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OBAMA'S PRESIDENTIAL (MIXED) RACE: FRAMING AND IDEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF BLOGS AND NEWS

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OBAMA'S PRESIDENTIAL (MIXED) RACE:

FRAMING AND IDEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF

BLOGS AND NEWS

by

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B.A., Communication Studies and African American Studies, Loyola
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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy
Communication**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to all the "combo kids" of this nation.

And to one in particular…

To my loving husband Christian, who consistently lives the "both/and" and gives me the

strength to do the same.

hermana. Each of you has held me up at times when I did not think I could stand on my own. Thank you.

The pillars in this village are my family. To my sister Nia, thank you for leading by example and showing me the importance of always thinking critically and challenging assumptions. To Carlos, I will never be able to put into words how much I value you as a brother. You have shown me the power of dedication, loyalty, as well as humor.

My parents paved the way and have never stopped helping me achieve my goals. There is no one in this village that I respect more than them. Gracias Papi, for being an example of a dedicated professor, leader, scholar, and person of integrity. No matter how many degrees I earn, you are still the wisest person I know. Thank you for clearing the brush, so that I could easily follow your path. To my Mami, you sacrificed in order to bring me in to this world. You have continued to sacrifice in order to see me succeed in this world. You have shown me how to be a strong woman, a caring friend, and person for others. All that I am I owe to you.

To my family, thank you for instilling in me confidence that is disproportionate to my actual talents and abilities.

Finally, I am most indebted to and grateful for my love, Christian De Larkin. You are my *Griot,* my partner, mi corazon, my inspiration, and my foundation. You are the Cliff to my Claire. You have been the constant drumbeat, never letting me lose my rhythm. Thank you for never letting me forget that we reach so high because we stand on the shoulders of giants.

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ABSTRACT

The election of Barack Obama as President of the United States brought a
heightened awareness to the role of race and produced speculation about the idealized
notion of the achievement of a post-racial United States. This dissertation examined
mediated conversations on mixed race identity in response to some of the significant
events in the Obama campaign and the first months of the Obama presidency.
Specifically, this study examined the ways that newspapers and blogs construct
discourses about race, mixed race, and racism. Further, I explored the biological, legal,
and social implications as they relate to current constructions of mixed race identity.

This dissertation centered the data collection around four pivotal discourses in the
Obama era: (1) Obama's announcement of his presidential candidacy; (2) Obama's "A
More Perfect Union" speech; (3) Obama's election to the presidency; and (4) the arrest of
Harvard professor Henry Gates. The parameters of these pivotal discourses allowed me to
focus on what bloggers say about the events and how the newspapers reported them.

Ideological criticism and framing analysis guided my study on racial identifications and negotiations related to Obama from three newspapers: *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Chicago Sun-Times;* as well as four blogs: Mixed Roots, Beige-World, Light-skinned-ed Girl, and Twisted Curlz.

Three dominant frames emerged from the news coverage on the four discursive moments: race, dialogue, and history. I define the race frame as stories about the issues concerning race and racism; the dialogue frame as stories about a conversation, specifically at the national level; and the historical frame as stories about historic events. Three frames also emerged from the framing analysis of the blog posts: awareness, personalization, and racism. The awareness frame consists of postings about news and celebrity in mixed race community; the personalization frame as personal postings; and the racism frame as postings relating to issues concerning racism.

Ideological criticism facilitated the analysis of the news articles and blogs and allowed me to uncover several ideologies about race and mixed race emerge from these discursive constructions. The newspapers perpetuated the invisibility of Whiteness, the Black and White binary, hybrid heroism, and the erasure of racism ideologies. The preference for Obama as President, the salience of mixed race matters, and promotion of anti-racist work are ideologies in the blogs.

While the blogs and news articles are different in format, style and purpose, taken together they give a look at the ongoing conversation that impacts discourses on race, racism, and mixed race. The interpretation of the findings explains how the media I examined reveal the social construction of race, the rhetoric of race, and agenda setting in each of the discursive moments in order to discuss current conceptualizations of race in

the United States. In addition to an in-depth interpretation of framing and ideological

analyses findings, the theoretical and methodological contributions are discussed.

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"**Change has come to America.**" **~Barack Obama**

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

The July 16, 2007, cover of *Newsweek* pictures Barack Obama with a caption that reads "Black & White: How Barack Obama is Shaking Up Old Assumptions." The subsequent article describes the way Obama aims to reach opposing sides in politics and racial matters alike. The story continues, "Is Barack Obama black enough? It's a question that has long dogged his career, though he says that he settled his struggle with racial identity in his late teens" (Wolffe & Briscoe, 2007, p. 24). The story quotes Michelle Obama saying, "He's very much a black man, but he's very much the son of his mother, who was very much a white woman, and he grew up with white grandparents" (p. 27). Audiences may expect media spin surrounding a presidential candidate to focus on the candidate's policy statements and ranking in the polls. Although these were important issues during the 2008 presidential campaign and for the media covering Barack Obama, these topics resided in the background, whereas Obama's racial identity was in the foreground. Because his racial identity is more complex than the presidential candidates who came before him, the media had a difficult choice to make about how to categorize him since he is not a Black man, he is not a White man, but he is both.

In mainstream discourse the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States brought a heightened awareness to the role of race and produced speculation about the idealized notion of the achievement of a post-racial United States. His mixed race presence in the political arena signaled excitement, as well as resistance, to the possibility of a non-White president. It also brought to light the complexities of racial categories in the United States, signaling a shift in racial formations and identities. This media

discussion about this president's racial identity reflected the importance of racial categorizations in the United States. The media disseminated these discussions quickly because of the 24-hour news and new media technology. The media usually provides frequent detailed descriptions of presidents and their election campaigns. In the new media world, the use of Internet technology has transformed the way this information is distributed. According to Becker and Bjurström (2007), "never before have so much information and so many kinds of symbolic forms been transmitted across such great distances, stored and preserved for future generations, and shared by so many people for such multifarious purposes" (p. 13). The traditional model of producer/consumer in media has shifted and evolved. Mediums, such as social networking sites and blogs, constitute an interactive and dialogical way of constructing discourse. Thus, events that highlight these complexities of politicians and political campaigns inevitably appear in traditional news medium as well through computer-mediated communication such as blogs.

The goal of this dissertation is to examine how media conversations construct mixed race identity in some of the significant events in the Obama campaign and during the first months of the Obama presidency. Specifically, this study investigates ways newspapers as well as blogs construct discourses on mixed race identity during significant events in the Obama era. The dissertation examines how Obama's race is discussed during his campaign and his election in these media discourses, how the conversations differ, and what implications these conversations have for understanding constructions of mixed race identity and a "post-racial" United States.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction as well as framework from which to understand, better explore, and achieve the above-mentioned goals. A section on my perspective as a researcher provides insights into my affiliation with and interest in this particular study. Additionally, the chapter identifies the interpretive and critical research perspectives that inform this study, presents a rationale for the study, provides the research questions, and defines key constructs.

Personal Perspective

The interpretive and critical approach to communication research emphasizes the role of the researcher as describing and analyzing data from one's own experience and perception. The personal perspective of the researcher is important since knowledge is reflexive and socially constructed. In this section, I address my personal perspective and my relationship with the topic of mixed race identity.

"Ok, all the Black people get together for a picture, then we will take one of all the Asians!" the host said with a smile at a gathering with friends. We were a group of eleven: three people who identify as Black from Africa, one U.S. Black, four Japanese, two Chinese, and then there was me. Someone in the group decided it would be fun to take pictures based on racial categories. Normally, people wouldn't think twice about which group they belong to, but I do because I identify as both Black and Mexican. As people started to pose for the "All Black" picture, someone said "What about Iliana? Should it just be half of her in the picture?" Ouch, I thought. Even in a safe social setting with friends, people often talk about my mixed race identity in terms of something different, lacking, or insufficient. And the most salient part is that I do not "look" Black, so they wondered if I really did belong in the picture. There was no "category" for me.

Since phenotypically I look "more Latina" I have been asked why I don't just give it up and say that I am "Mexican" when I am asked, on a consistent basis, "what are you?" But this standpoint assumes that first, it is acceptable to deny an entire part of my life, my family, my upbringing, and how I see myself. And that it would erase or diminish this feeling of lacking. Others question my Latina identity just as much as my Black identity. I am told that my Spanish is *pocho* (Americanized), that I shouldn't be in the sun so that I don't get too *prieta* (dark-skinned), and that I don't measure up to other "real" Mexicans. I have never felt as though I am Mexican enough.

For me, each label is a piece of the puzzle; none of the racial/ethnic labels as they stand-alone are enough: Black, African American, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicana, Xicana. Each label carries with it a history and connotation; some I embrace, others I reject. To know the past is to understand my present. For me, the label *Mexican American* is redundant. Mexico is part of America. A more accurate label is United States Mexican. But that seems to be cumbersome. I am neutral on the politically correct term *African American*, but prefer *Black*. I often used an explanation of what my parents were as a definition for my own racial identity: My dad is African American from L.A., and my mom is Mexican, born in Ensenada, MX. As I began to play with the language, the labels began to take shape and merge. Though I am never in a static state, always changing, shifting, growing, BlaXicana as a label encompasses my racial identities the way no other singular label has done before. My label, BlaXicana, represents my puzzle. Therefore, this dissertation offers an opportunity to map the discourse on a topic about mixed race identity that many experience but few have studied. My passion for studying mixed race identity stems from wanting to know how to talk about the complexities and

beauty of mixed race identity for myself and how the media deals with mixed race identity of public figures.

