto” is a long standing descriptor for where low-income, non-White people live. The term connotes an association with what middle class individuals may consider to be unethical or pathological behaviors such as a person who begs for money instead of holding a job, a “welfare queen,” a “ghetto gang member,” or a “drug addict” who lives on the street (Gilens 2009, p. 67). The word “ghetto” is also a coded word that signals to Whites that Blacks who live in “ghettos” are morally and socially inferior. The result is that Reagan has constructed an “us versus them” dichotomy based on taking a stand to protect the middle class from fraud and abuse or misguided spending provided to communities that do not deserve taxpayer support (Kendi 2016, 412).
Case II: George H. W. Bush

Common Speeches

Table 2.1: Positive Moral Values Summary

The word frequency in this category found six out of 35 words associated with Positive Moral Values. These words, such as “family values,” “personal responsibility,” and “work hard” signal to voters Bush’s view about how morally centered individuals should behave.

Table 2.1
Positive Moral Values

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<th>Word</th>
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<td>family values</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal responsibility</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work hard</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2: Negative Moral Values Summary

The word frequency in this category found seven out of 49 words associated with Negative Moral Values. These words are descriptors for race, drug abuse, and social decay and will likely describe Bush’s policies on crime control and welfare reform.

Table 2.2
Negative Moral Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bigotry</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55.56</td>
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<tr>
<td>Addiction</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drug dealer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dependency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>out of wedlock</td>
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<td>6.67</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.3: Stigmatizing Policy Failures Summary

The word frequency in this category found eight out of 33 words associated with Stigmatizing Policy Failures. These words describe the social conditions that impact urban areas with non-White populations.

Table 2.3
Stigmatizing Policy Failures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>3</td>
<td>33.33</td>
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<td>neglect</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.64</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>violence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.64</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>racism</td>
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<td>9.09</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>22.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>able-bodied</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>government assistance</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>mediocrity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4: Poverty and Impoverished Communities Summary

The word frequency in this category found 13 out of 47 words associated with poverty and impoverished policy failures.
Table 2.4

**Poverty and Impoverished Communities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>cocaine</td>
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<td>12.82</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.82</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urban</td>
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<td>10.26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
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<td>poverty</td>
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<td>violence</td>
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<td>7.69</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15.38</td>
</tr>
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<td>5.13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2.56</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crime control</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>destruction</td>
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<td>2.56</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>7.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>inner city</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jail</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slums</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**George H. W. Bush Common Speeches Summary**

Bush’s focus on the word “moral” is significantly higher than the remaining words that appeared in the word frequency test in the *Positive Moral Values* category. The use of that specific word may be attributed to the influence of the Religious Right during the Bush Administration. The Religious Right is a coalition of political activists that are associated with the Christian Conservative Movement (Jones 2016, 77). The influence of this movement began in the 1960s during Barry Goldwater’s 1964 presidential campaign and achieved national influence during the Reagan Administration. The movement is known for its grass roots activism; increased electoral opposition to abortion and homosexuality; and, increased support for school prayer (Kabaservice 2012, 392).

The remaining categories: *Negative Moral Values, Stigmatizing Policy Failures, and Poverty and Impoverished Communities*, suggest that social spending and race were prioritized in Bush’s remarks. While Reagan’s words were more focused on welfare, Bush’s word frequency patterns suggest that his
rhetoric focused on crime, racial discrimination, and affirmative action. Several words are used to also suggest that drug and crime control policies were significant components of Common Speeches.

George H. W. Bush: Social Policy Statements

Table 2.5: Positive Moral Values Summary

The word frequency in this category found 10 out of 35 words associated with *Positive Moral Values*. The terms “personal responsibility” and “dignity of work” suggest that they are related to the welfare reform debate. However, the remaining words in the word frequency analysis does not show a clear use of racial code words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>7.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>needy</td>
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<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.6: Negative Moral Values Summary

The word frequency in this category found 16 out of 33 words associated with *Negative Moral Values*. The words with the highest are descriptors for high profile, racialized political issues of the time affirmative such as drug crimes abuse and welfare reform. Other words in this category that connote negative moral failing include: “addiction,” “dependency,” “drug abuse,” and “out of wedlock.”
Table 2.6

Negative Moral Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>13</td>
<td>12.75</td>
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<tr>
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<td>12.93</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>12.07</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dependency</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.34</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illegal</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.34</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>7.76</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
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<td>gang</td>
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<td>7.76</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.86</td>
</tr>
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<td>4.31</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>delinquency</td>
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<td>3.45</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drug dealer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.92</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hopelessness</td>
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<td>2.59</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hopeless</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illegal drug</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>welfare dependent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.7: Stigmatizing Policy Failures Summary

The word frequency in this category found 13 out of 49 words associated with Negative Moral Values. These words have a clear association with social spending policies and politics such food stamps, welfare benefits, violence and neglect. The words with controversial racial associations include “affirmative action,” “mediocrity,” and “quota.”
### Table 2.7

**Stigmatizing Policy Failures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>22</td>
<td>21.57</td>
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<tr>
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<td>19.61</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>22.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discrimination</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food stamp</td>
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<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
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<td>neglect</td>
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<td>2.94</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>racism</td>
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<td>2.45</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.47</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.98</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>able-bodied</td>
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<td>0.49</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mediocrity</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.98</td>
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<tr>
<td>quota</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2.8: Poverty and Impoverished Communities Summary

The word frequency in this category found 16 out of 47 words associated with *Poverty and Impoverished Communities*. The top words, Hispanic and Black appeared 117 and 85 times respectively. Additional words include: “urban,” “violence,” “poverty,” “prison,” and “poor.” The database of speeches indicate that Bush addressed a high number of Black and Hispanic interest groups. He also issued a large number of statements related to urban policy, crime control, and welfare reform.
Table 2.8.  
*Poverty and Impoverished Communities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>11</td>
<td>10.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>19.68</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urban</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9.26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>violence</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9.26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prison</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>unemployment</td>
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<td>6.02</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>11.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5.79</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poverty</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3.24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3.01</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jail</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>destruction</td>
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<td>0.93</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**George H. W. Bush Social Policy Statements Summary**

The words found in the *Positive Moral Values* equates social spending with religious conservatism. The words “moral,” “dignity,” “family values,” and “personal responsibility” can be applied to policies related to welfare reform and to the abortion debate. The word frequency results for *Negative Moral Values* and *Stigmatizing Policy Failures* indicate a significant focus on social policy related to crime control policies that evolved from the prevalence of crack and cocaine as a national political issue in the 1980s and 1990s. “Welfare” appears three times more than the next closest word “violence.” There are also words that reinforce racially stigmatizing frames of inner-city poverty by the use of the words “fraud,” “dependency,” “gangs,” “crime,” and “drugs.” The results of the *Poverty and Impoverished Communities* indicates that Bush frequently uses racially stigmatizing words when he addressed the issues of crime and poverty in low-income, non-White communities. The words “Hispanic” and “Black” have very high frequencies. The frequency may be due to the efforts of the
Republican Party to address the political concerns of Hispanic voters so that they can build electoral support within this community. The word “Black” may have a large frequency due to the high profile of the Civil Rights Act of 1991 legislation.

**George H. W. Bush: Keyword-in-Context Analysis**

**Common Speeches**

The results for the *Positive Moral Values* analysis demonstrate that Bush’s moral vision is based on conservative, middle-class values. He argues for the restoration of America’s moral values. For example:

- “they need to live in dignity, where our schools challenge; (State of the Union 1990)
- “family and faith represent the moral compass of the nation;” (Address Before a Joint Session of Congress 1989)
- “through the door to the moral and intellectual satisfactions;” (Inaugural Address 1989)
- “I believe in personal responsibility. I believe in opportunity for.” (Bush/Quayle Reelection Announcement 1992)

In contrast to the *Positive Moral Values* examination, the results of *Negative Moral Values* are associated with race. The words in this category allude to policy interests that dominated his administration such as civil rights, affirmative action, and crime control policies. For example:

- “the tired old baggage of bigotry behind us;” (George Bush Announcement Speech 1987)
- “make sure that when a drug dealer is convicted there’s a.” (Address Before a Joint Session of Congress 1989)

However, Bush’s statements reflect that he held the same ideology that equated welfare recipients with personal failings.

- “lock people in bleak dependency as we work to reform;” (Bush/Quayle Reelection Announcement 1992)
- “with a new assumption that when able-bodied people receive government assistance, they have responsibilities to the;” (State of the Union Address 1992)
- “and reframe from having children out-of-wedlock, and the responsibility to obey.” (State of the Union Address 1992)

The results for the *Stigmatizing Policy Failures* analysis continues to show Bush’s focus on welfare reform and crime control policies. Additionally, welfare abuse is connected drug abuse. For example:
• “because of the mother’s addiction;” (Address Before a Joint Session of Congress 1989)
• “themselves of enslavement of whatever addiction – drugs, welfare, the demoralization that;”
  (Inaugural Address 1989)
• “work to reform our dismal welfare program, proposed more effective job;”
  (Bush/Quayle Reelection Announcement 1992)
• “enslavement to whatever addiction – drugs, welfare, the demoralization of rules.”
  (Inaugural Address 1989)

The results of the Poverty and Impoverished Communities again shows Bush’s focus on welfare and crime control. While it shows that Bush uses words to describe impoverished communities with stigmatizing images that portray them as bleak, hopeless, crime ridden spaces. For example:

• “crimes of extraordinary cruelty and violence;”
  (Republican National Convention 1988)
• “and they should go to jail. We face a massive task;”
  (Address before a Joint Session of Congress 1989)
• “the demoralization that rules the slums. There is crime to be;” (Inaugural Address 1989)
• “we must empower the poor with the pride that comes with;” (State of the Union 1992)
• “to curb the supply of cocaine, get tough on the pushers;”
  (Address before a Joint Session of Congress 1989)
  “I’ve seen the urban children who play amidst;” (Bush/Quayle Reelection Announcement 1992)
• “to the most vulnerable – infants, poor mothers, children living in poverty;”
  (Address Before a Joint Session of Congress 1989)

George H. W. Bush: Social Policy Statements

The results of the Positive Moral Values show that Bush’s perspective for positive moral values are intrinsically tied to an individual’s behavior. His statements suggest that persons living in poverty are responsible for their station in life. And therefore, responsible for lifting themselves out of welfare so that they can be moral individuals with self-respect. Examples include:

• “Recognizes the importance of personal responsibility, self-respect, independence;
  (Radio Address to the Nation on Welfare Reform 1992)
• “based on bedrock American values, personal responsibility, work, and family;”
  (Statement on Urban Aid Initiatives 1992)
• “the importance of personal responsibility, self-respect, independence, and self-sufficiency;”
• “of welfare that will encourage self-respect; build strength of character.”
  (Radio Address to the Nation on Welfare Reform 1992)

The results of the Negative Moral Values analysis provide example of how Bush uses images of
welfare, drug abuse, and violence as the moral failures that characterize people who live in low-income communities. For example:

- “increase in self-esteem in at-risk communities;”
  (Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion with the Weed and Seed Revitalization Committee and Community Leaders in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 1992)
- “break the cycle of dependency before dignity is destroyed;”
  (Statement on Urban Aid Initiatives 1992)
- “lock in a lifestyle of dependency and subtly destroy self-esteem;”
  (Radio Address to the Nation on Welfare Reform 1992)
- “was gunned down by a gang of crackheads;”
  (Remarks to the Law Enforcement Community in New Orleans 1992)
- Welfare parents who behave responsibly and fulfill these requirements would receive higher payments than those who fail to see to the health care and education of their children.”
  (Statement on Maryland Welfare Reform 1992)

The results of the *Stigmatizing Policy Failures* show Bush’s focus on policies related to affirmative action, crime and welfare policies. He addresses law enforcement and African American organizations with similar racially stigmatizing images. Examples of statements to law enforcement audiences:

- “people who provide freedom from violence and freedom from drugs and freedom from fear;”
  (Remarks at the Dedication Ceremony for the Drug Enforcement Administration’s New York Field Division Office in New York City 1992)
- A retired New York police lieutenant, Matt Byrne, gave me that badge some time ago. It’s his son’s badge, Eddie Byrne, who wore the badge the day he was gunned down by a gang of crackheads. (Remarks to the Law Enforcement Community in New Orleans 1992).

I believe that these statements are significant because they reinforce the view African Americas are more prone to crime and violence than other populations. This is of particular concern because of the challenges that African Americans have in the higher use of force, sometimes leading to death, in comparison to Whites when there are encounters with the police (Butler 2017, 52-53, 55).

Examples of statements to African American audience:

- “Urban America offers a bleak picture: an inner city in crisis. And there is too much crime, too much crack, too many dropouts, too much despair, too little economic opportunity, too little advancement, and -- the bottom line -- too little hope.”
  (Remarks at the National Urban League Conference 1989)
- “Because of crack, crime, violence, they’re the unholy trinity.”
  (Remarks at the National Urban League Conference 1989)
- Opportunity must replace despair. For opportunity means education, equipping kids with the tools they need to compete in a new century. It means freedom from drugs.
  (Remarks on the Observance of National Afro-American (Black) History Month 1991)
Bush also discusses welfare as a dependency in a way that is similar to how drug dependency and addiction is described.

- “Get off the dependency of welfare;”
  (Exchange with Reporters Prior to a Meeting on Welfare Reform 1992)
- “a necessary step to ending welfare being a way of life;”
  (Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting Proposed Legislation on Welfare Reform 1992)
- “The Wisconsin plan replaces some of the old assumptions of the welfare state and recognizes the importance of personal responsibility, self-respect, independence, and self-sufficiency.”
  (Radio Address to the Nation on Welfare Reform 1992).

The results of the Poverty and Impoverished Communities show how Bush addresses Hispanic organizations in a more positive, and at times sympathetic, manner than African American organizations that are described in the Stigmatizing Policy Failures discussion. The analysis of the results indicate that Bush addressed Hispanic organizations consistently receive strong praise for their family life and entrepreneurial spirit. There was one statement that discussed high school dropouts. For example:

- “And to this rich identity, Hispanic Americans contribute the bright culture and vital traditions, making this nation a stronger nation and a better nation.
  (Remarks on Signing the National Hispanic Heritage Month Proclamation and the Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans Executive Order 1990)
- “The Hispanic dedication to the dignity of life and to faith and to family and to freedom is an inspiration.”
  (Remarks on Signing the National Hispanic Heritage Month Proclamation and the Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans Executive Order 1990)
- “sadly, almost 11 percent of Hispanic students drop out of high school;”
  (Remarks to Hispanic and Corporate Leaders on Education 1989)
- “make sure at-risk Hispanic children start school ready.”
  (Remarks on Signing the National Hispanic Heritage Month Proclamation and the Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans Executive Order 1990)

George H. W. Bush: Conclusion

The Common Speeches analysis does shows that Bush used racially stigmatizing frames to describe and justify his positions for reducing the budget for the social safety as well as to increase spending for anti-crime and anti-drug policies. In comparison to the word frequency analysis, the Common Speeches results show that his remarks about African Americans and low-income communities
are racially stigmatizing. The coded language that he uses to signal to voters that he is tough on crime and will address immoral values includes terms such as “out-of-wedlock” births. As a result, Bush has constructed a vision that taking a stand to protect the values of middle-class by providing support for legislation that changes the behavior of individual who are involved in drugs, crime and abuse welfare.

It appears that Bush’s constant reinforcement of his belief that racial discrimination is an individual problem that can be improved by making an attitude adjustment. This would suggest that government remedies are not necessary. Therefore, he made an argument for a colorblind, smaller government. And, his interpretation minimized the impact of systemic racism as a component of the economic inequality that has negatively impacted the social and political development of Blacks and other people of color since the end of the Civil War.

Case III: Bill Clinton

Common Speeches

Table 3.1: Positive Moral Values Summary

The word frequency in this category found 12 out of 35 words associated with Positive Moral Values in this analysis. The results show that Clinton emphasizes middle-class values of individual morality. The analysis also demonstrates Clinton’s use of word to positively advocate for welfare reform.
Table 3.1
*Positive Moral Values*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
</tr>
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<td>personal responsibility</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>29.63</td>
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<tr>
<td>welfare to work</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25.93</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25.93</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3.70</td>
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<td>1.43</td>
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<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Negative Moral Values Summary

The word frequency in this category found seven out of 49 words associated with *Negative Moral Values* appeared in this analysis. The words suggest that they are descriptors for crime control, welfare or immigration.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>teen pregnancy</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>three strikes</td>
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<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gang</td>
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<td>3.39</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bigotry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.3: Stigmatizing Policy Failures Summary

The word frequency in this category found 12 out of 34 words associated with Stigmatizing Policy Failures appeared in this analysis. The results include “welfare,” “welfare benefits,” and “food stamp.” These are words that indicate that Clinton’s remarks are focused on welfare reform.

Table 3.3
Stigmatizing Policy Failures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents</th>
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<td>7</td>
<td>25.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>discrimination</td>
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<td>4.96</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>25.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food stamp</td>
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<td>3.90</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>11.11</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>7.41</td>
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<td>1.06</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.70</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.71</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neglect</td>
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<td>0.71</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.35</td>
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<td>3.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>trapped on welfare</td>
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<td>0.35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4: Poverty and Impoverished Communities Summary

The word frequency in this category found 13 out of 47 words associated with Poverty and Impoverished Communities in this analysis.
Table 3.4

Poverty and Impoverished Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
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</thead>
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<td>29</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>poverty</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>prison</td>
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<td>0.81</td>
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<td>0.81</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.70</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Clinton Common Remarks Summary

The word frequency result for Positive Moral Values for Bill Clinton mirror the results for George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush. The term “family values” had the highest result. Additional words show a high frequency of use are “dignity,” “moral,” “personal responsibility,” “welfare to work” and “hard work.” The results for Negative Moral Values show a low use. However, “teen pregnancy” does appear that they are related to welfare reform. The results for Stigmatizing Policy Failures reflect Clinton’s prioritized the successful passage of “The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996” and “The Violent Crime Control Act of 1996.” “Welfare” has the highest word frequency result with 220 appearances. The next closest result, “violence,” has 21 appearances. The majority of the remaining words have racially stigmatizing associations to poverty such as “food stamp,” “welfare benefits,” and “able-bodied.” The top word frequency results for Poverty and Impoverished Communities are not words that indicate race. “Poor,” “poverty,” “violence,” and “unemployment” are descriptions for economic problems in low income, and most often, non-White communities.
Bill Clinton: Social Policy Statements

Table 3.5: Positive Moral Values Summary

The word frequency in this category found 16 out of 35 words associated with Positive Moral Values in this analysis. The words and phrases “work hard,” personal responsibility,” “hand up,” and “pay the bills” are considered middle-class descriptors for individuals with strong work ethics. And therefore, positive associations for welfare reform.

Table 3.5
Positive Moral Values

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Word</th>
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<th>%</th>
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<th>Documents %</th>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.54</td>
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<td>1.52</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>0.51</td>
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</table>

Table 3.6: Negative Moral Values Summary

The word frequency in this category found 23 out of 35 words associated with Negative Moral Values appeared in this analysis. These words are associated with welfare reform, crime control, and family breakdown such as “teen pregnancy, “dependency,” gang,” and, “welfare dependency.”

Table 3.6
Table 3.7: Social Stigmatizing Policy Failures Summary

The word frequency in this category found 16 out of 39 word associated with 

*Stigmatizing Policy Failures.* These words are associated with welfare, racial equity policies, and violence. The results demonstrate Clinton’s emphasis as an advocate for reforming failed and unpopular social policies that were developed during past administrations by the high frequency of words such as “welfare,” “violence,” “affirmative action,” “food stamp,” and “able-bodied.”

Table 3.7


**Stigmatizing Policy Failures**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
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<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
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</table>

**Table 3.8: Poverty and Impoverished Communities**

The word frequency in this category found 20 out of 47 words associated with *Poverty and Impoverished Communities* in this analysis. The words are largely focused on violence and conditions related to poverty. The database indicated that the words “Black,” “Hispanic,” and “Latino” appear at a high frequency due to Clinton’s emphasis on addressing urban and social policies with Black and Latino advocacy organizations.
Table 3.8

Poverty and Impoverished Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<th>Documents %</th>
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<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bill Clinton Social Policy Statements Summary

The word frequency results for the Positive Moral Values are predominately with positive arguments for welfare reform. Those words include: “welfare to work,” “hard work,” “dignity,” “personal responsibility,” “hand up” (as opposed to “hand out). Conversely, the word frequency results for Negative Moral Values and Stigmatizing Policy Failures are words that are highly associated with welfare, crime, and inner-city poverty. The results show a high usage of words that indicate the passage of welfare reform legislation was a top priority for the Clinton Administration. The Poverty and Impoverished Communities results demonstrate that Clinton had a high degree of focus on low-income and non-White communities with several words to describe poverty, crime, and welfare. There is a high
frequency of words such as Black and Hispanic. This may be due to Clinton’s willingness to address race as well as his high participation at events focused on Black and Hispanic social and political issues.

**Keyword-in-Context Analysis: Bill Clinton**

**Common Speeches**

The results of the Positive Moral Values analysis show that Clinton discusses welfare and crime reform policies as a means of restoring moral standards. He articulates a middle class view of the importance of responsible, personal behavior. For example:

- “if you are willing to work hard and play by the rules;”  
  (Remarks at the Democratic National Convention 1996)
- “our fellow citizens from welfare to work; partnership to battle drug abuse;”  
  (State of the Union 2000)
- “a land where, if you work hard you can get ahead;”  
  (State of the Union 1995)
- “responsibility must first promote the value of work, not welfare;”  
  (State of the Union 1996)
- “we are moving welfare to work. We have increased child support;”  
  (Remarks at the Democratic National Convention 1996)
- “we must assume personal responsibility, not only for ourselves.”  
  (Remarks at the Democratic National Convention 1992)

The results of the Negative Moral Values analysis show that Clinton’s remarks use phrases to reinforce his commitment to standing for strong moral values that punish immoral behavior. He has a particular focus on the assumption that welfare mothers have multiple children out of wedlock for the sake of increase their welfare benefits. For example:

- “to reduce out-of-wedlock teen pregnancy;”  
  (Remarks at the Democratic National Convention 1996)
- “if you have a child out of wedlock, we will no longer give;”  
  (State of the Union 2000)
- “they are born out of wedlock, we will no longer give;”  
  (State of the Union 1994)
- “they’re born out of wedlock; every child deserves a chance.”  
  (Press Conference to Announce Reelection 1996)
- “to fight poverty and drug abuse and help people get back;”  
  (State of the Union 2000)

The results of the Stigmatizing Policy Failures analysis demonstrate how Clinton argues that the policies of the past should be changed for a more “responsible” America. For example:

- “get off and stay off drugs. Our administration’s budget;”  
  (State of the Union 1994)
- “people to work and bring dignity and strength back to these;”
The results for the Poverty and Impoverished Communities analysis shows that Clinton speaks of Low income communities with sympathy and support, but also with negative characterizations that are used to garner support for his policies. Examples of sympathy and support include:

- “best people are falling into poverty, even though they work 40;”
  (Remarks at the Democratic National Convention 1992)
- “that lifts up the poor and ends their isolation;”
  (Remarks at the Democratic National Convention 1996)
- “enterprise to inner city and poor rural areas with community development;”
  (State of the Union 1998)
- “economy has helped to revive poor urban and rural areas.” (State of the Union 1997)

Examples of negative characterizations of failed social development programs and how Clinton will correct social problems include:

- “a full-scale assault on juvenile crime, with legislation that declares war;”
  (State of the Union 1997)
- “millions of working families out of poverty, rewarding work over welfare;”
  (State of the Union 1994)
- “work together to stop the violence that explodes in our emergency rooms;”
  (State of the Union 1994)
- “from drugs and gangs and violence, four years from now.”
  (Remarks at the Democratic National Convention 1996).

Bill Clinton: Social Policy Statements

The results of the Positive Moral Values analysis suggest that Clinton uses positive words that symbolize morality to advocate for reforming the social safety net. For example:

- “will give back the dignity that comes from work;”
- “parents assume the responsibility of a real job;”
- “moves from dependence to the dignity of work”
  (Remarks to the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute 1999)
• “working hard needs to be a hand up;”
  (Remarks in an Outreach Meeting on the President's Initiative on Race 1998)
• “the importance of restoring the value of work to our social programs;”
  (Town Hall Meeting in Chillicothe, OH 1993)
• “all about hard work and personal responsibility, and family values;”
  (Remarks to the National Association of Hispanic Publications 1996)
• “by moving people from welfare to work, demanding responsibility, and doing better.”
  (Press Conference on Welfare Reform 1996)

The results of the Negative Moral Values analysis demonstrate how Clinton uses words to reinforce negative, racially stigmatizing images of crime, drug, and welfare abuse in minority and poor communities. For example:

• “trouble with violence and the breakdown of family and community, and the absence;”
  (Remarks to the NAACP 1994)
• “trapping generation and generation in dependency, and hurting the very people;”
  (Press Conference on Welfare Reform 1996)
• “the Crips, to every criminal gang preying on the innocent;”
  (White House Ceremony to Introduce 1996 Crime Control Legislation 1996)
• “welfare reform should discourage teen pregnancy and promote responsible parenting;”
• “conditions that lead to welfare dependency, such as teen pregnancy.”
  (Letter to Congress on Welfare Reform 1995)

The results of the Stigmatizing Policy Failures provide examples of how Clinton describes his agenda to correct unsuccessful policies of the past. In addition, even though all of the social policy speeches in this analysis were tested, the MaxQDA program only focused on the word “welfare.” Examples include:

• “country to replace the broken welfare system with one that expands;”
  (Press Conference on Welfare Reform 1997)
• “mistakes of their parents. Finally, welfare reform must be about responsibility.”
  (Letter to the Senate Leader on Welfare Reform 1995)

The examples of Clinton’s statements to describe his legislative successes include:

• “the smallest percentage of welfare in 29 years;”
  (Meeting with Baltimore with Maryland Democratic Leadership 1998)
• “we moved more people from welfare than any other;”
  (Press Conference on Welfare Reform 1997)
• “the biggest drop in the welfare rolls in history.” (Press Conference on Welfare Reform 1997)
a significantly high number of statements to and about issues of concern to African American and
Hispanic organizations. His remarks to these interest groups include an extensive discussion of poverty,
crime, and welfare reform. Some statements are socially and racially stigmatizing. While others relay
empathy and understanding for the economic and racial challenges that these communities face.

Examples of statements that demonstrate empathy to these communities include.

- “It’s important to remember that not so very long ago, at the beginning of this very Congress, some
  wanted to put poor children in orphanages and take away all help for mothers simply because they
  were poor, young, and unmarried.”
  (Press Conference on Welfare Reform 1996)
- “tired of people telling me poor minority kids live in;”
  (Remarks in a Race Initiative Outreach Meeting with Conservatives 1997)
- “I don’t want any Hispanic child to feel;”
  (Remarks to National Council of La Raza 1995)
- “can be especially difficult for Hispanic women who lack language.” (Congressional Hispanic
  Caucus Institute 1998)

Examples of socially and racially stigmatizing remarks include:

- “a culture of dependency and poverty to move to a culture;”
  (Meeting with House Democrats to Discuss Welfare Reform 1997)
- “children and alleviating the abject poverty that is holding them down;”
  (Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Hispanic Leadership Forum Dinner 1999)
- “scourge of juvenile crime and violence is my top law enforcement;”
  (Statement on the Crime Bill 1997)
- “My anti-gang and youth violence strategy declares war on juvenile crime and gangs,”
  (Statement on the Crime Bill 1997)

**Bill Clinton: Conclusion**

The results of the *Keyword-in-Context* analysis demonstrates that Clinton’s statements for both
Common Speeches and social policy statements contain racially stigmatizing words that construct
negative images of impoverished communities and the people who live in them. He makes statements
that suggest that his welfare reform policies will change the behavior of the underserving. Clinton argues
that the welfare system has created intergenerational dependence. Out of wedlock motherhood and teen
pregnancy are portrayed as problems that can be corrected with welfare reform policies. Additionally,
Clinton connects the problems of family breakdown and poverty when he makes assertions that there is a
lack of personal responsibility of the parents. Clinton’s use of racially stigmatizing words to connect crime, violence, and welfare dependency characterized social problems in the same manner that Republican presidents frame social spending programs.

Case IV: George W. Bush

Common Speeches

Table 4.1: Positive Moral Values Summary

The word frequency in this category found six out of 35 words associated with Positive Moral Values appeared in this analysis. These words are generally associated with middle class values. However, the term “welfare to work” is specifically used to support welfare reform policies.

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<th>Word</th>
<th>Word length</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
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<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.69</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Negative Moral Values Summary

The word frequency in this category found 11 out of 49 words associated with Negative Moral Values in this analysis. The words such as “addiction,” “bigotry,” “hopeless” and “illegal” are closely associated with both individual moral failings as well as race and poverty.
Table 4.2
Negative Moral Values

<table>
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<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>7.69</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Stigmatizing Policy Failures Summary

The word frequency in this category found three out of 33 words associated with Stigmatizing Policy Failures in this analysis. It is the smallest results section out of all Republican presidents in this study. “Violence” appeared 17 times in this category. Due to the high frequency of the word “violence” in the Common Statements category, it is expected that the term violence is associated with Bush’s foreign policy. More specifically, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan instead of inner-city gun violence. Bush addresses the wars in all speeches in this category after September 1, 2001.

Table 4.3
Stigmatizing Policy Failures

<table>
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<th>Documents %</th>
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<td>6.45</td>
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<td>7.69</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.4: Poverty and Impoverished Communities Summary

The word frequency in this category found 10 out of 47 words associated with Poverty and Impoverished Communities in this analysis. The frequency of large set of descriptive words that are associated with poverty and impoverished communities suggest that Bush frequently discussed his policies related to poverty. In addition, the high frequency of “destruction” and “violence” in the common words may be associated with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Word length</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
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<td>20.24</td>
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<td>prison</td>
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<td>14.29</td>
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<td>61.54</td>
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</tr>
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<td>23.08</td>
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<td>15.38</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

George W. Bush Common Speeches Summary

The words with the highest frequency results from the Positive Moral Values analysis, “dignity” and “moral,” are not necessarily associated with race, poverty, or other areas related to domestic policy. Those words can be linked to Bush’s advocacy for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Bush used this category of speeches to make his case for military action to fight the terrorism. The words that are more clearly associated with middle class values and positive moral behaviors had a relatively small appearance in the word frequency table. The results of the analysis of the Negative Moral Values and Stigmatizing Policy Failures shows a low frequency of appearances social policy words in this category. For example, “welfare” only appears ten times in the Stigmatizing Policy Failures category. The social problems that
are listed in the **Negative Moral Values** receive as high as nine appearances and as little as one. This suggests that social policy related to race was a low legislative priority. The word frequencies in the **Poverty and Impoverished Communities** category suggest that Bush discussed poverty and mass incarceration with a focus on words that characterize social problems that are associated with inner city communities.