I chose mixed race identity because it is complicated. I do not believe that a researcher can be outside of what is researched. I come to this study knowing that my perspective as someone who is mixed race will have an impact on how I analyze the discourses about the mixed race identity of Obama in newspapers and blogs.

Researcher Perspective

Interpretive and critical assumptions guide my analysis of racial identifications and negotiations related to Obama. Similar to rhetorical perspectives, the interpretive approach focuses on the relationship between symbols and human action by involving the self, symbols, and society. Those assumptions include the epistemological belief that knowledge can be gained through understanding personal accounts and lived experiences (Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 1991). This section emphasizes how the interpretive perspective relates to my study of racial identity construction in media. An interpretive perspective aids in building and gaining understanding of how individuals construct and negotiate their racial identities as they share their own experiences through various media outlets such as blogs. Developed as a reaction to positivist paradigm, the goals of interpretive theorizing are based on description and analysis or lived experience and worldviews (Gergen, 2001). The communication process of making meaning through interaction with others is how identity is constructed, formed and negotiated (Hall, 2000; Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998). An interpretivist perspective sees reality as constructed, emergent, and holistic.

Although this study is partially interpretive, a critical lens also influences the approach and the analysis. One of the assumptions from a critical lens is that context, specifically the historical context, is essential to the understanding race (Flores, Moon, & Nakayama, 2006). It is important to have a clear understanding of the historical impact of racial categories and categorizations because this directly shapes and influences the data analyzed in this study. A critical lens aids in taking contexts, history, and politics into account, as well as ideological underpinnings of race. One of the purposes of research from an interpretive and critical perspective is to uncover what is hidden in discourse, specifically power and domination. This critical lens looks for contradictions within patterns.

Underlying this study is the assumption that individuals do not act solely on their own but that their reality is often shaped by hegemonic ideologies (van Dijk, 1995). These hegemonic ideologies help to construct identity and establish the parameters of identity negotiation. Media construct hegemonic ideologies by perpetuating dominant assumptions that are often taken for granted and not challenged.

Of particular interest in this study are the labels the media chooses to develop the accounts of race and the labels used to resist the accounts on other news mediums. hooks (2002) explains that "shifting how we think about language and how we use it necessarily alters how we know what we know" (p. 226). My goal is to explore one significant set of discourses on mixed race identity that influence the current political and social climate.

Rationale

Several reasons justify this study. The first reason is the increase in people identifying with more than one race. The second is the biological, legal and social

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framings that shape constructions of racial identities. The third is the vision of the post-racial political climate evident during and after Obama's presidential campaign. The fourth reason is the need for research on the relationship between news and new media. Race categories, labels, and discourse are continually evolving; a lack of research on mixed race identity exists. My study is unique in that it explains identity as a rhetorically and mediated construction produced by traditional news media discourse and new media.

The increase in people identifying with more than one race, in what Spencer (1997) refers to as the "Mixed Race Movement," gives the first reason why this topic is relevant and timely. He argues that there has been a vast increase in births from interracial marriages since the 1990s. Similarly, Kwan and Speirs (2004) state, "the phenomena of mixed-race marriages, multiracial families, interracial relationships, and cross-race adoption are on the rise" (p. 2). With 6.8 million individuals in the U.S. identifying with more than one race, this issue is becoming more pertinent (U.S. Census Bureau Statistics, 2000). In the United States, race is an important signifier, the way one experiences life in the U.S. is often shaped and dependant on racial categories. Discourse on race impacts racial identity and lived experience because it impacts how people of mixed race view themselves and how others view them. Therefore, this research will address a specific an important issue that has personal and societal importance.

The second reason that justifies this dissertation is the impact of the biological, legal, and social framings that have shaped constructions of racial identities. Legally, the United States enforced the one-drop rule, which indicated that anyone who had a drop of Black blood was to be considered Black (Hickman, 1997). This is closely linked with the biological implications of mixed-race identity. Physical characteristics were used to

determine one's racial category. In other words, being mixed was not considered truly possible, and this is often reflected in the "check one box" language for race and ethnicity that is used on government and administrative forms. Socially, negative connotations of mixed race individuals have been used, specifically how they suffer or have an identity crisis or are rejected by all groups, in order to deter miscegenation. In classic literature, the Tragic Mulatta was often depicted as unstable and insane. This historical construction of mixed race individuals indicates a need for research on the current and new understandings of mixed race (Bost, 1998).

Various events contribute to the shifts in discourse about race in the U.S., but Obama's campaign and presidency have sparked the most discussions on the possibility of a "post-racial" nation, which is the third reason for this study. "Post-racial" refers to the idea that a society has transcended its racial divisions and is free from racial biases. The presence of a high profile public figure, such as the President, who is mixed race has highlighted the importance of this topic in current debates and discourses. The current "post-racial" ideal prevailing in many media raises questions and concerns about the role of mixed race identity in social and political life.

The fourth reason is this study contributes to an understanding of the relationship between newspapers and blogs. According to Jones and Himelboim (2010), "the potential of the Internet to become a meaningful and viable source of information, opinions and ideas depends on social attitudes as much as it does on the availability of technology. However, social attitudes depend, in part, on the stories written by traditional gatekeepers, professional journalists" (p. 272). The blogs selected for this study often rely on the newspapers as bloggers present their personal perspectives on Obama's

campaign and presidency. But newspapers also can use ideas from blogs in their coverage of high profile political candidates.

Blogs can also be used as a "corrective mechanism for bad journalism" (Andrews, 2003, p. 2). A blog is a type of computer-mediated communication produced on a website created and maintained by an individual. The contents of the blog are decided entirely by the blogger, which differs greatly from the newspaper standards. Newspapers have gatekeeping and editorial constraints. No such constraints exist for blogs. New media has a significant impact on journalism, social reality, and culture (Andrews, 2003; Ekdale, Namkoong, Fung, & Perlmutter, 2010; Jones & Himelboim, 2010). Since media, such as blogs and social networking sites, are a recent phenomenon, research on these topics is necessary in order to better understand the impact of these discourses on social and political knowledge.

In addition, this study is unique because of the methodological approach. Mixed race identity is rarely studied in communication, and this topic is rarely addressed as a rhetorical construction. My research on mixed race identity construction is innovative because it maps the different rhetoric of messages about mixed race identity by looking at the underlying language and strategies in the content of media messages. I believe this research can be helpful to those who are concerned with the discourse of race in the United States, the connection of racial discourses to presidential politics, what it means for mixed race individuals, and those interested in the relationship between news and new media.

Data Collection and Analysis

In this dissertation, I approach media from a critical and interpretive perspective. Media is a key agent in the social construction of personal and political reality, including racial identity. The news media and the blogs taken together present relevant media conversations about critical discourse moments. The research focusing on critical moments in the discourse on race frame this dissertation and are important to this study. In this section, I describe the features of the specific data for this dissertation: newspaper articles and blogs posts. I explain the so-called post-racial Obama Era, as the context for the study. I identify four critical discourse moments in the Obama era that elicited media conversations about race and mixed race identity.

News Media.

The news media refer to the types of media that focus on presenting current national news, especially political information, to the public. The media convey messages through newspapers, television segments, and the Internet. Shah and Thornton (1994) contend, "news media are a major source of cultural production and information" (p. 142). News media provide discourses about mixed race, not necessarily the self-expressions of individuals, but from the media's framing of identity. Media framing is the strategic selection of media messages by message producers to construct a slant that shows how people should think about a particular topic. Gamson (2008) states, "news was not something out there to which the media held up a mirror but the result of a complicated process of construction" (p. 154).

This dissertation is specifically concerned with newspaper articles. In the United States, newspapers generally conform to an expository writing style (Rivers, 1964;

Roshco, 1975; Sloan, 1990; Tuchman, 1978). Newspapers are generally thought to follow journalism ethics and standards that present the "information of importance to readers as citizens and members of community" with a considerable degree of objectivity (Iggers, 1999, p. 2). Many news organizations aim for the ideal of fairness and balance as major factors in presenting information (Evensen, 1995). Opinion and commentary are located in a distinct section of the newspaper, so as not to be interpreted as "hard news," which is objective reports using evidence from external sources to support claims. Because of their specific structure and format, news articles are their own genre (Bennett, Gressett, & Haltom, 1985; Berkowitz, 1992; Darnton, 1975; Galtung & Ruge, 1965). Journalists are typically trained to structure a news article as an inverted pyramid (Warren, 1951). The journalist will put the essential aspects of the story in the opening, with supporting elements following in order of diminishing importance.

News articles are not the only type of material that appears in newspapers. Longer articles in newspapers are considered "features." These types of stories differ from "hard" news, which always maintains third person language; a feature article is more likely to use first person. Stein, Paterno, and Burnett (2006) explain, "human interest is at the core of all features" (p. 195). The feature story lends itself to more flexibility than the standard news story since "they can be amusing, shocking, anecdotal, and interrogatory" (Stein, Paterno, & Burnett, 2006, p. 200). These features are value-laden and tend to develop character, setting, dialogue, and a point of view, which differs from the standard news article. Many news stories, particularly those related to political candidates and political campaign blur the lines between news and features since news about a candidate is not

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always about issues and policies but it often about character, experience, and personal background

Weblogs.

Weblogs, often called blogs, are a type of computer-mediated communication established and maintained by an individual. The weblog consists of entries, in reverse-chronological order, of descriptions of events, comments, or other material such as photographs or video. Blogs differ in the type of information they provide. Some strictly present commentary or news on a particular subject; while others are personal online diaries. Blog readers leave comments on postings enabling them to interact with the content on the blog. In their study of the perception of blog credibility, Johnson and Kaye (2004) report that blog readers believe that blogs are a more credible as a source of news than other media, such as online and print versions of newspapers, television and radio news. Ekdale, Namkoong, and Fung (2010) explain that the "two reasons that help explain blogs' high perceived credibility are that they often cover issues with greater depth than traditional media and they are able to present complex issues in a manner that is relevant and understandable to their audiences" (p. 3). In addition, blogs may be perceived as more genuine than mainstream media. They add that "blog posts are a form of narrative that reflects a blogger's own perspective and judgment on an issue, leaving the interpretation and evaluation to readers" (Ekdale, Namkoong, & Fung, 2010, p. 219). Their stories are often autobiographical and subjective, which relates specifically to readers' interests and experiences.

The blog posts are critical to this dissertation because they provide a nuanced look at the personal constructions of race and mixed race in new media. Using texts from

blogs and news articles permits me to examine two different rhetorical and mediated

constructions. Blogs and news articles compliment each other; as Lasica (2003) argues,

they need each other in order to function. Andrews (2003) adds that blogs and news

articles provide a holistic approach to an event. Both contribute to the public conversation

about race. The traditional news sources follow a standardized structure and language,

and the blog discourses present other positions and personal narrative that contribute to

public opinion and emerging constructions of racial identity. This new media platform

allows people to voice opinions about political events and ideas. According to Gamson

and Modigliani (1989), "rather than a single public discourse, it is more useful to think of

a set of discourses that interact in complex ways" (p. 2). Blogs are distinct from

newspapers because bloggers are not confined to and not held to the same expectations of

objectivity as newspapers are. They provide a new element of public opinion and public

responses to social and political issues.

Obama, Race, and Identity

On November 4, 2008, Barack Obama was elected president of the United States.

In the week after the 2008 presidential election headlines read: "What Obama's Election

Really Means to Black America" and "Obama and the Myth of the Black Messiah." The

media frenzy discussing what Obama's election meant in terms of race relations in the

United States was vast and unavoidable. In December 2008, *Time* magazine named

Barack Obama as its "Person of the Year" for his historic candidacy and election, which

it described as "the steady march of seemingly impossible." Barack Obama often notes in

his speeches that his mother was from Kansas, his father from Kenya. He acknowledges

his mixed race identity, but various media outlets highlighted the impact and expectations that his racialized presidency would have on the United States.

Four Pivotal Moments in Discourses on Mixed Race.

This dissertation centers data collection around four pivotal discourses in the Obama era. According to Gamson (1993) a critical discourse moment is a "perturbation in meaning that inevitably provoked a symbolic contest over its interpretation" (p. 152). These, sometimes, disruptive, often key, occurrences are moments created by pivotal public discourses that produce media conversations on race. This dissertation looks at four critical discourse moments in the Obama era. It should be noted that the dissertation is not about the events themselves; rather, the focus is on what bloggers say about the events and how the newspapers reported them. Therefore, these are described as discourse moments. I selected main features of these pivotal discourses because of their themes of racial identity, the media responses to these controversies created by the discourses, the news content that these discourses elicited about race, and the links of media conversations to political themes.

The four discourses are (1) Obama's 2008 candidacy announcement, (2) his March 18, 2008, speech on race, (3) the 2008 presidential election, and (4) his July 22, 2009 response to the incident about Professor Gates. Each of these qualifies as pivotal discourses that contributed to numerous media constructions of Obama's mixed race identity and public consciousness about racial identity. I provide a brief description in this section and an elaborated explanation of the discourse moments in Chapter 3.

Obama's 2008 presidential candidacy announcement is the first event framing this dissertation. A *New York Times* article (February 11, 2007) announced: "Wearing an

overcoat but gloveless on a frigid morning…as he started his campaign to become the

nation's first black president." (Nagourney & Zeleny, p. 34) This announcement is linked

to a political context because this was how Obama officially declared his status as not

just a politician, but also a presidential candidate. Though there was no direct reference to

racial identity in Obama's announcement, this moment initiated news content about race

because he was represented as a "Black" presidential candidate.

The second discursive moment is the March 18, 2008, speech titled "A More

Perfect Union" made by Obama. This speech centered on race and was a response to

criticism of his pastor, Jeremiah Wright, who was quoted saying "God Damn America"

in a sermon. The theme of racial identity is salient in this event because Obama directly

addressed the topic of race relations in the United States. In his speech Obama stated:

> This is where we are right now. It's a racial stalemate we've been stuck in for years.
>
> Contrary to the claims of some of my critics, black and white, I have never been so
>
> naïve as to believe that we can get beyond our racial divisions in a single election
>
> cycle, or with a single candidacy-- particularly a candidacy as imperfect as my own.
>
> (para. 38)

Obama also called attention to his own racial identities in the speech:

> I am the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas. I was
>
> raised with the help of a white grandfather who survived a Depression to serve in
>
> Patton's Army during World War II and a white grandmother who worked on a
>
> bomber assembly line at Fort Leavenworth while he was overseas. (para. 8)

This particular speech was a response to controversy about the role of race in the Presidential election and was a crucial moment fostering discourses about race in politics and in the nation as a whole.

The 2008 presidential election provides the third moment framing this study. The election has a clear link to a political theme since it is the official selection of Barack Obama as the President of the United States. The media coverage of this event also centered on the theme of racial identity and initiated news content about race since Obama was cast as the "first Black U.S. President."

The fourth and final pivotal moment is Obama's response to the Professor Gates police-profiling incident. The theme of racial identity is salient in this discursive moment since the discourse revolved around Boston Police racially profiling Prof. Gates. This Harvard professor was entering his home when the Boston police were called on suspicion that he was an intruder and not in fact the resident. Obama responded on July 22, 2009, by stating:

> that the Cambridge police acted stupidly in arresting somebody when there was already proof that they were in their own home; and, number three, what I think we know separate and apart from this incident is that there's a long history in this country of African-Americans and Latinos being stopped by law enforcement disproportionately. That's just a fact. (para. 182)

Obama's specific response was to a public controversy that provided a concrete example of race and discrimination in the United States.

Even if the meanings of Obama's campaign and his specific responses as President are no longer central to the current political discourse, this analysis contributes to the addressing larger issues of the relationship of Obama's discourse, media, news, and social construction of race.

Assumptions

My assumptions about communication inform this dissertation. As a communication scholar, I am interested in way that identities and social relations are constructed through news media and new media. One of my main assumptions is that media and mass communication are key elements to the construction of identity. I agree with Becker and Bjurström (2007) when they claim "communication implies the crossing of borders--historically across time, geographically across space, socially between people, and culturally between texts within various symbolic forms and genres. Media use belongs to the core of human activities in late modern societies, reconfirming that human beings are transgressing animals" (p. 13). One impact of traditional media, and increasingly of new media, is the shaping social identity in general and racial identity in particular. Carpentier and Cammaerts (2008) state, "we believe 'alternative' communication is important for daily life, for personal and collective politics, and for our sense of identity and belonging" (p.12).

Another assumption that influences my approach is the role played by communication in the social construction of race (Allen, 2007; Haney-Lopez, 1994; Nakano Glen, 2002; Omi & Winant, 1996; Steinberg, 1989; Waters, 1990). The construction of race occurs through communication. According to Allen (2007) "among potential avenues for theorizing race and communication, I am especially excited about

the potential of social construction, a school of thought, which contends that humans create reality through interaction (p. 261). She adds, "Social constructionists maintain that meaning arises from social systems, and that we derive knowledge from dominant discourses, which usually are based on dominant value systems. This perspective encourages us to question taken-for-granted knowledge about the world, and therefore about ourselves" (Allen, 2007, p. 261).

While people base their assumptions about someone and their racial classification on their physical characteristics, it is the meaning people assign to those characteristics that construct race. Omi and Winant's groundbreaking study, *Racial Formations in the US* (1996), explains how racial identity is shaped in the United States. Race, the racial state, and racialization are three concepts essential to their theory. They define race as a social construction based on socio-historical implications. They argue that race is an organizing principle that is continuously evolving and changing based on the current racial state. Their definition of race moves beyond the two assumptions of race as either an essence and biological or as a pure illusion. They describe race as a social force with very real implication for societal relations. This assumption aids in my conception and theorizing about race and mixed race identity.