**George W. Bush: Social Policy Statements**

Table 4.5: Positive Moral Values Summary

The word frequency in this category found 11 out of 35 words associated with **Positive Moral Values**. The high frequency of the word “dignity” may also be a part of the messaging that the Bush Administration was sending to the American public related to his foreign policy agenda. The remaining words, such as “hard work,” “family values,” “personal responsibility,” and “self-respect” are associated with individual moral values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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Table 4.6: Negative Moral Values Summary

The word frequency in this category found 17 out of 49 words associated with *Negative Moral Values*. Words such as “hopelessness,” “dependency,” “addiction,” and “out of wedlock” are descriptors for high profile, racialized political issues of the time such as affirmative action, drug crimes and drug abuse, and welfare reform.

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Table 4.7: Stigmatizing Policy Failures Summary

The word frequency in this category found 11 out of 33 words associated with *Negative Moral Values*. The words “addiction,” “dependency,” and “out of wedlock” have a clear association with negative values related to personal character as well as social spending policies and politics. The results suggest that welfare reform was framed as a socially stigmatizing policy.
Table 4.7

Stigmatizing Policy Failures

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Table 4.8: Poverty and Impoverished Communities Summary

The word frequency in this category found 17 out of 47 words associated with Poverty and Impoverished Communities. The top words, Hispanic and Black appeared 117 and 85 times respectively.
Table 4.8
Poverty and Impoverished Communities

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Summary: George W. Bush Social Policy Statements

The words with the highest word frequencies in the Positive Moral Values category, “dignity,” “hard work,” “family values,” and “work requirement” convey that his policies reflected moral, middle class values. The remaining words reflect the welfare reform priorities of the Bush Administration. The top results for the Negative Moral Values are focused on individual personal failures associated with poverty. The term “bigotry” yielded the top results. The remaining words include: “hopelessness,” “dependency,” “addiction,” “abuse,” and “gang.” Words in the Stigmatizing Policy Failures category are strongly associated with welfare reform. Keywords that appeared in this word frequency include: “food stamp,” “hand out,” and “welfare benefits.” The results for the Poverty and Impoverished Communities show there is a significantly higher frequency of the words Hispanic and Latino with 212 appearances versus African American and Black with 47 appearances. The database of speeches demonstrates that
Bush spoke to Hispanic and Latino organizations at significantly higher level than Black and African American interest groups. Additionally, the word frequencies that reference poverty and conditions in the inner city appear in small number.

**George W. Bush: Keyword-in-Context Analysis**

**Common Speeches**

The results of the *Positive Moral Statement* analysis show that Bush used words and phrases to connect financial independence with personal morality. For example:

- “income families find stability and dignity in a home of their;”
  (Republican National Convention 2000)
- “best is a place where personal responsibility is needed and expected;” (Inaugural Address 2001)
- “must understand we are responsible for the choices we make;”
  (Presidential Campaign Announcement 1999)
- “we moved people from welfare to work. We strengthen juvenile justice.”
  (Republican National Convention 2000)

The results of the *Negative Moral Values* analysis demonstrate how Bush articulated social problems as the moral failings of individual. Racism, gang violence, poverty are linked to individual behavior and moral failing. Examples include:

- “alcohol can destroy you and bigotry disfigures the heart;”
  (Republican National Convention 2000)
- “principle is the challenge of the soft bigotry of low expectations;”
  (Republican National Convention 2004)
- “without fathers in neighborhoods where gangs seem like friendships;”
  (Republican National Convention 2000)
- “trapped and worthless and hopeless if he believes his life;”
  (Republican National Convention 2000)
- “having a child out of wedlock is a sure-fire way;” (Presidential Campaign Announcement 1999)
- “better options than apathy, gangs or jail.” (State of the Union 2005)

The results of the *Stigmatizing Policy Failures* analysis show that Bush has a limited number of outcomes. The word “violence” often appears as part of the discussion for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Violence, racism, and bigotry are treated as moral failings instead of a systemic and legal problems. Bush advocates for changing a person’s heart to promote social change. For example:
• “discrimination, pure and simple, the soft bigotry of low expectations;”  
  (Republican National Convention 2000)
• “that respects women and rejects violence. Taking on gang life will;”  
  (State of the Union 2005)
• “the next bold step of welfare reform. Because changing hearts will;”  
  (Presidential Campaign Announcement 1999)
• “It is conservative to reform welfare by insisting on work.”  
  (Presidential Campaign Announcement 1999)

The results for the Poverty and Impoverished Communities indicate that many words appeared to describe conditions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The remaining statements crime, poverty, and violence are used to describe low income communities. For example:

• “commit crime and return to prison;” (State of the Union, 2004)
• “break old patterns of violence and failure than apathy or gangs or jail:’  
  (State of the Union, 2005)
• “men and women in our decaying cities:” (Presidential Campaign Announcement, 1999)
• “that wall are poverty and prison, and addiction and despair,”  
  (Republican National Convention, 2000)
• “too many failed schools, persistent poverty, the stubborn vestiges of racism.”  
  (Address to a Joint Session of Congress, 2001)

George W. Bush: Social Policy Statements

The results of the Positive Moral Values analysis demonstrate how Bush constructs positive morals with examples of what he views are negative moral failings. For example:

• “where people want to work hard to own their own businesses;”  
  (Remarks at the White House to Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month 2007)
• “must give personal attention to personal responsibility, especially that of absent parents;”
• “He was talking about the needy and the sick and the.”  
  (Remarks on Welfare Reform 2002)

It also appears that Bush equates racism as a problem associated with a moral failing that can be corrected by teaching children to have an open heart, and therefore, not harbor racist feelings. An excerpt from a speech he delivered to National Urban League, he stated:
The moral vision of African Americans and groups like the Urban League caused Americans to examine their hearts, to correct our constitution, and to teach our children the dignity and equality of every person of every race (Bush 2003).

Bush’s statements articulate how he constructs a “colorblind” narrative on American racism that asks individuals to correct their racial views. However, he does not discuss the expansion of civil rights further than what has already been done to correct past constitutional discriminatory laws.

The analysis of for Negative Moral Values demonstrates that Bush presents negative morals by conflating what conservatives consider negative moral values with negative images of poverty. For example:

- “do drugs, have a child out of wedlock, suffer abuse, or become a violent criminal” (Remarks on Welfare Reform 2002)
- “the number of children born out of wedlock grew;” (Remarks on Welfare Reform 2002)
- “to me means liberation from dependency. It means we realize;” (Remarks on Welfare Reform 2002)

The remarks related to racism demonstrate how attitudes that do not provide the high expectations of moral standards to racial minorities are a cause for racial inequality. For example:

- “What I call the soft bigotry of low expectations;” (National Urban League Convention, 2004)
- “bigotry of low expectations. That bigotry has young casualties.” (National Urban League Convention, 2001)

The results of the Stigmatizing Policy Failures articulates an “us versus them” frame for the victimization of Christian conservatives.

- “signed an executive order banning discrimination against faith-based charities. (Remarks to Urban Leaders 2003)

The analysis also shows how Bush attempted to redefine how Americans view what constitutes discrimination by focusing on individual attitudes instead of systemic racism.

- “in fact, a form of discrimination, the soft bigotry of low expectations.” (Remarks to the National Urban League Convention 2001)
Bush’s remarks on welfare reform conveys that low-income individuals have low personal standards and that the government must provide incentives to force them to behave better. For example:

- “we cannot accept mediocrity;” (Remarks on Welfare Reform 2002)
- “the child can escape from the mediocrity.” (Remarks on Welfare Reform 2002)
- “help our fellow Americans on welfare achieve independence through work;” (Statement on the House of Representatives Actions on Welfare Reform 2003)
- “a responsible citizen instead of a welfare client;” (Statement on Welfare Reform 2002)
- “Work is important. Welfare recipients must.” (Remarks on the Reauthorization of Welfare Reform 2002)

(The word “violence” appeared several times to describe the war in Afghanistan and Iraq.)

The results of the *Poverty and Impoverished Communities* analysis shows that Bush spent a significantly more time addressing Hispanic organizations than African American organizations. Additionally, Bush used more positive words and phrases to express cultural appreciation, family values, and strong business leadership when he addressed Hispanic groups. For example:

- “can recognize the contributions that Hispanic Americans make to our great country;” (Hispanic Heritage Month 2005)
- “in the strong commitment of Hispanic Americans to the family;” (National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast 2005)
- “in the tireless efforts of Hispanic American faith-based and community;” (National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast 2005)
- “and society is better because Hispanic owned businesses are thriving;” (US Hispanic Chamber of Commerce 2004)
- “commitments to family and faith. Hispanic Americans enrich our country.” (White House celebration for Hispanic Heritage Month 2007)

Conversely, when Bush addressed African Americans at the NAACP and the National Urban League conventions, he failed to focus on topics that demonstrate positive aspects of African American life. For example:

- “African Americans vote, and many African Americans wrote off the Republican Party;” (Address to the NAACP 2006)
- “and I understand many Americans distrust the Republican Party.” (Address to the NAACP 2006)
- “the failure on parents, on poverty, on circumstances beyond their control;” (National Urban League Convention 2001)
- “The failures of many urban schools are great.” (National Urban League Convention 2001)
The remaining statements in the analysis focus urban policy and welfare reform, which is perceived to represent unique social problems within the African American community. Bush portrays a bleak picture of the conditions in these communities. For example:

- “between self-restraint and self-destruction, government should not be neutral;”
  (Statement on Welfare Reform 2002)
- “is the highest ever. And poverty among Black children is the;”
  (Statement on Welfare Reform 2002)
- “criminals end up in prison. Building and preserving families are;”
  (Statement on Welfare Reform 2002)

**George W. Bush: Conclusion**

The *Keyword-in-Context* analysis results demonstrates that Bush uses racially stigmatizing code words to construct his argument for welfare reform policies. The analysis also finds that in spite of Bush’s call for compassionate conservatism, he continues to frame social problems for low-income, people of colors in bleak terms. He combines several social problems, such as out-of-wedlock births, to crime and welfare dependency. Bush makes attempt to transform or expand the meaning of discrimination from one that is applied to racial discrimination to a term that alludes to the discrimination of Christian conservatives.

The reconstruction of the definition of racial discrimination makes the problem of racism to be an issue about personal character instead of a systemic problem that requires legal and legislative remedies to reduce the negative impact of racial discrimination. Additionally, the results show that Bush addresses Hispanic organizations at a significantly higher rate than African American organizations. Further, the Hispanic audiences are recognized for having positive social and family values. In contrast, African American organizations have much fewer interactions with Bush. When he addresses issues related to African Americans, he neglects to address institutional racism and argues that a change in attitude will improve the lives of those trapped in poverty.
Case V. Barack Obama

Common Speeches

Table 5.1: Positive Moral Values Summary

The word frequency in this category found 11 out of 35 words associated with Positive Moral Values and middle-class ideals appeared in this analysis such as “hard work,” “moral,” “pay the bills,” “personal responsibility,” and “work hard and play by the rules.”

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Table 5.2: Negative Moral Values

The word frequency in this category found 9 out of 49 words associated with negative moral values appeared in this analysis. Such words include “addiction,” “drug abuse,” “gang,” and, “teen pregnancy.”
Table 5.2

Negative Moral Values

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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drug abuse</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gang</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
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<td>teen pregnancy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3: Stigmatizing Policy Failures Summary

The word frequency in this category found seven out of 33 words associated with *Stigmatizing Policy Failures* appeared in this analysis. Because of the high profile of mass shootings during the Obama era, violence may be associated to social policy that is related to poverty and race.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>violence</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discrimination</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>welfare</td>
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<td>11.54</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>neglect</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4: Poverty and Impoverished Communities Summary

The word frequency in this category found 12 out of 47 words associated with *Poverty and Impoverished Communities* appeared in this analysis.
Table 5.4

Poverty and Impoverished Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
</tr>
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<td>17.44</td>
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<td>8.14</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>27.78</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8.14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.89</td>
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<td>5.81</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>22.22</td>
</tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inner city</td>
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<td>1.16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.56</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urban</td>
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<td>1.16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Barack Obama Common Speeches Summary

The *Positive Moral Values* word frequency results show that “dignity,” “hard work,” and “moral” are similar to the results from Clinton and the other Republican presidents, but do not reflect the pro-welfare and pro-crime policy agenda of those administrations. However, they may reflect Obama’s effort to empathize with those White Americans who were negatively impacted by the economic downturn of 2008 so as to garner support for his health care legislation. The word frequency results for the *Negative Moral Values* and *Stigmatizing Policy Failures* are not necessarily associated with racially stigmatizing policies. The words “fraud” and “abuse” may be associated with the healthcare reform debate. The word “violence” may be associated with the mass shootings that occurred during his administration. The negative words that are associated with welfare and inner-city poverty such as “drug abuse,” “teen pregnancy,” and “food stamp” only occurred once. The results of the *Poverty and Impoverished Communities* suggest that Obama addressed issues related to poverty and low-income communities frequently during his time in office. The words “unemployment” and “violence” may be associated with the 2008 recession and remarks related to gun violence. The term “single mom” may have been used by
Obama to tell his story about his mother. The remarks in this context may be to show sympathy and include descriptions about single mothers and their struggle to raise their children. Therefore cultivate support for Obama’s domestic policies such as healthcare reform.

Barack Obama: Social Spending Speeches

Table 5.5: Positive Moral Values Summary

The word frequency for this category found 12 out of 35 words associated with *Positive Moral Values* appeared in this analysis. These words indicate a high frequency of words associated with middle class values such as support for American workers. These words and phrases include: “hard work,” “moral,” “dignity,” “hand up,” “pay the bills,” and “personal responsibility.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>23</td>
<td>16.67</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5.93</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pay the bills</td>
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<td>3.39</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>needy</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-respect</td>
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<td>0.85</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.6: Negative Moral Values Summary

The word frequency results for this category found 20 out of 49 words that are associated with Negative Moral Values. “Fraud” and “abuse” could refer to health reform. The words and terms are often descriptors of inner city, African American and Latino poverty.

Table 5.6
Negative Moral Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12.32</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12.32</td>
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<td>9.48</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bigotry</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>5.07</td>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2.59</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang</td>
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<td>2.59</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teen pregnancy</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don't want to study</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopeless</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>drug dealer</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
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<td>gang violence</td>
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<td>0.72</td>
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<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rap star</td>
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<td>0.86</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.7: Stigmatizing Policy Failures Summary

The word frequency results in this category found 10 out of 33 words associated with Stigmatizing Policy Failures. The word “violence” had nearly two times the appearances at 59 than the next word, “discrimination,” at 33 appearances. This could be due to the high profile of gun violence.
during the Obama Administration. However, the remaining words on the list indicate that he had addressed social issues with stigmatizing frames

Table 5.7
*Stigmatizing Policy Failures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>violence</td>
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<td>19.57</td>
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<tr>
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<td>33</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.42</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>handout</td>
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<td>3.17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3.17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
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<td>neglect</td>
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<td>2.17</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0.72</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.8: Poverty and Impoverished Communities Summary

The word frequency results in this category found 23 out of 47 words associated with *Poverty and Impoverished Communities*. There is an exceptionally high frequency of racial identifiers, when totaled together, 376 (Black/African American) and 256 (Latino/Hispanic), in comparison to the other presidents. This is likely due to the fact that as the first non-White president, Barack Obama addressed these audiences and spoke to their concerns more readily that previous presidents. Therefore, this category will have an exceptionally frequency levels.
Table 5.8

Poverty and Impoverished Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
</tr>
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<td>32</td>
<td>23.19</td>
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<tr>
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<td>22.46</td>
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<td>8.70</td>
</tr>
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<td>13</td>
<td>9.42</td>
</tr>
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<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
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<td>1.45</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.45</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1.45</td>
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<td>0.72</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.72</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Barack Obama Social Speeches Summary

The results of the Positive Moral Values word frequencies suggest the Obama used words such as “dignity,” “hard work,” “pay the bills,” and “dignity of work” to appeal to working families. The three terms that refer to welfare reform, “hand up,” “welfare to work,” and “work hard and play by the rules” appeared only one time each. The Negative Moral Values results show fairly low frequencies. The words “fraud,” and “abuse” may be connected to Obama’s advocacy for health care reform. The remaining words that refer to individual moral failings, “addiction,” “drug abuse,” “gang,” and “teen pregnancy”
only received one or two appearances each. The word frequency for *Stigmatizing Policy Failures* indicates that there were occasions that Obama used terms that his critics believed unfairly disparaged African American communities such as: “don’t want to study,” “play basketball,” “basketball player,” and “mediocrity.” The results of the *Poverty and Impoverished Communities* suggest that he addressed African American and Latino groups and related issues at a very high frequency. He also has a high use of words that are negatively associated with low income and communities of color.