Racialization, or racial formation, is the process by which the state categorizes race, and through racial projects, racial definitions change and shift. Omi and Winant use this concept to describe the way previously unmarked groups are racialized. Racial projects developed through legal and institutional means influence people to identify with only one race because government forms often demand that a person "check one box," and that box forces a choice of racial identity as White, Black, Latino, Asian American

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Indian, or Pacific Islander. My own mixed race identity is informed by the idea that the racial state shaped the way that mixed race individuals are categorized and affects self-perception since mixed race is not a category that a person can check to verify their identity for the government.

Another of my assumptions is that individuals construct and are constructed through interaction. This assumption is rooted in Symbolic Interaction (SI). SI is an American theory rooted in sociology that was developed by Blumer and Mead. Although he never used the term, Blumer developed the central assumptions of symbolic interactionism based on the work of George Herbert Mead. The symbolic interaction tradition focuses on the construction of meaning through social interaction. Rooted in sociology, the basis of this tradition is symbols and meaning making, which makes this approach useful for communication studies and practices. Symbolic interactionist research focuses on they way meaning is created during social interaction, how self presentation produces constructions of identity, and how situations are defined in ways that cause people to reflect on the meaning symbols. The notion of symbolic interaction as the constitutive communication process of constructing racial identity provides the foundation for this dissertation's approach to rhetorical analysis of selected media discourses.

The basis of the rhetorical process of media representation is also rooted in the Symbolic interactionist (SI) perspective. Symbols are not neutral, they are planned and used to persuade. People select some symbols, either words or phrases, and leave out others, in interaction. Thus, using symbols is a rhetorical process. Symbolic interactionists assume meaning is constituted through interaction as the unit of study. SI

explains the interactions of self, identity, society, the other, symbol, and interaction. I explain these concepts independently, it is important to note that they are all interrelated and interacting with each other. Mead (1934) describes the *self* as constantly changing and evolving through interaction. An individual has many selves depending on the type of interaction or the context. This closely relates to the idea of *identity*. Mead argues that identity is made up of self conceptions learned through interaction. These conceptions are also related to *society*. Interactionists are not concerned with society as a structure, rather, they see society as composed of the interactions, as people communicating in order to exchange meaning and have a shared perspective. In this light, society is in a constant flux. The *symbol* is particularly important to this theory, especially for communication scholars, since symbols are the primary building block of language or speech acts, and other acts from which we attach meaning. Media texts are composed of constellations of symbols that mediate people's interaction with society.

Central to this theory is the notion of *interaction*. Mead (1934) describes interaction as people communicating and acting in relation to another. The interaction consists of acts, interpretation and acting again. It is in this way that this theory is linked to pragmatism, since this approach goes against the behavioralists' belief that humans are simply reacting to external stimuli. Because humans are interacting and defining their world, they also try to define the world for *the other*. Although this theory is based in sociology, the implications for communication are evident. A main assumption of this theory is that humans aim to communicate. It is through this communication that individuals interpret themselves, others, as well as society. It is sometimes difficult to

describe what one studies in communication and SI helps to explain the importance of the often taken-for-granted communication that moves beyond just language comprehension.

Some media and cultural studies' concepts can also account for racial identity representations; symbols influence the social constructions of identity. From a cultural studies perspective, Stuart Hall (1996) describes these symbolic means more explicitly. He views race as a signifier and says that people make sense of reality through the use of symbols made available to society. He contends that "reality exists outside of language, but it is constantly mediated by and through language: and what we know and say has to be produced in and through discourse" (Hall, 2002, p. 169). An important aspect to Hall's conceptualization of signs, symbols, and signifiers is that people's symbolic interaction with media representation do not take place inside a vacuum, ideology is an important aspect of racial identity and representation, but somewhat hidden feature of symbols that influence media representation and thereby influence racial identity (Hall, 1982).

A key aspect of concepts developed by theorists in cultural studies is the racial state, which is an ideological and hegemonic force that dictates what characteristics of race are important at a given time. Racial projects that the state may implement in a number of different ways instantiate these forces. This includes government and institutional policies, laws, judicial decisions that shape racial conflict. Obama's rhetoric and the media conversation this rhetoric elicited are shaped by the racial projects of the state.

Because I focus on Barack Obama's presidential campaign and early presidency, I address the role that new technology and news media has on symbol using, interaction, and discourses of race. Informed by this tradition, I see the role of public and mediated

interaction-using symbols impacting the way people interpret mixed race identity and construct a social reality in relation to pivotal discourses of Obama.

Research Questions

Rhetorical criticism is one method for analyzing discourses as the social constructions of mixed race identity. The goal of this dissertation is to examine the rhetorical content and the social uses and effects of news media texts in constructing race, mixed race, and racism as they emerge around significant events in the Obama campaign and the first months of the Obama presidency. Five questions focus my analysis of rhetorical discourses that shape these symbolic meanings and the resulting social constructions of identity.

RQ1: How do pivotal discourses during Obama's campaign and early presidency stimulate conversations about race, mixed race identity, racism?

RQ1a: How do newspapers frame race and mixed race identity?

RQ1b: How do blogs frame race, mixed race, and racism?

RQ2: What ideologies about race, racism, and mixed race emerge from newspapers and blogs?

RQ3: How do media discourses contribute to constructions of race?

RQ4: In what ways do the constructions suggest the possibility of a post-racial United States?

RQ5: How do newspapers and blogs set agendas that reinforce and oppose each other?

Key Concepts

The following section provides definitions of the following key constructs: (1) mixed race identity; (2) post-racial United States; and (3) media conversations. Defining these key terms establishes parameters from which to conduct this study.

Mixed Race Identity

I choose to focus on mixed race identity because this is rarely addressed. Perhaps this is because of the complicated nature of race in general and mixed race identity in particular. How is race defined? How is mixed race defined? What are the parameters of mixed race and how is this concept then conceptualized in research? Who counts as mixed? Who does not? For the purpose of this study, I define race as a socially constructed entity that is based on physical and cultural characteristics. Similarly, Lopez (2003) explains that race is "constantly being created and re-created through popular culture, state policies, laws, and social interactions" (p. 17). Mixed race is the avowed identity of referring to more than one racial category as the primary racial identification. Given the nature of the texts I analyze, mixed race is conceptualized with a few indicating phrases and statements: mixed race, biracial, claiming more than one race (such as "I am BLANK and BLANK"). The point is not to exclude anyone from the data if they do not articulate it as I have indicated, rather, the parameters are set so that the study can be concise, the data presented can be exhausted, and the implications can be made about mixed race.

Since race is a complicated subject, there are many overlapping features that are out of the scope of this study, such as many combinations of races, contextual matters such as nationality and ethnicity, as well as complicated factors of tracing one's ancestry.

Some scholars (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009; Zack, 1993/1995) in similar

situations define mixed race identity by establishing parameters about those who have

two parents of different races. I use this definition to establish the parameters in the

collection of data from blogs. Therefore, I define mixed race as discourse that

encompasses more than one race as an avowed personal and social identity.

Post-Racial United States

Current events have sparked a shift in discourse surrounding race as a topic as

well as brought more attention to mixed race communities. Current talk emphasizes a

"post-racial" United States in which issues of mixed race communities no longer exist

(Bonilla Silva, 2010). Some even make the argument that this post-racial state is the

result of the increase in racial mixing, the idea being that the more "mixing" there is, the

less race will matter. The 2000 U.S. Census allowed individuals to check more than one

box to indicate their racial identities; celebrities such as Tiger Woods bring attention to

the complexity of race through their own unique identity; and Barack Obama references

his White mother and African father as the heritage of his identity. These public events

and figures bring discussions on mixed race identity to the forefront. Various events have

contributed to the shifts in race discourse in the U.S., but Obama's campaign and

presidency sparked the most frequent discussions on the possibility of a "post-racial"

nation. Daniel Schorr, an NPR Senior News Analyst, discussed "Barack Obama as a

presidential candidate and wonders whether the U.S. is entering a new, 'post-racial'

political era" (Schorr, January 28, 2008, para. 1).

This evolution highlights how the notion of a colorblind approach to race began in

a turbulent time in the United States, the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement.

Statements such as "I don't see color, just people" (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 1) is an attempt to reinforce the notion that Martin Luther King, Jr. advanced where "people are judged by the content of their character, not the color of their skin" (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 1). The promotion of multiculturalism and diversity often mask colorblindness. This ideology is often framed as a positive way to address issues of race and racism. Flores, Moon, and Nakayama (2006) contend:

Moreover, educational institutions increasingly support a multicultural curriculum, offering students opportunities to discuss issues of race/ ethnicity, as well as gender, class, and sexuality. Even politicians participate in this venture, with President George W. Bush displaying his Spanish-language skills and his multi-racial family. Providing what Gray terms ''representational equity,'' this larger discourse of tolerance and multiculturalism helps to create a social vision of a society that has finally come to terms with, and perhaps even embraced, its racial diversity. Given such a world, arguments for colorblindness can seem both reasonable and progressive. (p. 183)

They later argue that colorblindness strategically upholds White privilege as "it directs social, political, and legal attention away from race and racism" (Flores et al, 2006, p. 184). This ideology is a perpetuation of racist ideologies, hidden behind the notion of multicultural assimilation. Within the contemporary climate, "racial logics maintain that unless one can see racism, in ways consistent with, for instance, Jim Crow laws, one no longer has to believe that it exists. Indeed, colorblindness equates the seeing of race with racism" (Flores et al, 2006, p. 184). Thus, the discourses in newspapers and blogs are shaped, to some extent, by this current ideology.

While the post-racial attitude prevails in some aspects, the assumptions of the past still exist. On October 15, 2009, newspapers reported that "a Louisiana justice of the peace said he refused to issue a marriage license to an interracial couple out of concern for any children the couple might have." ("Interracial couple denied," 2009, para 1). While past trends that discussed this topic were based in biological assumptions that shaped legal and social categorizations, the new trends are difficult to pinpoint. According to an article in the *New York Times* on March 31, 2008, "the old categories are weakening." ("Who Are We?," para. 9), but the parameters of the new categories of social identity construction, and what they mean for mixed race individuals, are unclear.

Media Conversations

Media conversations are the discourses that exist in various forms of mediums that, taken together, reflect societal trends and beliefs. The media conversations selected for this study are influenced by social and political events that influence public opinion about race and mixed race identity. The discourses in these conversations contain rhetorical features that help construct meaning by connecting media discourse content to personal experience.

Overview

When conducting research on blogs and newspaper articles I use qualitative data collection and analysis. The primary purposes of this study is to examine how people make sense of and conceptualize mixed race identity in representative artifacts. Further, I explore the roles of biological, legal, and social implications as they relate to current constructions of mixed race identity. I examine specific communication labels that individuals use to express, understand, and make sense of mixed race as a concept. My

research on racial identity constructions through media is innovative because it maps the discourses about mixed race identity by looking at pivotal discourses surrounding this topic in newspapers and blogs. This research is helpful to those who are concerned with the discourse of race in the United States and what it means for mixed race individuals. This research contributes to current understandings of the social constructions of race, mixed-race identity, and racism.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of literature outlines my investigation of the presentation of the rhetorical construction of mixed race identity on newspapers and blogs. This chapter details the relevant research concerning: (1) racial identity construction; (2) media representations; and (3) framing and rhetorical features.

Mixed race refers to someone who has one parent of one race or ethnicity and the other parent of another race or ethnicity. I link race and ethnicity together in this way in order to encompass the cultural norms that often accompany what constitutes race. Root (1992b) defines biracial as "someone with two socially and phenotypically distinct racial heritages-–one from each parent" (p. 11). However, a problem arises in that the term "biracial" does not truly define who a person is, but rather denies all races because it does not explicitly name the races. It is almost as if saying, "I am a hybrid," not one race or another, yet both (or more). This also leads to "othering" of people who identify with more than one race. What I associate here with this term is the struggle of identifying with two distinct heritages based on race. It is impossible to separate race and culture. But I specify race because biculturality occurs on many levels that are beyond the scope of this study, such as in the hyphenated American's nationality. I use the terms "racially mixed," "biracial" and "multiracial" interchangeably at times, as do many of the authors who write on this subject (Gilbert, 2005; O'Hearn 1998; Root, 1992a). As hooks (1994) states "this is the oppressor's language yet I need it to talk to you" (p. 228). I understand the term is problematic but I use it throughout this paper because it is in common use.

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The phrasing "of mixed race" is often used, but this carries a much looser definition since this phrase could also include a person whose ancestral lineage is in some way racially mixed. There are those who self-identify as "mixed" when describing having parents of two different races. Although various authors use various terms, few justify their choices. Gilbert (2005) ultimately contends, "because mixed-race is a social construction, it seems sufficient to acknowledge that there can be no single or fully satisfactory label. There is a strong argument that in all circumstances it should be left to individuals to self-identify for reasons of self-empowerment" (p. 59).

Racial Identity

The word *race,* as interpreted to mean "common descent," was introduced into the English language in the 16th century, from the French word *rasse*. The use of this word in the United States is a product of European imperialism and colonization of North America by the French and English (Smedley, 1999). The following definition of race is presented in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language:*

Race- n.

1. A local geographic or global human population distinguished as a more or less distinct group by genetically transmitted physical characteristics.

2. A group of people united or classified together on the basis of common history, nationality, or geographic distribution: *the German race.*

3. A genealogical line; a lineage.

4. Humans considered as a group.

In the United States, race has multiple connotations that evolve from the definitions. Scholars use race as an assumptive construct. In other words, race is used for

academic discussion (as well as public and personal discourse), with the assumption that all are in agreement about what it is and what it means. Sha (2006) explains that race is often "used politically, rather than objectively, and that [its] connotations often are evaluative, rather than descriptive" (p. 49). Comas (1951), as cited in Sha (2006), states, "that although race as a linguistic term refers exclusively to a descriptive biological factor, its meaning often is defined politically, rather than biologically" (p. 49). In this chapter, I present the research on biological, legal, and social issues surrounding race in the United States and then explore the current literature on mixed race identity.

Biological Assumptions

The most problematic approach to race is that we are biologically different races. Although scientists have proven this theory to be false through genetic testing, this conception of race as essentially biological still persists (Smedley, 1993). This understanding of race stems from a long history of science that aimed to prove biological differences among races. The history of eugenics in the United States, which also influenced other regions such as Nazi Germany, justified racial inequality (Haney-Lopez, 1994; Smedley, 1993). Eugenicists argued that by measuring skulls, they could determine brain size and therefore intellectual ability. Scientists used these findings to make a racial chart that described Caucasians, Mongoloids, and Negroids as proven to be different races (Haney-Lopez, 1994). It is this type of science that justified movements such as slavery. This type of science was also used when Blacks were able to be successful at certain things, such as athletic events. The justification became that Blacks were built differently, but intellectually were still inferior. This definition is problematic because it shapes race relations through legal and social action because the assumption

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that "science" was correct justified power and domination over groups categorized as subordinate (Omi & Winant, 1996).

Another biological assumption is that blood is an indicator of racial identity. Since scientists have established that our race is not carried in our bloodstream, the language that reflects this notion still permeates everyday discourse on racial identity (Zack, 1995). Medical research also complicated our understandings of race. Epstein (2004) asserts that medical research historically leaves out populations of color as well as women. New government policies mandated that medical research include previously ignored groups, but this is complicated by the fact that if race is a social construction and not based in biology, how does this impact medical research? Medical claims are often made about certain racial groups, such as Black men having a higher rate of prostate cancer. Although this may be true, my understanding of race allows me to see that those claims need to not be solely based on the essence of race, but on the socio-historical, geographic, and cultural implications that may be influencing a particular group categorized along racial lines. These biological assumptions significantly impact the way race is conceptualized. It requires a paradigm shift in public policy in order to undo this myth about blood as a source for racial identity because these biological assumptions continue to have a significant impact on legal explications of race.

One-drop rule.

In the United States, there has been a history of fear of miscegenation, or racial mixing. A discussion on biracial individuals in the United States cannot take place without an understanding of the history that shaped the current perceptions of race. For those with African heritage, the one-drop rule has influenced how mixed race is viewed

today. People who were a descendents of a White person and a Black person were labeled "mulatto," and the terminology emphasized that "African blood" was clearly marked for legal purposes, particularly property matters (Hickman, 1997; Roth, 2005). However, it is assumed that few identity options existed for multiracial individuals who have Black heritage. The U.S. "history of the 'one-drop rule'—codified legally as well as socially and culturally—designated how they should be identified" (Roth, 2005, p. 36). People with any known Black ancestry, or "a single drop" of Black blood, were legally designated as Black, and over time most Blacks internalized this rule themselves (Roth, 2005). Roth (2005) goes on to add, "definitions of Blackness were necessary in part because of state laws making interracial marriage illegal" (p.38).

Therefore, a person with one drop of African blood was considered Black (or colored, given the time period) (Hickman, 1997; Roth, 2005; Zack, 1995). Five or more generations later, a range of skin color and phenotypic characteristics exist within the Black community. Hickman (1997) contends "over the generations, this rule has not only shaped countless lives, it has created the African-American race as we know it [sic] today, and it has defined not just the history of this race but a large part of the history of America" (p. 1). It is only recently that people have begun to use the term "biracial," which encompasses being of two races. Prior to this term, one had to choose, or was forced to identify with one race or the other; that is, monoracial identity was ascribed, and a biracial avowed identity was ignored. According to Roth (2005), "the increase in interracial marriage and the ensuing multiracial population have begun to challenge views of race as *exclusive*" (p. 38).

Zack (1995) clarifies that the one-drop rule holds no scientific weight.