**Barack Obama: Keyword-in-Context Analysis**

**Common Speeches**

The results of the *Positive Moral Values* analysis show that Obama uses positive values to express his views on how America can achieve economic equality and human dignity. His statements convey his support for the wellbeing of working Americans. For example:

- “an economy that honors the dignity of work;”  
  (Remarks to the Democratic National Convention 2008)
- “describes tolerance, opportunity, human dignity and justice;” (Inaugural Address 2013)
- “to work a chance, a hand up;” (State of the Union 2016)
- “time to finally meet our moral obligations to provide every child;”  
  (Remarks to the Democratic National Convention 2008)
- “They are not whiners. They work hard and give back and keep;”  
  (Democratic National Convention 2008)
- “The notion that if you work hard and take responsibility, you can.” (State of the Union 2014)

The results from the *Negative Moral Values* analysis demonstrates that several of the words captured had multiple meanings. For example, fraud and abuse are associated with the health care, banking, and economic recovery legislation. A review of the text found that the word “addiction” was associated with Obama’s remarks to reduce American consumption of oil. The remaining words that are associated with social policy are not necessarily condemning individual behavior, but conveying either empathy or lauding improvements. For example:

- “who are battling prescription drug abuse and heroin abuse;” (State of the Union 2016)
- “than those who are plagued by gang violence in Cleveland;”  
  (Remarks to the Democratic National Convention 2008)
“by boosting graduation rates, reducing teen pregnancy, even reducing violent crime.”
(State of the Union 2013)

The results from the Stigmatizing Policy Failures analysis is dominated by the gun violence debate. The tone of the remarks is empathetic. Obama speaks as an advocate for victims of gun violence and asks that Congress acts to protect the interests of the American people over the gun lobby. For example:

- “we will stand against violence and intimidation;” (State of the Union 2012)
- “communities ripped open by gun violence. But this time is different;” (State of the Union 2013)
- “when a child turns to violence, there’s a hole;” (Presidential Campaign Announcement 2007)
- “for the lives gun violence steals from use each day;” (State of the Union 2014)
- “been torn apart by gun violence. They deserve a vote.” (State of the Union 2013)

The remaining examples show how Obama continues to portray a sense of empathy and support for legislation that is intended to correct the social conditions that produce inequality. For example:

- “civil rights violations and employment discrimination. We finally strengthened our laws;”
  (State of the Union 2010)
- “live their lives free from discrimination in the workplace and free;”
  (State of Union 2013)
- “and moved more families from welfare to work.” (Democratic National Convention 2008)

The results of the Poverty and Impoverished Communities provides examples of the complexity and nuances of Obama’s views on race and poverty. The statements that he uses describes a collective vision of what America can be. He also addresses social problems by explaining how different groups of people have suffered from economic inequalities but through have the chance to rise above their current circumstances in life. For example:

- “from rural communities to the inner city. In the 21st century;” (State of the Union 2010)
- “Native American, conservative, liberal, rich, poor, gay, straight;” (State of the Union 2012)
- “and lifted millions out of poverty. We welcomed immigrants to our;”
  (Presidential Campaign Announcement 2007)
- “offered an escape from poverty by a great teacher;”
  (Democratic National Convention 2012)
- “packing up; inescapable pockets of poverty, urban and rural, where young;”
  (State of the Union 2013)
- “how a son of a single mom can be President.” (State of the Union 2014)
(There was one sentence from Obama’s 2008 acceptance speech that stated: “Born in poverty? Pull yourself up by your bootstraps.” It was a rhetorical response to McCain’s candidacy.)

Barack Obama: Social Policy Speeches

Three out of four section of the Social Policy Speeches, Positive Moral Values, Negative Moral Values, and Stigmatizing Policy Failures, will have an additional analysis of comments that Obama delivered to predominately African American audiences. This is needed to determine if Obama addresses African American audiences differently than non-African American or mixed raced audiences. And, made comments that African American audiences may consider to be racially stigmatizing. These remarks are selected from commencement addresses at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, African American journalists, and African American advocacy organizations. The fourth category, Poverty and Impoverished Communities, shows that words sorted in this analysis are used to compose complex policy discussions regarding poverty, class, and economic inequality.

The results for the Positive Moral Values demonstrate how Obama expressed that positive moral values such as hard work and financial independence are essential tools for an individual to enter the middle class. He also addresses compassion and empathy as a fundamental moral value. For example:

- “are designed to give you a hand up to everybody, every child, every;” (My Brother’s Keeper 2014)
- “values like responsible fatherhood and health marriage are integral to any antipoverty;” (White House Faith Breakfast 2010)
- “that sense of empathy, that moral compass, that conviction of what;” (Latino Prayer Breakfast 2011)
- “everybody who is willing to work hard, so that they could afford;” (White House Celebration for Hispanic Heritage Month 2016)
  “to get an education and work hard and give our children a;” (University of Michigan Commencement 2010)
- “people who are willing to work hard to get into the middle class.” (Economic Event in Binghamton NY 2013)

The results below will show how Obama addresses audiences in venues such in which the audiences are predominantly African American.

- “your children, a sense of personal responsibility and self-respect to pass;”
The results for the **Negative Moral Values** analysis show how Obama uses words to describe moral failings as they relate to government waste and government programs to help Americans with serious personal problems. There are also examples that provide information on his view of collective failings in the African American community. One example of negative moral values in the implementation of policies is listed below:

- “the welfare cheat or the illegal immigrant;”
  (Martin Luther King March on Washington Commemoration 2013)

Examples of how negative moral values that describe substance abuse and violence are used to describe social problems are listed below:

- “a devastating rise in opioid abuse and an associated increase in;”
  (Essay in The Economist 2016)
- “parents are struggling with substance abuse. And many have been sexually;”
  (President’s Visit to New York City 2015)
- “to change the odds for at-risk girls, to make sure that.” (Hispanic Chamber of Commerce 2009)

Examples of how negative morals are discussed in the presence of African American audiences are listed below:

- “You’re a low-level drug dealer or you violate your parole;” (NAACP 2015)
- “We should not be tolerating gang activity in prison. We should;” (NAACP 2015)
- “dollars to benefit the welfare cheat or the illegal immigrant;” (MLK Commemoration 2013)
- “Well, you know, I don’t want to study, I’m just going to play basketball;” (MLK Day 2009)
- “I don’t want to study, I’m going to be a rap star;” (MLK Day 2009)
- “away from a life of gang violence and towards the safety.” (National Urban League 2012)

The results of the **Stigmatizing Policy Failures** demonstrate that Obama focuses on the problems of systemic racism, gun violence and neglect. Obama’s descriptions of discrimination and violence are discussed in the context as sustained, intractable social problems. Examples include:

- “It demands that we fight discrimination, whatever form it may come;”
  (Martin Luther King Day Observance 2010)
“durable and destructive legacies of discrimination is the way we’ve;” (NAACP 2009)
“experience and sociological reality racism in this country has made;” (Coates 2016)
“where schools are underfunded and violence is pervasive; where too many;”
(Morehouse College 2013)

Examples of how negative morals are discussed in the presence of African American professional audiences are listed below:

“set high. No excuse for mediocrity. If he comes home with;”
(Congressional Black Caucus 2009)
“No one cares if you’ve suffered from discrimination. And moreover, you have to;”
(Morehouse College 2013)
“to deal with ignorance, hatred, racism, foolishness, trifling folks;” (Howard University 2016)
“to be caught up in drugs and violence;” (Benedict College 2015)

The results of the Poverty and Impoverished Communities demonstrates how Obama constructs complex policy analysis to describe the conditions and potential solutions to the problems of poverty, crime, mass incarceration, and urban development. Examples include:

“Latino. One out of five African Americans don’t have health insurance;” (Ryan 2009)
“down ‘separate but equal’ with African Americans being purged from the voter rolls;”
(Congressional Black Caucus 2009)
“responsible for the education of Hispanic students, reducing the dropout;”
(Statement on President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics 2010)
“young African American men in jail. We’d have more family;” (Coates 2016)
“in the Latino community because the Latino community is an entrepreneurial community;”
“boys face the school-to-prison pipeline, a lot of girls;” (Congressional Black Caucus 2015)

Barack Obama: Conclusion

Barack Obama’s presidency provides an opportunity to examine whether or not a non-White president will use code words, or racially stigmatizing language to address social problems. It appears that Obama’s Common Speeches are used to both encourage Americans to find common ground to solve problems that impact people across racial and socioeconomic lines. On these occasions, Obama discusses public policy related to poverty and race with a significant amount of detail and nuance. Obama discusses social policy to constituency groups with detail and nuance as well. Yet, the phrase “welfare cheat” appears in the results.
However, the tone often changes when the audience is African American. Obama delivered speeches in front of African American audiences that may be perceived as containing condescending messages. He addressed audiences at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) with messages and wording that admonish the audiences to correct their personal behavior. Obama used stigmatizing words with African Americans audiences to discuss issues related to crime, poverty and economic inequality. While it is clear poverty and social inequality disproportionately impact African American communities, is it necessary to discuss these issues with racially stigmatizing tones and words when African Americans are the primary audience? Obama’s ability to convey complex policy analysis to broad audiences demonstrates that it is not necessary to use racially stigmatizing messages when the audience is African American. It also indicates that even an African American president may not provide African American audiences the same consideration that he may provide to majority White audience.

**Republican Presidents: Combined Common Speeches**

**Table 6.1 Positive Moral Values Summary**

The word frequency analysis found 11 out of 35 word associated with positive moral values. The results indicate that Reagan and George W. Bush have a high usage of positive moral values. Although Reagan used these words to describe his social policy, clarification is needed to determine if the words “dignity,” and “moral” relate to his social policy or advocacy for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.
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Republican Common Speeches

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Table 6.2: Negative Moral Values Summary

The word frequency analysis found 15 out of 39 words associated with negative moral values. Reagan has the highest use of the words “dependency” and “fraud” likely due to his welfare reform priorities. The word “unemployed” is likely due to the impact of the Reagan era recession. These words and terms include: “drug abuse,” “hopelessness,” “welfare dependency,” “delinquency,” and “out of wedlock.”
Table 6.2
**Negative Moral Values**

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Table 6.3: **Stigmatizing Policy Failures Summary**

The word frequency found 9 out of 33 words associated with *Stigmatizing Policy Failures*.

Reagan and George W. Bush demonstrated a significantly higher use of words than George H. W. Bush.

The most prominent word is “welfare” due to the focus on welfare reform. Therefore, this policy was discussed more frequently in front of broader audiences. The word “violence” may pertain to George W. Bush’s foreign policy.
Table 6.3

Stigmatizing Policy Failures

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Table 6.4: Poverty and Impoverished Communities Summary

The word frequency analysis found 18 out of 47 words associated with Poverty and Impoverished Communities. The results demonstrate that Reagan and George W. Bush discussed poverty and policies as it related to low-income communities. George H. W. Bush’s focus on the concept of a “kinder and gentle” nation in front of broader audiences may account for the use of less stigmatizing rhetoric when he wanted to appeal to “swing” or independent voters.
Table 6.4  
*Poverty and Impoverished Communities*

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<td>1.75</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Republican Presidents Common Speeches Summary**

Reagan and George W. Bush statements reflect the high profile that welfare reform policy had within the Republican Party during their administrations. Their social safety net remarks are significantly higher than George H.W. Bush. Perhaps his campaign vow to have a “kinder, gentler nation” meant that conservative social policies were not discussed as broadly as the other presidents in front of broad audiences. In addition, the word frequency analysis alone cannot provide a confirmation of whether or not these words were used within a framework of social and racially stigmatizing language.

**Republican Presidents: Social Policy Speeches**

This section only shows the breakdown of word frequencies as one group. MaxQDA2018 program does provide a print of the results for each president. However, because the results print out the word
frequency per category and per president, the results are too large to print in this chapter. Therefore, there is a need to compare each category by party affiliation.

**Table 6.5: Positive Moral Values Summary**

The analysis found 14 out of 35 words associate with positive moral values and middle-class values that are related to economic independence and personal morality. These words are also considered positive arguments for welfare reform. These words describe middle-class, respectable values such as “family values,” “hard work,” and “personal responsibility.”

**Table 6.5:**

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<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
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<td>18</td>
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<tr>
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<td>10.47</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.94</td>
</tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>2.97</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>4.95</td>
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<td>0.50</td>
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<tr>
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</table>

**Table 6.6: Negative Moral Values Summary**

The word frequency analysis found 23 out of 33 words associate with negative moral values. The words are focused on negative terms associated with drug and welfare as well as crime. These terms include: “drug abuse,” “welfare dependency,” “addiction,” “gang,” “cheat,” and “out of wedlock.”
Table 6.6

Negative Moral Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
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<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
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<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.46</td>
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<td>2.97</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>1.49</td>
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<td>0.99</td>
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<td>20</td>
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</table>

Table 6.7: Stigmatizing Policy Failures

The word frequency found 22 out of 33 words associated with stigmatizing policy failures. The words are primarily associated with welfare reform, crime control, and inner-city poverty.
### Table 6.7

**Stigmatizing Policy Failures**

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<th>Documents %</th>
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<td>0.99</td>
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### Table 6.8: Poverty and Impoverished Communities Summary

The word frequency found 24 out of 47 words associated with poverty and impoverished statements. It also appears that Republican presidents have made a significant number of speeches and statement that have addressed issues related to Black and Latino communities.
Table 6.8

*Poverty and Impoverished Communities*

<table>
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<th>Documents %</th>
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</tr>
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<td>7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14.85</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.94</td>
</tr>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>1.49</td>
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<td>18</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Democratic Presidents: Social Policy Speeches**

This section only shows the breakdown of word frequencies as one group. MaxQDA2018 program does provide a print of the results for each president. However, because the results print out the word frequency per category and per president, the results are too large to print in this chapter. Therefore, it is needed to compare each category by party affiliation.
Democratic Presidents: Common Speeches

Table 7.1: Positive Moral Values Summary

The word frequency summary found 15 out of 35 words associated with *Positive Moral Values*. The results suggest that both Clinton and Obama used positive moral values to support their policy priorities. However, they do not necessarily use the same words with the same level of frequency. These words include: “work hard,” “family values,” “welfare to work,” and “personal responsibility.”

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<th>Documents %</th>
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<th>Clinton</th>
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Table 7.2: Negative Moral Values Summary

The word frequency analysis found 14 out of 49 words associated with *Negative Moral Values*. Clinton used these words at a higher frequency than Obama. These words include: “illegal,” “abuse,” “teen pregnancy,” and “drug abuse.”
Table 7.2

*Negative Moral Values*

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Table 7.3  

*Stigmatizing Policy Failures Summary*

The word frequency analysis found 12 out of 34 words related to *Stigmatizing Policy Failures*. Clinton used these words at a significantly higher frequency than Obama. It highlights Clinton’s focus on welfare reform.

Table 7.3

*Stigmatizing Policy Failures*

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Table 7.4: Poverty and Impoverished Communities Summary

The word frequency analysis found that 16 out of 47 words associated with Poverty and Impoverished Communities. The results demonstrate that both Clinton and Obama frequently addressed issues related to poverty and low-income communities in their Common Speeches. Clinton’s use of “poor” and “destruction” are used significantly more than Obama. These two words may refer to Clinton’s welfare reform and crime control policies.

Table 7.4
Poverty and Impoverished Communities

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Democratic Presidents Common Word Frequencies Conclusion

Presidents Clinton and Obama appear to use words to describe their social policy agenda at different frequency levels. Clinton appears to speak more frequently about social safety net policy than Obama in the Common Speeches category. The word frequency analysis alone cannot provide a confirmation of whether or not these words were used within a framework of social and racially stigmatizing language.
Democratic Presidents: Social Policy Speeches

This section only shows the breakdown of word frequencies as one group. MaxQDA2018 does provide a print of the results for each president. However, because the results print out the word frequency per category and per president, the results are too large to print in this chapter.

Table 7.5: Positive Moral Values Summary

The word frequency analysis found 19 out of 35 words associations with positive moral values. This list is predominately comprised of words and phrases that give positive support for welfare reform. These words include: “work hard,” “welfare to work,” “personal responsibility” and “hand up.”

<table>
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<th>Documents %</th>
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The word frequency analysis found 31 out of 49 words associated with *Negative Moral Values*. These words reflect the emphasis on welfare reform and crime control and include such words as “teen pregnancy,” “abuse,” “dependency,” addiction,” and “three strikes.”

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<td>0.64</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.32</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>25</td>
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Table 7.7: Stigmatizing Policy Failures Summary

The word frequency results found 16 out of 33 words associated with stigmatizing policy failures. These words are predominantly associated with welfare reform, civil rights, and crime control. These words include: “welfare,” affirmative action,” “able bodied,” “food stamp,” “neglect,” “quota,” and “anti-gang.”

Table 7.7

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<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
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<td>violence</td>
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<td>affirmative action</td>
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<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>discrimination</td>
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<td>racism</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>food stamp</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anti-gang</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>welfare benefits</td>
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<td>0.30</td>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.8: Poverty and Impoverished Communities Summary

The word frequency analysis found that 24 out of 47 words associated with poverty and impoverished communities. These words include: “poverty,” “unemployment,” “violence,” “prison,” “cocaine,” “crime control,” “destruction,” and “jail.” The high frequency of the words “Black,” “Hispanic,” “Latino,” and “African Americans” are likely due to the frequency that these presidents appeared before Black and Latino organizations and made statements related to race and racism.
Table 7.8:  
*Poverty and Impoverished Communities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Documents %</th>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Results: Research Hypotheses for this Study

The results from the content analysis for this study are as follows:

H1: There is a relationship between a president’s political party and the use of racial code words. Democratic presidents are less likely than Republican president to use racial code words.

Results: H1 is false. There is no significant difference between the presidents’ political parties and the use of racial code words. Democratic and Republican presidents use racial code words.

H0: There is no relationship between a president’s political party and the use of racial code words.

Results: H0 is true. All five presidents, regardless of party affiliation use racial code words.

H2: There is a relationship between the president’s race and the use of racial code words.

Results: H2 is false. President Obama uses racially stigmatizing code words and the “politics of respectability” when he addresses African American audiences.

H0: There is no relationship between the president’s race and the use of racial code words. H0 is true. A non-White president’s race does not prevent him from using racially stigmatizing code words in his remarks.

Summary of H1

The results of H1 indicate that presidents in both the Democratic and Republican parties use racial code words in both the Common Statements and the Social Policy Statements categories. The Republican presidents use racially stigmatizing code words in both categories. The results for the Democratic presidents are slightly different. Bill Clinton uses racially stigmatizing code words in both categories. Barack Obama does not use racially coded language in the Common Statements category. It
appears that Obama uses these opportunities to teach the public about the complexities of poverty and racism. However, Obama inserts the “politics of respectability” when he addresses predominately African American audience. It does not appear that he is teaching the audience about the complexities of race and poverty. Instead, he uses these occasions to assert that African Americans are generally behaving responsibly and need to work harder within the community to improve the economic and social conditions of their communities.

**Summary of H2:**

The results of this hypothesis demonstrate that the first and only African American president did use racially stigmatizing language in his socially policy statements. This result shows that the American people, as well as African American and other people of color, cannot assume that a non-White President of the United States will always address issues of race and poverty with racially sensitive language.

**Conclusion**

The content analysis in this study does show that there is a “Reagan Effect.” President’s since Reagan have used racially stigmatizing language to demonstrate their political policies for the White “Forgotten man.” The use of racially stigmatized language shows that presidents are using words to reinforce their priorities to the public that working and middle class, mostly White interests are their political priority. By doing so, the presidents are reinforcing their beliefs, as well as the beliefs of conservative voters, that the poor are responsible for their economic and social conditions. And, the president must use his moral authority to address the conditions of poverty by forcing the poor to change their behavior. Therefore, this demonstrates that the language of the Southern Strategy has sustained as a significant political influence of the American presidency.
Chapter Six

Conclusion

Introduction

The present research fills the gap in the literature on the Southern Strategy and its impact on the American presidency. The research consists of five chapters that focus on specific topics related to the development of White resentment and its impact on the Southern Strategy. Additionally, there is an extensive discussion how both Democratic and Republican presidents have used racially stigmatizing language to define their view of the “forgotten man” and how their philosophy related to the social safety net.

The Southern Strategy is a political phenomenon that is very familiar to both voters and political analysts. It is frequently defined by an overly simplistic explanation that connects its development to Richard Nixon’s 1968 and 1972 presidential campaigns. This also includes the narrative that explains the conversion of Southern Democrats into the Republican Party by leveraging the White resentment that evolved with the elimination of Jim Crow laws during the Civil Rights era. While Richard Nixon’s elections are historically significant, Ronald Reagan’s leadership in the development of Movement Conservatism and his presidential legacy demonstrate that Reagan, and not Nixon, provided the framework for the Southern Strategy as both an electoral tactic and a sustained political ideology.

Chapter One discusses the limitations of the classic definition of the Southern Strategy. Chapter Two provides a historical overview of the Black “forgotten man” of the 100 years between the end of slavery and Reconstruction through and the end of the Civil Rights Movement in 1968. Chapter Three contains the literature review. It discusses the rise of massive resistance and the outgrowth of opposition to the Brown vs. Board of Education decision, as well as the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The literature describes how White resistance has shaped the politics of race and social spending from Richard Nixon through Donald Trump. Chapter Four provides an
overview of the content analysis methodology and research design for this study. And Chapter Five discusses the content analysis results for the five presidents included in this study, as well as the content analysis of the presidents by their party affiliation.

**Research Summary**

The term Southern Strategy is so frequently used by political analysts that it has been reduced to an oversimplified trope. The public and analysts generally understand that this phenomenon was a long-term, strategic effort of the Republican Party to convert Southern, racially conservative Democrats to the Republican Party. This conversion occurred as Republicans cultivated and leveraged White resentment with the use of racial code words in campaign rhetoric. Additionally, there is an assumption that it began in 1968 with Richard Nixon’s presidential campaign and ended in 1992 with Bill Clinton’s successful presidential election. This study argues that this view of the Southern Strategy is incomplete.

Chapter One discusses why this definition is problematic by illuminating the limitations of the classic definition of the Southern Strategy. While Nixon’s political success was largely responsible for the Republican Party’s electoral success in the South, the Southern Strategy success should be credited to Ronald Reagan’s rise as the leader of Movement Conservatism starting in 1964. Reagan’s role is generally misunderstood. The study introduces Reagan by describing how he acquired political influence when he delivered the closing arguments for the Goldwater campaign with his “A Time For Choosing” speech (Reagan 1964). The speech was a call for Americans to abandon the social safety net that was established under the Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal program and was responsible for building the White middle class after the Great Depression. In these remarks, racial minorities and the poor were portrayed as dishonest or naive victims of social spending. The rhetoric also suggested that working and White middle class taxpayers view themselves as the “forgotten man.” Reagan asked them to believe that government programs were going to the undeserving, and therefore, cheated hard-working middle class out of their tax dollars. The speech also served as the foundation Reagan’s national addresses throughout the remainder of his career (Reagan 1976, Reagan 1980, Reagan 1994).
The insertion of coded language found in the “A Time for Choosing” speech has carried through to the post-Reagan era presidencies. The racially stigmatizing language, that has constructed the conservative frame of the “forgotten man,” has transformed the way presidents advocate for and against the government’s commitment to the social safety net. Reagan’s linkage of social spending programs to negative images of African Americans, and other non-whites undermines, undermined policy debates and conversations to show that Whites were provided with unearned, economic advantages under the New Deal. He did not include historical facts that show that Franklin D. Roosevelt negotiated with Southern Democrats to accept legislation that excluded non-Whites from receiving benefits solely on the basis of their race, and thus gave them an unearned advantage (Katzenelson 2005, 21; Lowndes 2008, 14). The study argues that the racialized language, as well as the ahistorical explanations and the insertion of Movement Conservatism into presidential politics, has empowered a conservative alternative to the “forgotten man” that not only reinforces anger and resentment, but also has convinced many White voters that social spending is inherently harmful to their economic interests (Chappell 2011, 35; Engels 2010, 304; Lowndes 2008, 102).

The reaction of racially conservative White voters to the election of Barack Obama, and their support for his immediate successor, Donald Trump, provides undeniable evidence that racial resentment cultivated by Reagan and his conservative allies continues to influence presidential politics. This chapter explores underlying factors in contemporary American politics that serve to perpetuate a political environment that is not just racialized, but encourages voters to reject social spending, even when they can benefit from government programs. These factors include the phenomenon of the “spillover of racialization.” This is an aspect of American politics that demonstrate how policies that impact Americans of all races such as healthcare, affordable housing, infrastructure, and increases to the minimum wage, are unnecessarily racialized (Sears and Tessler 2010, 79).

Additionally, Chapter One examines how the Southern Strategy has impacted the Democratic Party and its presidents. Scholars who support liberal activism argue that the Democratic Party has capitulated to Reagan’s conservatism by the formation of party organizations such as the Democratic
Leadership Committee (DLC). The DLC advocated for centrist policies that fell short of addressing the problems of systemic racism so that the Democratic Party could garner the support of White middle-class voters (Lopez 2013; Reed 2014; Williams 2003). Further, in response to Republican welfare reform policies, Democratic presidents have embraced the “politics of responsibility” which argues that the problems of the poor, and poor Blacks in particular, is that they are not held accountable for behavior that perpetuates their poverty (Greenbaum 2015, 160-162).

Although four decades have passed since Reagan’s successful presidential campaign, the continued use of Reagan’s racially stigmatizing language still poses challenges to our efforts to address race and inequality. The perpetuation of Republican presidential politics continues to promote resentment with claims that government programs benefit Black interests over White interests. It serves to reduce the likelihood that Democratic presidential candidates and presidents will address transformative reform policies to reduce poverty or aggressively confronts the social conditions caused by systemic racism. Thus, the “politics of responsibility” is a strategy meant to ensure that the Southern Strategy remains a sustaining factor in presidential politics.

Chapter Two provides an in-depth analysis of the story of the Black “forgotten man” from Emancipation to the end of the 20th Century Civil Rights Movement in 1968. It challenges the assumption that African Americans are, and have been, the illegitimate recipients of government spending and protections. The chapter discusses the historical cycle of Black progress and White backlash that has shaped American politics since the end of slavery. This history is described in the following four time frames: the post-Civil War and Reconstruction, the imposition of Jim Crow and the turn of the 20th Century, post-World War I activism, post-World War II activism, and the mid-century Civil Rights movement.

The chapter strives to counter the misuses of civil rights history that often fails to accurately recount the government’s failure to protect African Americans from state laws that restrict their civil rights and from the vigilante violence of White citizens. Instead of learning about the cycles of backlash, Americans are taught that the experience of race in America is one of linear progress. In other words,
there were no setbacks, and consequently, the country is constantly moving forward and remaining a

The chapter also describes how the revision of civil rights history allows presidents to make
inaccurate claims that because Jim Crow laws are now illegal, the United States has evolved into a
colorblind nation (Theoharis 2018, 6). The research explains that the United States is not and has never
evolved into a color-blind nation. In fact, it appears that the use of a color-blind narrative is also a means
to avoid discuss the difficult setbacks, which includes the use of the 13th Amendment to re-enslave
African Americans; the deadly terrorism and the destruction of Black communities by the means of
lynchings and race riots; and, the existence of racial oppression outside of the South. This flawed
narrative is intended to minimize the problem of racial inequality as a national problem.

However, the study argues that African Americans could not rely on presidents to address the
racial concerns of their times. This was the case if the president was a racial conservative such as
Woodrow Wilson or moderate or a liberal leaning president such Lyndon Johnson. History also shows
that African Americans found that presidents placed their individual political interests and electoral
viability over their significant needs for safety and concerns for their communities, political and social
interests. Therefore, the institution of the American presidency has not served as a reliable ally for
African Americans to find legislative or legal relief for the systemic inequality and social injustices that
ensures that they have the same opportunities that have been provided to White Americans. Chapter Two
concludes with the final speech delivered by Martin Luther King, Jr. King. He advocated for the
“forgotten Black man” and reminded America that in the 100 years since the end of slavery Black men
and women were still struggling to gain the rights due to them as American citizens. And that in spite of
the efforts to suppress the progress of the Civil Rights Movement, the fight for freedom and full equality
will continue.

Chapter Three discusses the literature related to the development of the Southern Strategy and its
impact on the American presidency from Richard Nixon and through Donald Trump. The chapter is
divided into two parts. The first part focuses on the impact of the Civil Rights Movement on the political
order of presidential politics. This discussion explains that the “racial backlash” of the Civil Rights Movement did not begin in 1968 with Richard Nixon’s presidential campaign. The opposition to modern Civil Rights Movement began during the 1940s as a result of the political activism of the Double V Campaign organized by Black World War II veterans to fight for freedom against tyranny both in the United States and abroad. To explain this opposition, the literature review provides an overview of the development of White supremacy as a political ideology and the influence of Charles Wallace Collins writings for the Southern segregationist Democrats (Collins 1947, 236-257). The chapter explains the evolution of massive resistance and how conservatism influenced the political activism in the South, North, Midwest, and West, and transformed the Republican and Democratic parties.

The second part of Chapter Three focuses on the institution of the presidency from 1968 through the presidency of Donald Trump. The sections provide a linear analysis and historical overview of their presidencies to show how each president used racially stigmatizing language to either take advantage of or to mitigate racial resentment. The analysis also includes racial controversies that occurred during their presidential campaigns and during their administrations. The section on that covers Republican presidents includes discussion on Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, George W. Bush, and Donald Trump. The section that covers Democratic presidents includes Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama.

Chapter Four focuses on the methodology and research design for this study. This discussion provides an overview of the benefits of comparative case studies to determine the prevalence of “the Reagan Effect” as candidates and during their presidencies by measuring the prevalence and pattern of racially stigmatizing code words to express their views on social spending. There is an extended explanation of the steps taken to develop a comprehensive analysis of the rhetoric of Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama. The chapter describes the following: the steps taken to construct the cases; the sources for the units of analysis; why specific categories of speeches were develop to review the speeches, measures taken to ensure that the speeches selected are appropriate and are accurate selections; the development of categories for racial code word;
and, an explanation of the software used for election and how the software managed the categories of coded language to determine the if and how such words were used in presidential speeches.