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She explains that it used to be assumed that parents literally passed their blood to their children. "We now know that this is nonsense," contends Zack, "maternal and fetal blood circulate separately; blood is not passed on, but its type is copied genetically; there are no general racial blood types—human blood types are distinguished for transfusion purposes, and full siblings may have incompatible blood types" (p. 122). She states that the concept of race in the United States which "purports to be about something hereditary and physical, has no scientific foundation" (Zack, 1995, p. 120).

The one-drop rule has been reflected in the U.S. Census since 1920 (Zack, 1995), and the concept of the one-drop rule was often used in legal cases. One of the most influential legal decisions was the landmark case of *Loving v. Virginia* (1967). It was not until 1967 that state anti-miscegenation laws were ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court, at which time 16 states still had such laws on the books (Roth, 2005; Zack, 1993). These laws did not stop interracial heterosexuality or the birth of individuals of mixed race from occurring, according to Zack (1993), "the laws did accomplish . . . the imposition of bastardy, or illegitimacy, on such individuals" (p. 77). The decision, involving a Black/Native American woman and White man who were accused of violating the Virginia state ban on Whites marrying non-Whites, determined that a ban on interracial marriage and miscegenation were unconstitutional (Zack, 1993). After the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that anti-miscegenation laws were unconstitutional, the one-drop rule lost its relevance in constitutional law.

However, this notion continues in the minds of the public, and issues surrounding biracial identity still are clearly rooted in the influence of the one-drop rule. The discussion of biracial identity, especially when involving either the Black or White (or

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both) race can center on the notion of passing, that is the ability to pass for White when, in fact, one is not just White, or not White at all. The basis for this lies in the association of phenotype and race. Roth (2005) contends, "although designations of Blackness have frequently correlated with phenotype, the very fact that knowledge of Black ancestry has historically caused shifts in classification of those who appear White—the very essence of 'passing'—illustrates that the one-drop rule is not simply based on racial appearance" (p. 38).

Since the one-drop rule was used to categorize people, "an American classified as Black may have more genes that cause physical characteristics considered to be white than an American classified as white" (Zack, 1995, p. 122). This leads to a varied and diverse-looking group within the Black population living in the United States. Beltran and Fojas (2007) contend that in the past a person with ambiguous features may have been motivated to pass as White in order to have benefits, such as "education, employment, and housing" (p. 8). They add that the one-drop rule also affected those who were part Mexican or American Indian. To pass was also a risk because of legal sanctions against passing and that these biracial individuals are also often marginalized by the non-White communities (Beltran & Fojas, 2007). This rejection from both dominant and marginalized communities often left individuals feeling uncertain about their identity. Some researchers found that people who were mixed race were viewed by others as not "Mexican enough" or "Asian enough," because of their mixed race (Beltran & Fojas, 2007; Root, 1999).

The dominant public discourses surrounding this topic demonstrate that biracialism is a complex and complicated subject that is difficult for people to discuss.

According to Brunsma (2005), "mixed-race persons have always been a 'concern' in American society because of the challenge they pose to the racial order" (p. 1132). It is also difficult for people to categorize those who are biracial. Butcher (2005) adds, "biracial persons indicate how difficult it is for many people to think outside socially constructed boundaries. Moreover, existing ideologies use bodily appearances to reinforce these boundaries and to explain collective experiences" (p. 2). Pellegrini (2005) contends that this view of biracialism is salient because

mixed race has been 'smothered' by the prevailing biracial idiom in

everyday life, and through the norms, policies, and practices of the media,

big business, and state institutions such as courts of law and universities; it

has been relegated to the outskirts of society and of the collective

American psyche. (p. 533)

In this study, my analyses of texts around the topic of mixed race identity and the Obama campaign and election rely upon public and personal understandings of the historical underpinnings as well as the current shifts in discourse. In other words, the way people talk about and conceptualize mixed race identity today is influenced by the biological assumptions of the past. Part of the analysis examines rhetorical references or echoes of these historical ideas in newspapers and blogs about Obama's pivotal discourse moments.

Legal Assumptions

The biological assumptions were used by judicial entities in the United States in order to justify a racial hierarchy and social actions that went against the U.S. Constitution's main claim that "All men [sic] are created equal." The Dred Scott case

declared Blacks as 3/5 of a human being, justifying unequal treatment (Haney-Lopez, 1994). Legal decisions also declared that a person be considered Black if they had one drop of Black blood. The "one-drop rule" shaped race relations in the U.S. in ways that still impact Black identity to this day because various physical characteristics of Black communities rely on skin color as a key descriptor and the ideas about skin tone still permeate beliefs about legal and political identity.

Legal implications are not limited to this Black/White binary. Because the Constitution prior to the Civil War deemed that a citizen had to be a White male, many cases decided by the appeal courts were conflicts about citizenship (Haney-Lopez, 1996). Even though some were successful in their efforts to gain U.S. citizenship, many others were not. Haney-Lopez (1996) describes two cases that are key examples of the legal implications that further justify the social construction of race: *Takao Ozawa v. the United States* (1922) and *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind* (1923). Ozawa was a man born in Japan who immigrated to the United States, learned English, attended college at Berkeley, raised a family and insisted on complete "American assimilation" by emphasizing American culture to his family. He decided to go to court to gain citizenship and argued that he was loyal to the United States and had done everything "the American way." He also insisted on arguing about skin color as the determining factor in race. He acknowledged he was of Japanese descent, but insisted that his skin color made him "white." The court's response was:

> Manifestly the test [of race] afforded by the mere color of the skin of each
>
> individual is impracticable as that differs greatly among persons of the
>
> same race, even among Anglo-Saxons, ranging by imperceptible

gradations from the fair blonde to the swarthy brunette, the latter being

darker than many of the lighter hued persons of the brown or yellow races.

(*Takao Ozawa v. the United States,* 1922)

Therefore, the court argued that skin color was not a determining factor for racial

classification.

The court in *Takao Ozawa v. the United States* (1922) stated that "skin color does

not correlate well with racial identity" (p. 58). The court decided that he could not gain

citizenship because, based on scientific categorizations, he was a mongoloid and

therefore could not be considered White. Based on *Takao Ozawa v. the United States*

(1922), three months later a Syrian born man named Thind decided to make his case to

the courts to gain citizenship. He had served in the U.S. military and believed that he

should be considered a citizen. His attorneys argued that Syrians were scientifically

considered Caucasian and therefore Thind could be considered White and U.S. citizen.

His appeal was denied because the court claimed that though scientifically he is

considered Caucasian, due to his dark features, to a "common man" he would not pass for

White (*United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind*, 1923). In other words, the judicial system

decided racial categorizations based on scientific research and legal understanding of the

time. This gives evidence to the continuously changing racial definitions. For example,

the 'one-drop rule', in which a person with a single drop of African blood was

categorized as Black, was challenged at the government level as recently as 1982 in

Louisiana (Hasian & Nakayama, 1999). This study assumes that the legal implications,

along with the biological assumptions, inform current understandings of race and racial

categories.

Social Implications

Racial categories vary widely throughout the world, and even within the United States the meanings of these categories have shifted throughout history because of immigration. When southern Europeans first began immigrating to the U.S., they were considered non-White, then the racial line was drawn to include all Europeans and those from outside of Europe, such as immigrants from China, were designated as non-White (Callaway-Thomas et al., 1999). Similarly, Leonard (1993) explains that "immigrants from the Punjab province of India came to California at the turn of the twentieth century and settled in the state's major agricultural valleys. About five hundred of these men married *Mexican* and *Mexican*-American women, creating a Punjabi *Mexican* second generation, which perceived itself as "Hindu" (the name given to immigrants from India in earlier decades)" (p. 1). Sha (2006) explains that although Whites and Asians are categorized as different races, "Nazi propagandists, for political reasons, asserted that their Japanese allies were really part of the Aryan race, possessing the same superior intellectual and moral qualities as the German people themselves" (Comas, 1951 as cited in Sha, 2006). According to Zack (1995), "racial theory is the intellectual structure within which it is possible to develop an understanding of race as socially constructed" (p. 120). Race is not purely based on phenotype, but history and region and self-identification as well as many other broad categories. The analyses for this study rely on understanding the role of biological, legal, and historical discourses on contemporary media conversations. This dissertation builds upon existing literature, but provides a unique perspective on the social implications of race by focusing on the complexities of mixed race identity.

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Socially Constructing Race

While people may base their racial classification of other people on their physical characteristics, it is the meaning we assign to those characteristics that makes race a social construction. Omi and Winant's (1996) research explains the systematic way in which race is shaped in the United States. Race, the racial state, and racialization are three important concepts that are essential to their theory. Omi and Winant define race as a social construction based on socio-historical implications. They also argue that race is an organizing principle that is continuously evolving and changing based on the current racial state. Their definition of race moves beyond the two assumptions of race as both an essence and biological or as pure illusion. They describe race as a social force with very real implication on societal relations.

A key aspect to their work is the racial state. They argue that the racial state is an ideological and hegemonic force that dictates what characteristics of race are important at a given time and in a particular context. This is done through racial projects that the state implements including government and institutional policies, laws, and judicial decisions that shape racial conflict. The racial state is a potent force in conveying the normative meaning of race.