And finally, Chapter Five reports the results of the content analysis conducted for this research in two sections. The first section discussion provides the results of the analysis of the case studies for Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama. Each of these case studies are developed to review the “Common Speeches” and “Social Policy Speeches” by examining how often racial code words appeared in “word frequency” tests; and “keyword-in-context” tests for the four categories of code words which are positive moral values, negative moral values, stigmatizing policy failures, poverty and impoverished communities. The second section provides the results of the combined analysis of the two categories of speeches by the presidents’ political parties. The analysis of this study concludes that there is a “Reagan Effect.” Presidents in both parties use racially coded language. And, in spite of President Obama’s race, he still used racially coded language in his remarks as well.

**Limitations of the Study**

The study focused on the prevalence of racially stigmatizing language by presidents to describe their positions on spending for the social safety net. It also focused on America’s racial history. It did not address America’s history of White poverty and how presidents address poor White communities. For example, the study does not examine how presidents address issues of poverty in rural and low-income White communities. One can argue that study on the impact the views of the presidential speeches in informing the political values social safety net for low-income Whites because their electoral opposition to social reform makes the passage of progressive social legislation very difficult to achieve. In his book, *Dying of Whiteness: How the Politics of Racial Resentment is Killing American’s Heartland*, Jonathan Metzel (2019) argues that rural Whites are refusing to vote for policies that could benefit their own individual interests solely because they support an anti-social policy, racist myth that minority groups are receiving generous benefits that they do not deserve. As a result, because these voters are unable to
evaluate how the policies may benefit them because they are unable to see past the frame of racial resentment, they are dying prematurely. These voters a willing to voter for Republican, “White backlash conservatism,” or “backlash austerity” policies that negatively impacting their life expectancy rates rather than to share political power and social status with people of color (Metzel 2019, 11-12, 14, 221).

Metzel’s research is a contemporary example of Sears and Tessler’s theory of “spillover of racialization” (Sears and Tessler 2010, 79). In this instance, rural and working class White voters have accepted the racialization of social policies that should not be viewed through a racial frame at the expense of their own lives. Recent reports are showing that the lack of social and economic development in states and communities where these voters live is contributing to their early deaths. The lack of social mobility is increasingly linked to a rise in suicides as well as alcohol and drug related deaths in middle-aged working class White. Not only are they casting votes for representatives that support cuts in healthcare, education and drug treatment programs, they are casting votes against increasing funding for the infrastructure that is essential to providing access to jobs, and therefore, contributing to the system that imposes economic and social inequality on their own lives (BBC 2017; Hoxie 2017).

The conditions in rural and blue collar White communities’ merit further examination. It is important to examine how presidents and presidential candidates contribute the beliefs of voters, who may be living in overwhelmingly White states or communities, and still believe that their station in life is directly related to social spending for racial minorities and not their own votes. We live in a time when our country is truly coming a multiracial nation, yet we are still unable to find common ground and consensus on issues that should not viewed in within racist frames that perpetuate the belief that Whites are the victims of Black and non-White progress and social development in areas that remain predominately or exclusively White.

The limitation of this study is that there is not a basis to compare the rhetoric that presidents have used to discuss the causes and policy prescriptions needed to address poverty in predominantly White areas. Therefore, we do not know if presidents articulated words of sympathy to or about rural poor Whites. Do they place the blame for their impoverished conditions on their individual behavior? Do
presidents use an “us versus them” frame when discussing the conditions poverty in White communities as they address White middle class audiences? And finally, we don’t know if there are different patterns of speech between Republican and Democratic presidents that they may have used to discuss White poverty. This kind of analysis has the potential to be useful in the discussion of income inequality. While there are often many factors that cause poverty, the continued racialization of the issue impedes the discussion of policy changes and social investments that can alleviate problems that create poverty across racial lines. And, therefore helps the American society to have a more collective, multiracial response to problems that produce income inequality.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

The discussion of the emerging problem of the declining mortality rates of low income and working class Whites prompts the following question: Will these voters continue to be motivated to vote for candidates that cultivate White resentment even though the evidence is becoming clear that their votes against social development is not just hurting non-White Americans economically, but also cutting their own lives short? It is important to know how the institution of the presidency is contributing to the political bargain that these individuals are making because of their unwillingness to accept the principles of a multicultural America.

The following are suggestions for future research that would help to address the shortcomings of this dissertation. This study can be replicated to examine how presidents discuss the issues related to poverty in predominantly White rural areas. The same content analysis can be used to examine the similarities and differences of how poverty is addressed in common speeches among broad, multi-racial middle class audiences and with audiences in rural and poor communities. The lists that were used in the content analysis may need some adjustments to identify topics that are specific to rural audiences. However, it will allow researchers to examine if presidents blame the poor for their economic or social conditions on problems such as drug use or stereotypical bad behavior. Or do presidents focus on other factors such as the loss of jobs due to trade agreements, outsourcing, or the lack of investments due to a
declining tax base? Although, the President is not the only politician that uses the “us versus them” frame, as the most prominent leader in the country, the president’s rhetorical frames are more likely to shape the political views of Americans more than political officials in less influential offices.

Conclusion

Presidential Speeches: The impact on the “Forgotten Man”

As this study concludes, I revisit the quote from Barack Obama’s “A More Perfect Union” speech to discuss the challenges that race continues to pose on the American democracy.

But race is an issue that I believe this nation cannot afford to ignore right now. We would be making the same mistake that Reverend Wright made in his offending sermons about America - to simplify and stereotype and amplify the negative to the point that it distorts reality. The fact is that the comments that have been made and the issues that have surfaced over the last few weeks reflect the complexities of race in this country that we've never really worked through - a part of our union that we have yet to perfect. And if we walk away now, if we simply retreat into our respective corners, we will never be able to come together and solve challenges like health care, or education, or the need to find good jobs for every American (Obama 2008).

This study has demonstrated that the perpetual insertion of the Southern Strategy into presidential speeches has made it significantly more difficult for the nation to begin needed discussions on the legitimacy of the social safety net. The normalization of racially stigmatizing code words impeded the development of a national dialogue that allow Americans to examine harsh truths about racial policies and practices that created seemingly irreconcilable differences between Whites and non-Whites, and more particularly African Americans. The marginalization has arguably transformed the institution of the presidency so that it is difficult to discuss controversial social, political, and economic policies. These policies include the following: understanding the impact of mass incarceration of Black and Brown men, and the role of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution plays in this issue; domestic terrorism and the subsequent destruction of Black wealth; and the development of federal policies that excluded Blacks while providing Whites with unearned advantages with systems to build wealth. The study also questions how the American government continues to allows members of our society and suffer from extreme poverty and violence due to racialized policies.
This study also demonstrated that Reagan’s reiteration of the Southern Strategy did transform the way post-Reagan era presidents addressed the social safety net. Craig Smith (2017) argument confirms that Reagan’s rhetoric was critical in the development of Movement Conservatism largely due to the way that he spoke to non-Republican voters. He encouraged them not to allow personality to determine their politics but asked voters to concentrate on issues that impacted their lives. Reagan inserted figures and statistics in his public remarks to demonstrate how the government was wasting money individuals who were receiving the government assistance while society had failed taxpayers by encroaching on their freedoms. Although Smith does not discuss Reagan’s stigmatizing racialized rhetoric, he does discuss his call for a color-blind America where Americans are not known by their hyphenated ethnic and racial identities. He quotes Reagan’s statement that politicians abuse voters affinities to ethnic identities by making cynical political promises as they solicit votes (Smith 2017, 41-46). Smith’s argument can be interpreted as description of the realignment of White voters into the Republican Party as a reaction to the liberalization of voting laws that permitted an increasingly influential block of non-White voters into the political system.

Reagan’s rhetoric can also be seen as a current reiteration of conservatism that proposes that government spending for policies that address inequality as a threat to the individual freedoms of hard working Americans. Roland and Jones (2008) suggest that the conservatives have increased their political influence and electoral success by transforming the narrative on the American dream by defining personal success as an individual effort, not a collective effort. The use of words to frame the American dream as an individual effort means that success is due to the individual’s ability to assert his moral values. Roland and Jones argue that Ronald Reagan and the Reagan revolution recast the conservative narrative and the meaning of individual responsibility and social values as well as delegitimized the role that government played more than had been done by previous presidents (Roland and Jones 2008, 427-433).
The study confirms Vanessa Beasley’s (2004) assertion that presidents are reluctant to engage in discussions of race. Primarily, race is identified as a problem and not a fact. For example, when African Americans are described, they are treated differently than other “hyphenated” Americans. Instead of being discussed as a part of the fabric of the nation, they are connected with social problems and unrest. Beasley states that African Americans are not seen as individual human beings with individual successes and shortcomings. Instead they are grouped together as collective problem to society. Further, she argues that this framework allows presidents to construct and “us” versus “them” argument without discussing race. The discussion of social problems reminds voters that “they” cannot be a part of “us” or “our community” because “they” have fundamentally different values and make different choice. Even though race is not overtly mentioned in this rhetoric, it is palatable to the audience (Beasley 2004, 96-98).

The findings in this study are also in line with Mary Stuckey’s (2004) argument that presidents are fundamentally conservative in their governing processes. This conservatism is due to the inherent political constraints of the institution of the presidency. Presidents do not serve as leaders of cutting edge, progressive cultural change. They are not risk-takers and try to avoid controversial issues. Stucky states that even when presidents engage in forward-thinking social justice agendas, they do so by exercising a high degree of caution. Therefore, their political and rhetorical choices are measured and conservative in nature. Additionally, when faced with circumstances that will change the social or economic orders of the nation, presidents strive to maintain the political alliances and structures that brought them to power (Stuckey 2004, 8, 338).

It appears that in spite of the growth and influence of a multicultural American society, the imposition of extreme, racially based social policies makes the institution of the presidency an inadequate platform to engage in complex policy discussions is which racial resentment is a factor. As this study demonstrates, American history is replete with examples to show that there have always been segments of White Americans who do not want women, or racial minorities to have political power and social mobility for non-White communities. Presidents have not used the power of their office to challenge these forces and explain why systemic racism hurts White and Black working and middle class voters.
Stuckey makes additional points that are central to the research in this study. Many Americans have shifted their long-held political allegiances from one political party to another. However, these shifts in party identities are often significantly influenced by rhetoric. It is a reflection of the national values that signal that we still live in a country were race plays a role in determining which citizens are most welcomed and valued in society (Stuckey 2017, 268, 270). Stuckey’s observation also prompts the question of whether or not racialized rhetoric will be eliminated from president speeches. The continuation of racialized code words in presidential speeches suggests that racial resentment remains a difficult political problem.

Daniel Gillion (2016) gives an alternate perspective on the assumption that Americans have common values and goals but are unable to see past their party affiliation. This perspective was examined in Chapters One and Three regarding to the adaptation of colorblind language. Gillion states that discussions on race are viewed negatively for two reasons. First, the economic successes of some minorities have led to the belief that race-conscious rhetoric and government actions has served its purpose, and therefore are irrelevant to the current debate related to income inequality. Secondly, conservatives have argued that discussing racial inequities are not just unnecessary, but produce political divisions (Gillion 2016, 34-35). These assumptions enable us to deduce that African Americans are not seen as individual human beings with individual successes and shortcomings. Instead they are grouped together as one and labeled as a social problem.

As the scholars and citizens navigate the latest reiteration of White backlash that was manifested during the Obama and Trump presidencies, it is clear that the perpetuation of racial divisions hampers he nation’s ability to secure upward mobility to both working and middle class Americans. As Senator Obama predicted in 2008, our racial divisions continue to hamper our ability to find solutions for the pressing issues of our time: education, healthcare, infrastructure, the inability to renew investment the social safety net; and the development of pathways to them middle class that reduce the impact of economic inequality. The racial stigmatization of social policies allows Americans to continually remain
separated. And as it pertains to this study, presidents, and their racialized rhetoric, are significant contributing factors to our continued racial divisions.
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Appendix A: Definition of Terms and Concepts

For the purposes of this study only, the definitions provided are for the following terms:

**American exceptionalism** - American exceptionalism is the ideology that views the United States as superior and distinct from all other nations because of its Judeo-Christian beliefs in the values of freedom, liberty, and democratic political institutions (Feagin, 2012, p. 23). Feagin argues that American exceptionalism is based in Eurocentric views that have influenced national values since colonization. The term marginalizes the values and contributions of people of color by associating negative characteristics to their personal behavior, physical appearances, and intellectual capabilities as being inferior to White Americans (Feagin, 2012, p. 30).

**Anti-big government** - The anti-big government philosophy, as defined by Movement Conservatives, is often referred to as a political philosophy that believes in limiting the role that government plays in constructing American society and influencing the lives of individual Americans (Davenport & Lloyd, 2013, p. 52). It is also referred to as efforts to reduce the role and size of the federal government by reducing spending and regulatory authority (Beland and deChantal, 2004, p. 249-251).

**Forgotten Man** - The “forgotten man” is a term used by both conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats to represent their advocacy on behalf of hard-working Americans who embody the ideal American values of having a strong work ethic, contributing to the national well-being, and providing for their families. However, they are forgotten because government policies do not represent their interests. For Democrats and liberals, the contemporary definition comes from FDR’s 1932 presidential campaign speech titled “The Forgotten Man” (Roosevelt 1932). Roosevelt’s forgotten man was the working class individual who fell into deep poverty during the Great Depression. Roosevelt advocated for government programs that lifted workers out of poverty.
For Republicans and conservatives, the term is often attributed to the 19th-century social scientist William Graham Sumner’s essay titled “The Forgotten Man.” Summers’ forgotten man is the victim of reform laws and practices, philanthropists, and social scientists. Sumner argued that government efforts on behalf of the downtrodden are unduly burdensome and force the middle and upper class taxpayers to finance social reforms against their will. Sumner argued that government reform and intervention come at a cost to middle class citizens who are not impacted by the social problems that government programs are directed to address. He believed that government is an unnecessary intrusion on the liberties of individuals (Sumner, 2011, p. 314-315).

Massive resistance - The term massive resistance was defined by segregationist U.S. Senator Harry Byrd (D-VA) to join Southern White supremacy groups with Northern ultra conservatives to build political and social support against the Supreme Court’s Brown vs. Board of Education (1954) decision that ordered the desegregation of American public schools (Lowndes, 2008, pp. 39-40). Conservatives viewed massive resistance as a means of protecting the “Southern way of life” of racial segregation from the undue intrusion of the federal government’s orders to desegregate schools, businesses, and other public institutions (Bartley, 1999, p. 17; Lassiter, 2006, p. 30; Williams, 2003, p. 117).

Movement Conservatives - Movement Conservatives are Republicans whose ideology is based on the beliefs and strict interpretation of the Constitution to protect the wealthy from wealth redistribution, to dismantle the Federal government, and to reinstate state’s rights. Historically, Movement Conservatives were against the New Deal and any distribution of tax dollars directed to African Americans. As the Civil Rights Movement developed in the Southern states, Movement Conservatives and White Southerners found common ground in their opposition to desegregation and consequently formed the modern Republican Party (Cox Richardson, 2014, pp. 244, 264).
**Nullification** - Nullification is also known as “interposition.” This is a theory and political rallying call for massive resistance that originated in antebellum South. The term originated in a speech delivered to the United States Senate in 1833 by Senator John C. Calhoun of South Carolina. His speech was a statement of protest that argued that the Northern states had imposed regulations and taxes that intentionally disadvantaged Southern states. Calhoun stated that nullification, or the intentional disregard of these laws, was a lawful means for Southern states to protest laws considered unconstitutional and oppressive to the South (Calhoun, 2014, p. 5). During the Civil Rights era of the 1950s and 1960s, nullification was applied as a justification to nullify, or prevent, Federal efforts to enforce the South to abide by the Supreme Court’s orders to integrate schools and end Jim Crow laws and practices (Bartley, 1999, p. 126-127, Lowndes, 2008, p. 40-41).

**Politics of pathology** - This term was developed by social scientists in the 1930s. It is associated with Gunner Myrdal’s observations of personal behavior of the Negroes who lived in poverty and whose personal choices and behavior were considered offensive to Whites. These perceived pathologies included unwed pregnancies, female heads of household, welfare dependency, and absent fathers from the home. Myrdal asserted the belief that policy makers used the perception of this behavior to justify laws that enforced social and legal inequalities (Myrdal, 1942, p. 947). The concept of social pathology also served as the framework that Daniel Patrick Moynihan used to develop the Moynihan Report, officially titled: “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action,” in 1964 to describe how racism damaged the social development of the African American community (Geary, 2015, pp. 8 and 72; Greenbaum, 2015, p. 10-11).

At the time of the report’s release, Moynihan served as the Assistant Secretary for Policy Planning and Research at the Department of Labor under the Lyndon Johnson administration. The report attributed the problems of Black inequality to the family structure. Specifically, the Black family was dysfunctional because Black men were unemployed and absent from the home. As a consequence, they were emasculated because of their inability to serve as the head of the household. Moynihan also asserted
in the report that female-headed households promoted a cycle of behavior that led to social problems such as teen pregnancy, unmarried parenthood, criminal behavior, and low educational achievement. Moynihan concluded that the cycle of pathology would be a generational problem unless the government implemented policy changes (Greenbaum, 2015, pp. 9-11).

**Politics of respectability** - This philosophy developed at the turn of the twentieth-century among elite Black leaders like W.E.B. Dubois and Booker T. Washington to encourage poor blacks to change the perception of their deviant individual behavior, such as the lack of work ethic, out of wedlock births, and alcohol dependency, and ultimately adapt to the acceptable social norms of Whites to gain respect and equality with the White social structure (Harris, 2012, pp. 117-118).

**Implicit racial appeals** - Implicit racial appeals are used to cultivate racial stereotypes, fears, and resentments while appearing not to do so. Implicit racial appeals convey the same values and social messages as explicit racial appeals. However, instead of using overt racist language and descriptions, they use more obscure references to race considered less offensive to social norms but designed to appeal to or cultivate racial resentment (Mendelberg, 2001, pp. 8-9). Philpot describes this as a political practice of “color-coding” that portrays Whites as the victims of policies that unduly provide assistance to undeserving minority beneficiaries. Color-coding creates polarizing racial divisions among the electorate (Philpot, 2007, p. 52). Implicit racial appeals to Whites refer to minorities without using words considered racist to associate policies and social characteristics with Blacks, Latinos, and other people of color. These appeals are most often used to discuss issues related to welfare, crime, immigration, and affirmative action. They also imply that spending and government intervention on behalf of minorities is an affront to middle class voters and harmful to their economic interests (Haney Lopez, 2013, pp. 19-21). The recipients of government sponsored welfare benefits are portrayed as abusers of government programs who are too lazy to work or, alternatively, cheating the system by engaging in fraud (Chappell, 2011, p. 217).
**Racial Resentment** - This is also known as “White backlash.” This term describes the anger and resentment of White voters who express their disapproval of government programs perceived as unfairly benefiting racial minorities at the expense of White voters (Lowndes, 2008, p. 5; Edsall & Edsall, 1992, p. 206). Racial resentment is often cultivated by a narrative used to counter arguments of those in favor of applying government action to mitigate the persistent barriers of systematic racism. White backlash uses terms such as “color blind society” and “reverse racism” that suggest that the government effort to reduce structural racism and provide social mobility to Blacks were made by unduly harming Whites (Feagan, 2012, p. 194).

**Southern Strategy** - A term first coined by Barry Goldwater in 1961 to support his assertion that the Republican Party would not receive a significant percentage of the Negro vote in the 1964 and 1968 presidential elections to win the White House. Therefore, the Republican Party would be best served by cultivating racial animosity and taking advantage of the resentment of Southern Democratic White voters who were angry about Lyndon Johnson’s actions to end segregation and expand voting rights and court ordered school desegregation (Bass & DeVries, 1976, p. 27).

**Stigmatized social safety net** - This term describes the values assigned by politicians, political writers, and the public to distinguish between the deserving and the undeserving poor. The undeserving poor are often described as those abusing the public funds or unnecessarily dependent on government welfare because of their perceived poor individual choices. Therefore, they can survive without the benefits (Geary, 2015, p. 35; Quagdano, 1996, p. 19). The stigma is often attached to racially coded language that associates minorities as the undeserving poor who are unnecessarily or illegally taking advantage of the benefits and, therefore, harming the economic interests of Whites (Gilens, 2009, p. 67). Because the social stigmatized safety net in American politics is often depicted as an individual moral failing, individuals who were formerly middle and working class that become poor during downturns by
becoming unemployed and underemployed often express shame for needing government assistance (Sherman, 2013, p. 413-415).
Appendix B - Primary Code Words

These are words and phrases that commonly appear in presidential and political speeches/discourse related to poverty and related issues.

able-bodied
absent father
absent parent
abuse
addiction
African American
Afro-American
bigotry
Black
born out of wedlock
broken families
broken home
cheat
cocaine
crack cocaine
crime
crime infested
crime ridden
culture of dependency
delinquency
dependency
destruction
dignity
dignity of work
drug abuse
drug addicted
drug addict
drug infested
drug ridden
drugs
epidemic
ethics
expectation
family value
fatherless home
food stamp
fraud
ghetto
handout
hard work
hard working American
hard working American taxpayer
health care reform
Hispanic
illegal
illegal drugs
illegitimate
immoral
indecency
indecent
inner city
inner city destruction
inner city youth
Latino
low expectations
low income
low income communities
mend it
minorities
moral
needy
out of wedlock
out of wedlock birth
personal responsibility
pestilence
play by the rule
poor
poor communities
poverty
predator
quota
racism
respectable
scourge
self-respect
single mom
single mother
single parent
soft bigotry
super predator
true need
truly needy
unemployed
unemployment
unmarried mother
urban
value of work
values
violence
welfare applicant
welfare benefit
welfare dependency
welfare reform
welfare rolls
welfare spending
White
work hard
working poor
work requirement
Appendix C:

List of Contributing Scholars for the Development of the List of Racial Code Words

Dewey M. Clayton, Ph.D.
Professor of Political Science
Department of Political Science
University of Louisville

Date of contact: September 23, 2018

Martin Gilens, Ph.D.
Professor of Politics
Department of Politics
Princeton University

Date of contact: July 27, 2018
*Provided guidance on the use of stigmatizing words within and out of context and intent of the speaker.

Daniel Q. Gillion, Ph.D.
Julie Beren Platt and Marc E. Platt
Presidential Associate Professor
Political Science Department
University of Pennsylvania

Date of contact: September 13, 2018

Susan Greenbaum, Ph.D.
Professor Emerita of Anthropology
University of South Florida

Date of contact: April 11, 2018
*Suggested that I reach out to scholars who have published work related to racialized politics.
Athena M. King, Ph.D. MPA
Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science and Public Administration
Jackson State University

Date of contact: September 20, 2018

Tali Mendelberg, Ph.D.
John Work Garrett Professor of Politics
Department of Politics
Princeton University

Date of contact: April 10, 2018
*Confirmed that there is no definitive list.

Sherri L. Wallace, Ph.D.
Professor of Political Science
Department of Political Science
University of Louisville

Date of contact: September 14, 2018

List of dissertation sources for declined or did not respond to request for assistance.

Ange Marie Hancock-Alfaro, Ph.D. (no response)
Dean's Professor of Gender Studies and Professor of Political Science and Gender Studies
Department of Political Science
University of Southern California

Dates of contact: April 29, 2018 and July 27, 2018

Ibram X. Kendi, Ph.D. (declined)
Professor and Director
The Antiracist Research and Policy Center
American University

Date of contact: May 11, 2018

Tasha Philpot, Ph.D. (no response)
Associate Professor of Government
Department of Government
University of Texas at Austin

Date of contact: July 27, 2018

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Moral Values</th>
<th>Negative Moral Values</th>
<th>Stigmatizing Policy Failures and Outcomes</th>
<th>Words Associated with Poverty and Impoverished Communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dignity of work</td>
<td>abuse</td>
<td>affirmative action</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethics</td>
<td>addiction</td>
<td>discrimination</td>
<td>Afro American</td>
</tr>
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<td>family values</td>
<td>at-risk</td>
<td>food stamp</td>
<td>Black</td>
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<tr>
<td>hard work</td>
<td>bigotry</td>
<td>government assistance</td>
<td>cocaine</td>
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<td>hard working American</td>
<td>breakdown of family</td>
<td>hand out</td>
<td>crack cocaine</td>
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<tr>
<td>hard working tax payer</td>
<td>broken famil</td>
<td>handout</td>
<td>crime infested</td>
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<tr>
<td>healthy marriage</td>
<td>cheat</td>
<td>low standard</td>
<td>drug epidemic</td>
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<td>intact famil$</td>
<td>child support collection</td>
<td>meal ticket</td>
<td>drug infested</td>
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<tr>
<td>mend it</td>
<td>culture of dependency</td>
<td>mediocrity</td>
<td>drug ridden</td>
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<td>moral</td>
<td>delinquency</td>
<td>neglect</td>
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<td>needy</td>
<td>dependency</td>
<td>predator</td>
<td>gang violence</td>
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<td>pay the bills</td>
<td>deviant behavior</td>
<td>quit on</td>
<td>ghetto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal responsibility</td>
<td>dispar</td>
<td>quota</td>
<td>inner city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>play by the rule</td>
<td>drug abuse</td>
<td>racism</td>
<td>Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>promote the ethic of hard work</td>
<td>drug addict</td>
<td>scourage</td>
<td>low income community$</td>
</tr>
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<td>respectable</td>
<td>drug dealer</td>
<td>soft bigotry of low expectation</td>
<td>marginalized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respectable</td>
<td>fast food</td>
<td>super predator</td>
<td>minority$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibility a way of life</td>
<td>fatherless home</td>
<td>systemic racism</td>
<td>postellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsible</td>
<td>fraud</td>
<td>underemployed</td>
<td>poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self reliance</td>
<td>gang violence</td>
<td>urban decay</td>
<td>poor communit$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self respect</td>
<td>gang</td>
<td>violence</td>
<td>poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stay off drug</td>
<td>hopeless</td>
<td>welfare</td>
<td>section 8 housing</td>
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<td>strong famil$</td>
<td>hopelessness</td>
<td>welfare benefits</td>
<td>single mom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>struggle famil$</td>
<td>illegal</td>
<td>welfare roll</td>
<td>single mother</td>
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<td>traditional value</td>
<td>illegal drug</td>
<td>welfare spending</td>
<td>single parent</td>
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<td>truly needy</td>
<td>illegitimate</td>
<td>trapped on welfare</td>
<td>slums</td>
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<td>immoral</td>
<td>antigang</td>
<td>street corner</td>
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<td>welfare to work</td>
<td>juvenile delinquent</td>
<td>able-bodied</td>
<td>unemployment</td>
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<td>work ethic</td>
<td>nihilism</td>
<td>programs robbed recipients of their dignity</td>
<td>unmarried mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work hard</td>
<td>born out of wedlock</td>
<td>trapped them into a dependency</td>
<td>urban</td>
</tr>
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<td>work hard and play by the rule</td>
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Appendix E

Ronald Reagan

Address on Behalf of Senator Barry Goldwater: "A Time for Choosing"

October 27, 1964

Thank you very much. Thank you and good evening. The sponsor has been identified, but unlike most television programs, the performer hasn't been provided with a script. As a matter of fact, I have been permitted to choose my own ideas regarding the choice that we face in the next few weeks.

I have spent most of my life as a Democrat. I recently have seen fit to follow another course. I believe that the issues confronting us cross party lines. Now, one side in this campaign has been telling us that the issues of this election are the maintenance of peace and prosperity. The line has been used "We've never had it so good."

But I have an uncomfortable feeling that this prosperity isn't something on which we can base our hopes for the future. No nation in history has ever survived a tax burden that reached a third of its national income. Today, 37 cents of every dollar earned in this country is the tax collector's share, and yet our government continues to spend $17 million a day more than the government takes in. We haven't balanced our budget 28 out of the last 34 years. We have raised our debt limit three times in the last twelve months, and now our national debt is one and a half times bigger than all the combined debts of all the nations in the world. We have $15 billion in gold in our treasury—we don't own an ounce. Foreign dollar claims are $27.3 billion, and we have just had announced that the dollar of 1939 will now purchase 45 cents in its total value.

As for the peace that we would preserve, I wonder who among us would like to approach the wife or mother whose husband or son has died in South Vietnam and ask them if they think this is a peace that should be maintained indefinitely. Do they mean peace, or do they mean we just want to be left in peace? There can be no real peace while one American is dying some place in the world for the rest of us. We are at war with the most dangerous enemy that has ever faced mankind in his long climb from the swamp to the stars, and it has been said if we lose that war, and in doing so lose this way of freedom of ours, history will record with the greatest astonishment that those who had the most to lose did the least to prevent its happening. Well, I think it's time we ask ourselves if we still know the freedoms that were intended for us by the Founding Fathers.

Not too long ago two friends of mine were talking to a Cuban refugee, a businessman who had escaped from Castro, and in the midst of his story one of my friends turned to the other and said, "We don't know how lucky we are." And the Cuban stopped and said, "How lucky you are! I had someplace to escape to." In that sentence he told us the entire story. If we lose freedom here, there is no place to escape to. This is the last stand on Earth. And this idea that government is beholden to the people, that it has no other source of power except to sovereign people, is still the newest and most unique idea in all the long history of man's relation to man. This is the issue of this election. Whether we believe in our capacity for self-
government or whether we abandon the American revolution and confess that a little intellectual elite in a far-distant capital can plan our lives for us better than we can plan them ourselves.

You and I are told increasingly that we have to choose between a left or right, but I would like to suggest that there is no such thing as a left or right. There is only an up or down--up to a man's age-old dream, the ultimate in individual freedom consistent with law and order--or down to the ant heap totalitarianism, and regardless of their sincerity, their humanitarian motives, those who would trade our freedom for security have embarked on this downward course.

In this vote-harvesting time, they use terms like the "Great Society," or as we were told a few days ago by the President, we must accept a "greater government activity in the affairs of the people." But they have been a little more explicit in the past and among themselves--and all of the things that I now will quote have appeared in print. These are not Republican accusations. For example, they have voices that say "the cold war will end through acceptance of a not undemocratic socialism." Another voice says that the profit motive has become outmoded, it must be replaced by the incentives of the welfare state; or our traditional system of individual freedom is incapable of solving the complex problems of the 20th century. Senator Fullbright has said at Stanford University that the Constitution is outmoded. He referred to the president as our moral teacher and our leader, and he said he is hobbled in his task by the restrictions in power imposed on him by this antiquated document. He must be freed so that he can do for us what he knows is best. And Senator Clark of Pennsylvania, another articulate spokesman, defines liberalism as "meeting the material needs of the masses through the full power of centralized government." Well, I for one resent it when a representative of the people refers to you and me--the free man and woman of this country--as "the masses." This is a term we haven't applied to ourselves in America. But beyond that, "the full power of centralized government"--this was the very thing the Founding Fathers sought to minimize. They knew that governments don't control things. A government can't control the economy without controlling people. And they know when a government sets out to do that, it must use force and coercion to achieve its purpose. They also knew, those Founding Fathers, that outside of its legitimate functions, government does nothing as well or as economically as the private sector of the economy.