Racialization (racial formation) is the process by which the state uses race to categorize its citizens. Through these racial projects, racial definitions change and shift. Omi and Winant (1996) use this concept to describe the way previously unmarked groups are racialized. Racial projects are developed through legal and institutional means that justify how people should identify with only one race in government forms that demand

that you "check one box." My study shows that newspapers and blogs are influenced by racialization.

Media Framing

This dissertation focuses on the notion that media conversations exist as part of social and political narratives that influence public opinion about race, mixed race identity, and racism. The discourses in these conversations contain particular rhetorical features; their goal is to form public opinion and one means for achieving this goal is framing.

Public opinion formation, developed by Walter Lippmann, focuses on media and democracy. He was concerned with how the practice of democracy fluctuates with media and technological advances and the distorted information that resides in the human mind (Lipmann, 1922). Contemporary research focuses on the role of media in structuring a particular message and the effects that this message has on audience's interpretations and public opinions from media agenda-setting and framing.

Media agenda setting typically focuses on media habits, including news diffusion, news selection, and emphasis (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). According to Kim and McCombs (2007), "while the agenda-setting effect could once be summarized as the media being highly effective in telling us what to think about, but not what to think, the continuing elaboration of agenda-setting theory suggests that the media often tell us how to think about a topic in the news and sometimes even what opinion to hold about that topic" (p. 300). McCombs and Shaw (1972) coined the term "agenda setting." This concept is often applied to the media in general but to political news in particular. This

theory is a simple way of explaining how media frames tell audiences how to think about political information and political news.

One aspect of agenda setting is the concept of framing. Through the framing process, the media text's influential meaning is revealed (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). Framing is the "persistent selection, emphasis, and exclusion" of information in media messages (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7). According to Entman (1993), a frame is a "slanted point of view on a news story—the essential features of framing are the selection and salience. Entman describes framing as the selection of "some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text" (p. 7). The salience is the emphasis that brings a particular frame to the forefront. Framing contributes to public opinion and political knowledge and this concept is important for analyzing news framing of Obama's mixed race identity. The media conversations take place in news and blogs through rhetorical features, in which newspapers and blogs reinforce each other, and construct a consciousness about race, racialization, and the racial state in the United States.

Rhetorical and Ideological Framing

Framing is also a rhetorical process that includes linguistic framing by featuring certain metaphors, naming, labels, images, and phrases. This framing is done through what Kenneth Burke calls terministic screens. According to Cavallaro (2001) "language as a system of signs and symbols is always based on figures of some kind—namely, conventional elements that define things in their absence" (p. 27). When these conventional elements are strategically used in media discourse to present the point of view of the source, the process of rhetorical framing occurs.

Cavallaro (2001) adds that "rhetoric and ideology are inextricably intertwined" (p. 30). Rhetorical language serves to perpetuate ideologies. The definition of ideology has shifted and evolved through the contributions of Marx, Gramsci, Althusser, Stuart Hall and van Dijk. Each of these key scholars expanded and contributed to a complex conceptualization of ideology. Conceptually, ideology "did not originate in Marxism and is still in no way confined to it" (Williams, 1977, p. 55), but it is a good place to start since many scholars develop their own understanding of ideology by expanding on or challenging a Marxist approach. Marxist writings explore the notion of ideology in class struggles. Marx noted that ideology is a false consciousness, a way to explain how those in power (the bourgeoisie) remained in power. The notion of false consciousness emphasizes how the bourgeois misrepresent "reality" to subordinates, thus subordinates have an unrealistic view or understanding of the world. An important aspect of the Marxist approach to ideology is that a fixed system is imposed onto subordinates by the bourgeoisie through images that serve their own purposes that keep the lower classes without power. Gramsci (1971) and Althusser (1971) both challenge and expand on a Marxist understanding of ideology.

Gramsci (1971) reconceptualized ideology as going beyond just the dominant ideology from the bourgeoisie. He argued that those in subordinate positions are not passive receivers of the dominant ideology, but they continue to have a role in the political, historical, as well as economic process. His argument of hegemony describes the level of negotiation in being dominated (Gramsci, 1971). In other words, people consent to their own domination. From a structuralist approach, Althusser (1971) expanded on the Marxist notion of ideology by incorporating the idea that there is

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cultural domination as well as economic domination. Hall (1985) contends that Althusser was "the key figure in modern theorizing on this question who clearly broke with some of the old protocols and provided a persuasive alternative which remains broadly within the terms of the Marxist problematic" (p. 92). Althusser's approach to ideology allows for a theorizing about historical events, certain texts, and ideological constructions as determined by more than one structure (Hall, 1985, p. 94). Althusser sees ideology as achieved on many levels and uses the term 'ideological state apparatuses.' These apparatuses cause domination and are inescapable. Media is one structure that perpetuates ideologies.

Stuart Hall conceptualizes ideology and media, adding a crucial piece to the understanding of ideology emphasizing the symbolic features, that is, the rhetoric embedded in the discourse. Hall focuses on ideology and provides a direct application to mass media in terms of production, representation, signs, and discourse (Hall, 1988). He explains that "ideology is a function of the discourse and the logic of social processes, rather than the intention of the agent" (p. 88). According to Hall (1988), media are actually reproducing ideologies by the symbols they use to create the discourse so that it addresses specific audiences.

van Dijk (1998) approaches the topic of ideology as a theory that looks at discourse, society, and cognition. van Dijk explains that ideologies are not just worldviews of a group "but rather the principles that form the basis of such beliefs" (p. 8). This approach differs from previous researchers because it is concerned with individuals' cognitions in their explanations of ideology(ies).

According to van Dijk (2006), ideologies are "foundational beliefs that underlie the shared social representations of specific kinds of social groups" (p. 121). These representations are in turn the basis of discourse and other social practices. Discourse, "spoken or written communicative interaction," expresses ideologies. Discourse and ideologies are closely linked with identity because ideology and identity are constructed through discourse. van Dijk also explains, "When group members explain, motivate or legitimate their (group-based) actions, they typically do so in terms of ideological discourse" (p. 121). I adopt this idea that ideology is constituted by how audiences respond to and interact with message content.

Another important perspective is that of Foucault's conceptualizations of power and historical discourse and is developed through his idea of discursive formations. Foucault went beyond the study of language and focused on the power of historical discourse, which he saw as language and practice that people accepted and acted upon. Discourse, according to Foucault, is conceptualized as "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about—a way of representing the knowledge about—a particular topic at a particular historical moment" and is about "production of knowledge through language" (Hall, 1992, p. 291). Discourse governs the way we think and behave concerning a certain topic. The concept of discourse is concerned with where meanings come from. Foucault's "discursive formations" are domains for discourse that represent a set of rules, often assumed and taken for granted, regarding what can be written, thought, and acted upon on a particular topic. He notes:

> Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a
> system of dispersion, whenever between objects, types of statements,

concepts or thematic choices, one can define a regularity, we will say, for

the sake of convenience, that we are dealing with a discursive formation.

(Foucault, 1972, p. 38)

Systems for dispersing statements and discourse and the regularity in dispersion

of statements are the basis of how discourse becomes second nature, and in some cases

unconscious. Since discourse governs our thoughts and behaviors, it also influences how

we think of ourselves, our identities. Theoretically, ideology and identity are manifested

through discourse.

In addition to identity, ideological framing also links to culture. According to Lu

(2004) "although ideology and culture are not synonymous terms, one cannot fully

understand a nation's prevailing ideology without understanding its culture and vice

versa." (p. 39). In other words, the ideological underpinnings of a given discourse are

linked to individual, cultural, national, and racial identity. She adds that "language, a

major component of culture, both conveys and constructs a worldview, as well as

formulating ideologies and belief systems for the people of any given culture" (Lu, 2004,

p. 39). Identifying the rhetorical features and framing of Obama discourses and media

discourses allow me to map the boundaries and strategies that influence the ideologies

received from the political and legal history of the U.S. and those that are reinforced in

current media discourses. The conversation related to Obama's identity challenge

existing discursive formations about race and mixed race.

Rhetoric of Race

Rhetoric is "the action humans perform when they use symbols for the purpose of

communicating with one another" (Foss, 1996, p. 4). Rhetoric and media discourses are a

fundamental way in which symbols help form and transmit social and political public opinion and social identity. According to Kenneth Burke (1969), rhetoric is "the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents" (p. 41). In this section I provide background on labels, names, and rhetorical devices infusing discourses that elicit a frame on race. I then give detail of various labels in mixed race discourses.

The rhetorical perspective on language and labels sheds light on how the use of symbols influences behavior. Burke (1966) asserted "the nature of our terms affects the nature of our observations . . . much that we take as observations about 'reality' may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms" (p. 46). Burke also theorized that reality was created and shaped through the use of language or "terministic screens" (discussed later in this chapter). Rhetorical use of symbols can also resist or challenge the way others use symbols or change the meaning of symbols.