Now, we have no better example of this than the government's involvement in the farm economy over the last 30 years. Since 1955, the cost of this program has nearly doubled. One-fourth of farming in America is responsible for 85% of the farm surplus. Three-fourths of farming is out on the free market and has known a 21% increase in the per capita consumption of all its produce. You see, that one-fourth of farming is regulated and controlled by the federal government. In the last three years we have spent $43 in feed grain program for every bushel of corn we don't grow.

Senator Humphrey last week charged that Barry Goldwater as President would seek to eliminate farmers. He should do his homework a little better, because he will find out that we have had a decline of 5 million in the farm population under these government programs. He will also find that the Democratic administration has sought to get from Congress an extension of the farm program to include that three-fourths that is now free. He will find that they have also asked for the right to imprison farmers who wouldn't keep books as prescribed by the federal government. The Secretary of Agriculture asked for the right to seize farms through condemnation and resell them to other individuals. And contained in that same program was a provision that would have allowed the federal government to remove 2 million farmers from the soil.
At the same time, there has been an increase in the Department of Agriculture employees. There is now one for every 30 farms in the United States, and still they can't tell us how 66 shiploads of grain headed for Austria disappeared without a trace and Billie Sol Estes never left shore.

Every responsible farmer and farm organization has repeatedly asked the government to free the farm economy, but who are farmers to know what is best for them? The wheat farmers voted against a wheat program. The government passed it anyway. Now the price of bread goes up; the price of wheat to the farmer goes down.

Meanwhile, back in the city, under urban renewal the assault on freedom carries on. Private property rights are so diluted that public interest is almost anything that a few government planners decide it should be. In a program that takes for the needy and gives to the greedy, we see such spectacles as in Cleveland, Ohio, a million-and-a-half-dollar building completed only three years ago must be destroyed to make way for what government officials call a "more compatible use of the land." The President tells us he is now going to start building public housing units in the thousands where heretofore we have only built them in the hundreds. But FHA and the Veterans Administration tell us that they have 120,000 housing units they've taken back through mortgage foreclosures. For three decades, we have sought to solve the problems of unemployment through government planning, and the more the plans fail, the more the planners plan. The latest is the Area Redevelopment Agency. They have just declared Rice County, Kansas, a depressed area. Rice County, Kansas, has two hundred oil wells, and the 14,000 people there have over $30 million on deposit in personal savings in their banks. When the government tells you you're depressed, lie down and be depressed.

We have so many people who can't see a fat man standing beside a thin one without coming to the conclusion that the fat man got that way by taking advantage of the thin one. So they are going to solve all the problems of human misery through government and government planning. Well, now, if government planning and welfare had the answer and they've had almost 30 years of it, shouldn't we expect government to almost read the score to us once in a while? Shouldn't they be telling us about the decline each year in the number of people needing help? The reduction in the need for public housing?

But the reverse is true. Each year the need grows greater, the program grows greater. We were told four years ago that 17 million people went to bed hungry each night. Well, that was probably true. They were all on a diet. But now we are told that 9.3 million families in this country are poverty-stricken on the basis of earning less than $3,000 a year. Welfare spending is 10 times greater than in the dark depths of the Depression. We are spending $45 billion on welfare. Now do a little arithmetic, and you will find that if we divided the $45 billion up equally among those 9 million poor families, we would be able to give each family $4,600 a year, and this added to their present income should eliminate poverty! Direct aid to the poor, however, is running only about about $600 per family. It would seem that someplace there must be some overhead.

So now we declare "war on poverty," or "you, too, can be a Bobby Baker!" Now, do they honestly expect us to believe that if we add $1 billion to the $45 million we are spending...one more program to the 30-odd we have--and remember, this new program doesn't replace any, it just duplicates existing programs--do they believe that poverty is suddenly going to disappear by magic? Well, in all fairness I should explain that there is one part of the new program that isn't duplicated. This is the youth feature. We are now going to solve the dropout problem, juvenile delinquency, by reinstating something like the old
CCC camps, and we are going to put our young people in camps, but again we do some arithmetic, and we find that we are going to spend each year just on room and board for each young person that we help $4,700 a year! We can send them to Harvard for $2,700! Don't get me wrong. I'm not suggesting that Harvard is the answer to juvenile delinquency.

But seriously, what are we doing to those we seek to help? Not too long ago, a judge called me here in Los Angeles. He told me of a young woman who had come before him for a divorce. She had six children, was pregnant with her seventh. Under his questioning, she revealed her husband was a laborer earning $250 a month. She wanted a divorce so that she could get an $80 raise. She is eligible for $330 a month in the Aid to Dependent Children Program. She got the idea from two women in her neighborhood who had already done that very thing.

Yet anytime you and I question the schemes of the do-gooders, we are denounced as being against their humanitarian goals. They say we are always "against" things, never "for" anything. Well, the trouble with our liberal friends is not that they are ignorant, but that they know so much that isn't so. We are for a provision that destitution should not follow unemployment by reason of old age, and to that end we have accepted Social Security as a step toward meeting the problem.

But we are against those entrusted with this program when they practice deception regarding its fiscal shortcomings, when they charge that any criticism of the program means that we want to end payments to those who depend on them for livelihood. They have called it insurance to us in a hundred million pieces of literature. But then they appeared before the Supreme Court and they testified that it was a welfare program. They only use the term "insurance" to sell it to the people. And they said Social Security dues are a tax for the general use of the government, and the government has used that tax. There is no fund, because Robert Byers, the actuarial head, appeared before a congressional committee and admitted that Social Security as of this moment is $298 billion in the hole. But he said there should be no cause for worry because as long as they have the power to tax, they could always take away from the people whatever they needed to bail them out of trouble! And they are doing just that.

A young man, 21 years of age, working at an average salary...his Social Security contribution would, in the open market, buy him an insurance policy that would guarantee $220 a month at age 65. The government promises $127. He could live it up until he is 31 and then take out a policy that would pay more than Social Security. Now, are we so lacking in business sense that we can't put this program on a sound basis so that people who do require those payments will find that they can get them when they are due...that the cupboard isn't bare? Barry Goldwater thinks we can.

At the same time, can't we introduce voluntary features that would permit a citizen who can do better on his own to be excused upon presentation of evidence that he had made provisions for the non-earning years? Should we allow a widow with children to work, and not lose the benefits supposedly paid for by her deceased husband? Shouldn't you and I be allowed to declare who our beneficiaries will be under these programs, which we cannot do? I think we are for telling our senior citizens that no one in this country should be denied medical care because of a lack of funds. But I think we are against forcing all citizens, regardless of need, into a compulsory government program, especially when we have such examples, as announced last week, when France admitted that their Medicare program was now bankrupt. They've come to the end of the road.
In addition, was Barry Goldwater so irresponsible when he suggested that our government give up its program of deliberate planned inflation so that when you do get your Social Security pension, a dollar will buy a dollar's worth, and not 45 cents' worth?

I think we are for an international organization, where the nations of the world can seek peace. But I think we are against subordinating American interests to an organization that has become so structurally unsound that today you can muster a two-thirds vote on the floor of the General Assembly among the nations that represent less than 10 percent of the world's population. I think we are against the hypocrisy of assailing our allies because here and there they cling to a colony, while we engage in a conspiracy of silence and never open our mouths about the millions of people enslaved in Soviet colonies in the satellite nation.

I think we are for aiding our allies by sharing of our material blessings with those nations which share in our fundamental beliefs, but we are against doling out money government to government, creating bureaucracy, if not socialism, all over the world. We set out to help 19 countries. We are helping 107. We spent $146 billion. With that money, we bought a $2 million yacht for Haile Selassie. We bought dresses suits for Greek undertakers, extra wives for Kenyan government officials. We bought a thousand TV sets for a place where they have no electricity. In the last six years, 52 nations have bought $7 billion worth of our gold, and all 52 are receiving foreign aid from this country.

No government ever voluntarily reduces itself in size. Government programs, once launched, never disappear. Actually, a government bureau is the nearest thing to eternal life we'll ever see on this Earth. Federal employees number 2.5 million, and federal, state, and local, one out of six of the nation's work force is employed by the government. These proliferating bureaus with their thousands of regulations have cost us many of our constitutional safeguards. How many of us realize that today federal agents can invade a man's property without a warrant? They can impose a fine without a formal hearing, let alone a trial by jury, and they can seize and sell his property in auction to enforce the payment of that fine. In Chico County, Arkansas, James Wier overplanted his rice allotment. The government obtained a $17,000 judgment, and a U.S. marshal sold his 950-acre farm at auction. The government said it was necessary as a warning to others to make the system work. Last February 19 at the University of Minnesota, Norman Thomas, six-time candidate for President on the Socialist Party ticket, said, "If Barry Goldwater became President, he would stop the advance of socialism in the United States." I think that's exactly what he will do.

As a former Democrat, I can tell you Norman Thomas isn't the only man who has drawn this parallel to socialism with the present administration. Back in 1936, Mr. Democrat himself, Al Smith, the great American, came before the American people and charged that the leadership of his party was taking the part of Jefferson, Jackson, and Cleveland down the road under the banners of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin. And he walked away from his party, and he never returned to the day he died, because to this day, the leadership of that party has been taking that party, that honorable party, down the road in the image of the labor socialist party of England. Now it doesn't require expropriation or confiscation of private property or business to impose socialism on a people. What does it mean whether you hold the deed or the title to your business or property if the government holds the power of life and death over that business or property? Such machinery already exists. The government can find some charge to bring against any concern it chooses to prosecute. Every businessman has his own tale of harassment. Somewhere a perversion has taken place. Our natural, inalienable rights are now considered to be a dispensation of
government, and freedom has never been so fragile, so close to slipping from our grasp as it is at this moment. Our Democratic opponents seem unwilling to debate these issues. They want to make you and I believe that this is a contest between two men...that we are to choose just between two personalities.

Well, what of this man that they would destroy? And in destroying, they would destroy that which he represents, the ideas that you and I hold dear. Is he the brash and shallow and trigger-happy man they say he is? Well, I have been privileged to know him "when." I knew him long before he ever dreamed of trying for high office, and I can tell you personally I have never known a man in my life I believe so incapable of doing a dishonest or dishonorable thing.

This is a man who in his own business, before he entered politics, instituted a profit-sharing plan, before unions had ever thought of it. He put in health and medical insurance for all his employees. He took 50 percent of the profits before taxes and set up a retirement program, a pension plan for all his employees. He sent checks for life to an employee who was ill and couldn't work. He provided nursing care for the children of mothers who work in the stores. When Mexico was ravaged by floods from the Rio Grande, he climbed in his airplane and flew medicine and supplies down there.

An ex-GI told me how he met him. It was the week before Christmas during the Korean War, and he was at the Los Angeles airport trying to get a ride home to Arizona for Christmas, and he said that there were a lot of servicemen there and no seats available on the planes. Then a voice came over the loudspeaker and said, "Any men in uniform wanting a ride to Arizona, go to runway such-and-such," and they went down there, and there was this fellow named Barry Goldwater sitting in his plane. Every day in the weeks before Christmas, all day long, he would load up the plane, fly to Arizona, fly them to their homes, then fly back over to get another load.

During the hectic split-second timing of a campaign, this is a man who took time out to sit beside an old friend who was dying of cancer. His campaign managers were understandably impatient, but he said, "There aren't many left who care what happens to her. I'd like her to know I care." This is a man who said to his 19-year-old son, "There is no foundation like the rock of honesty and fairness, and when you begin to build your life upon that rock, with the cement of the faith in God that you have, then you have a real start." This is not a man who could carelessly send other people's sons to war. And that is the issue of this campaign that makes all of the other problems I have discussed academic, unless we realize that we are in a war that must be won.

Those who would trade our freedom for the soup kitchen of the welfare state have told us that they have a utopian solution of peace without victory. They call their policy "accommodation." And they say if we only avoid any direct confrontation with the enemy, he will forget his evil ways and learn to love us. All who oppose them are indicted as warmongers. They say we offer simple answers to complex problems. Well, perhaps there is a simple answer--not an easy answer--but simple.

If you and I have the courage to tell our elected officials that we want our national policy based upon what we know in our hearts is morally right. We cannot buy our security, our freedom from the threat of the bomb by committing an immorality so great as saying to a billion now in slavery behind the Iron Curtain, "Give up your dreams of freedom because to save our own skin, we are willing to make a deal with your slave masters." Alexander Hamilton said, "A nation which can prefer disgrace to danger is prepared for a master, and deserves one." Let's set the record straight. There is no argument over the
choice between peace and war, but there is only one guaranteed way you can have peace—and you can have it in the next second—surrender.

Admittedly there is a risk in any course we follow other than this, but every lesson in history tells us that the greater risk lies in appeasement, and this is the specter our well-meaning liberal friends refuse to face—that their policy of accommodation is appeasement, and it gives no choice between peace and war, only between fight and surrender. If we continue to accommodate, continue to back and retreat, eventually we have to face the final demand—the ultimatum. And what then? When Nikita Khrushchev has told his people he knows what our answer will be? He has told them that we are retreating under the pressure of the Cold War, and someday when the time comes to deliver the ultimatum, our surrender will be voluntary because by that time we will have weakened from within spiritually, morally, and economically. He believes this because from our side he has heard voices pleading for "peace at any price" or "better Red than dead," or as one commentator put it, he would rather "live on his knees than die on his feet." And therein lies the road to war, because those voices don't speak for the rest of us. You and I know and do not believe that life is so dear and peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery. If nothing in life is worth dying for, when did this begin—just in the face of this enemy? Or should Moses have told the children of Israel to live in slavery under the pharaohs? Should Christ have refused the cross? Should the patriots at Concord Bridge have thrown down their guns and refused to fire the shot heard 'round the world? The martyrs of history were not fools, and our honored dead who gave their lives to stop the advance of the Nazis didn't die in vain. Where, then, is the road to peace? Well, it's a simple answer after all.

You and I have the courage to say to our enemies, "There is a price we will not pay." There is a point beyond which they must not advance. This is the meaning in the phrase of Barry Goldwater's "peace through strength." Winston Churchill said that "the destiny of man is not measured by material computation. When great forces are on the move in the world, we learn we are spirits—not animals." And he said, "There is something going on in time and space, and beyond time and space, which, whether we like it or not, spells duty."

You and I have a rendezvous with destiny. We will preserve for our children this, the last best hope of man on Earth, or we will sentence them to take the last step into a thousand years of darkness.

We will keep in mind and remember that Barry Goldwater has faith in us. He has faith that you and I have the ability and the dignity and the right to make our own decisions and determine our own destiny.

Thank you very much.
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Stephanie Lynn Williams received her Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science and Spanish from Spelman College and a Master’s of Arts in Organizational Management from The George Washington University. Stephanie lived in Washington, DC for several years to pursue a career in politics. Her positions included five years as a staff assistant for Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA) on the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Labor - Policy Office. She also held positions with NARAL Pro-Choice America, and Planned Parenthood. Stephanie served on the board of directors and volunteer for CARECEN, an advocacy organization that serves the Central American immigrant community in the Washington, DC area. After 15 years in Washington, DC, she began her career in higher education administration at the University of South Florida. Stephanie’s scholarship interests includes presidential rhetoric and racial appeals, the impact of social justice issues and Congressional obstruction on the institution of the American presidency, civic engagement, and voting rights.