The influence of naming and labeling for racial identity is an important aspect of the symbolic construction of race. The impact of specific language to describe race can be traced back to the Enlightenment. Herder (1992) based his theories of language on the work of Darwin, Lamarck, and Kant. One of his main arguments was that language evolves as a process that becomes more complex through adaptation, change, and natural selection. His work stimulated a new way of studying language that applied race to nationalist theory and developed the origins of ethnic nationalism (Herder, 1992).

Past research (Salett & Koslow, 1994; Smith, 1992; Stiano, 1980) investigated the meaning of racial identity for minority group members within the United States. Racial groups are not fixed entities; they are often continuously shaped by labeling and

identification (Martin & Krizek, 1996). The significance of labels lies in the meanings

that they imply. Rooted in the discussion of racial identity is the assumption that the

language and labels we use to describe ourselves are discursive interpretations of our

identity (Burke, 1966; Mokros, 2003).

Racial identity is communicated through labels. The name chosen to label a group

often has historical roots and social justifications. Burke (1959) emphasizes how symbols

shape attitudes:

One shapes his [*sic*] attitudes, the logic of his life, by the coordinates [e.g., naming]

he chooses, and one shapes his actions with reference to the judgments that follow

from the coordinates. (p. 326)

Previous research looked at the connotations of various terms in the Black

community (Anglin & Whaley, 2006; Niven & Zilber, 2000) from the perspective of the

audience. Goeke (2009) contends:

One of the first manifestations of a racial or ethnic group claiming a label that

reflected identity was in the 1960s, during the Black Power Movement. The use of

the word "*Black*" became popular with some members of the Civil Rights

Movement. The term was embraced as a celebration of distinctly American African

ancestry. (p. 1)

According to Niven and Zilber (2000), there is a difference in the way an

audience responds to a speaker based on the preference for either "Black" or "African

American." They analyzed the relationship between ideology and racial label use by

looking at members of the U.S. House and Senate as a sample of the political elite. They

found that political liberals are more likely to choose African American than Black, and

liberals are far more likely to choose African American than are conservatives. This research suggests a strong connection between ideology and politics that also surfaces in media conversations about Obama's mixed race identity.

Labels used to describe someone who is more than just one race have changed over time and vary in how they represent an ascribed or avowed identity. According to Sha (2006), "When an individual avows a cultural identity, he or she identifies with a cultural group and asserts that membership . . . On the other hand, an ascribed cultural identity is the reference group assigned to a person by another person and may not be the same as the person's avowed cultural identity" (p. 52). This is important when discussing racial identity since a person's avowed and ascribed identity may not coincide. Myers and Collier (2005) also explain:

> cultural identifications become evident through avowed descriptions about
>
> the character of one's own group affiliations, as well as ascriptions,
>
> composite representations about the identifications of those aligning with
>
> another cultural group. Each cultural identification is extremely broad and
>
> abstract and does not incorporate all the individual voices and the
>
> multivocality of those aligning with that group. (p. 260)

One can think of avowed identity as being "internally defined," whereas ascribed identity is "externally imposed" (Hecht et al., 1993, as cited in Sha, 2006, p. 51).

Previous research on mixed race identity focuses on this nomenclature. Traditionally, the term used for someone who was both Black and White was "mulatto" (Hickman, 1997; Roth, 2005). Other terms, such as quadroon and octoroon, were used to label and mark someone with African ancestry and clearly indicate the amount of

contribution from that bloodline (Hickman, 1997). These "scientifically" based terms, often ascribed to those with the corresponding lineage, emphasize racial background as a feature of identity. Mixed race terminology and categorization are not limited to those of African descent.

Culturally specific terms are often used such as the term "Hapa," used to refer to someone from mixed Asian American and Pacific Islander background (Kimoto, 2004). According to Beltran and Fojas (2007), this Hawaiian term, literally meaning "half," traditionally has negative connotations. People from this background reappropriated "Hapa" more broadly and with "a more neutral meaning" (Beltran & Fojas, 2007, p. 7). The label metisse describes someone who is White and American Indian although it is sometimes used in reference to anyone who is "mixed." Eurasian refers to a person of mixed European and Asian descent. Similarly, the term Amerasian denotes being of mixed White American and Asian descent (Beltran & Fojas, 2007)

Individuals, based on their preferences for identity, often avow these terms. Another term that is important to this discussion is "mestizo," which comes from the word "mestizaje" or mixture. Historically, this term referred to the population that developed after the Spanish colonization of the indigenous of Latin America. Now, the term refers to Latin@s of any mixed heritage (Beltran & Fojas, 2007). Recently, the use of terms such as "biracial" and "mixed" has become more prevalent (Butcher, 2005; Gilbert, 2005). Again, as society changes, so does the preference of people for terms identifying them as "biracial" or "mixed." Obama's candidacy and Presidency influenced the terminology used to address racial identity.

The name reflects empowerment or disempowerment. Scholars agree that the terms available for this subject matter are often problematic (Butcher, 2005; Gilbert, 2005). Butcher (2005) states that race is more readily recognized as "socially constructed with no grounding in genetic reality" (p. 3) and that "scholars need to push forward a more inclusive definition of what constitutes a Biracial [sic] identity" (p. 3). Butcher (2005) also points out that using "biracial" as a category for someone who identifies as belonging to more than one racial group is common "since race is still understood within a White/Black [sic] paradigm in the U.S., Biracial [sic] persons of African descent may have different experiences than other multiracial persons" (Butcher, 2005, p. 3). Gilbert (2005) prefers the term "'mixed-race' instead of 'bi-racial', 'dual-heritage', 'mixed-heritage', or 'multiracial'" (p. 59). He contends that his choice should be understood as a "purely ascriptive label, and this has been chosen largely on the basis of the author's own political and ideological choice of self-identification (mixed-race Yemeni/British); however, the author acknowledges that the label of mixed-race is becoming increasingly problematic and untenable" (Gilbert, 2005, p. 59). The complexities and obstacles one encounters in finding an appropriate term for discussing this topic becomes evident in Gilbert's (2005) explanation. For Gilbert, the term remains ascriptive although he uses it to define his avowed identity.

Part of the challenge in researching this topic is that the "language is also a place of struggle" (hooks, 1990, p. 236). I most often use the term "mixed race," when referring to a person or people who are a *both/and* when it comes to race. Part of the struggle of language is that the terms can be interpreted in various ways. The term

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"biracial" is problematic in that it is based on the idea of race (and racism), which is socially constructed.

Terministic screens.

The rhetorical perspective on language illuminates the relationship between symbols and human action. I previously explained Symbolic Interaction (SI) and its significance to communication studies. Burke converted SI into theory of social performance. Burke used language from theatre and literature to describe social performance. Burke also asserted that language helped construct social reality through "terministic screens." Burke (1966) explains "though man [sic] is typically the symbol-using animal, he clings to a kind of naïve verbal realism that refuses to let him realize the full extent of the role played in symbolicity in his notions of reality" (p. 5). The words chosen direct people's attention as "the nature of our terms affects the nature of our observations" (Burke, 1966, p. 46). Based on this rhetorical feature, the discourse in newspapers and blogs uses certain "terministic screens" about race and mixed race identity that influence public understanding of them. A terministic screen is a lens or filter that language creates. The linguistic filter screens in some features of a reality and screens out others. For example, when news stories and blogs refer to Barack Obama as the "first Black President," the language used speaks to his racial identity while simultaneously erasing his mixed race, gendered, and sexual identities. Burke stated that "reality" is a "clutter of symbols about the past combined with whatever things we know mainly through maps, magazines, newspapers, and the like about the present . . . a construct of our symbol systems" (p. 5). The vocabulary used to describe how the world works and what things mean constructs a reality.

Mixed Race and Media Representations

Although closely linked, framings and representations are distinct concepts. The way the media frames a particular event or identity reflects worldviews. Chua (2006) states, "frames are fundamentally about our relationship to the world and how we view it" (p. 2). Frames are a biased perspective in that the frame puts some focus into a narrative and leaves others out in order to develop a slant on the news story or narrative of the blogger. Representations, on the other hand, are constructed images (Cavallaro, 2001).

This section, addresses the media representations of mixed race identity. The struggle that "mulattos" could experience was often depicted in a negative light. As Bost (1998) points out, "in nineteenth century literature, biracialism was often conceived as a 'tragedy' for African Americans" (p. 675). The fictional character of the *tragic mulatto*, often used in American literature, attempted to deter people from interracial marriages and relationships. Gilbert (2005) adds, "while there was social and moral distaste about the children of interracial couples, concern was also expressed about the psychological and interpersonal difficulties that mixed-race individuals encountered" (p. 60). In other words, people focused on the identity crisis that may occur and used that as the reason to oppose interracial marriage. The *tragic mulatto* (although it was often a *mulatta*) character was prevalent in early films (Beltran & Fojas, 2007). This notion of the *tragic mulatto* presented in media reflected and reinforced normative ideologies rooted in fear of racial mixture.

A discussion on mixed race in the media cannot occur without a discussion of the representations of interracial relationships in the media. According to Beltran and Fojas

(2007), "the evolution of the representation of mixed-race relationships in film and television has historically reflected and arguably has also impacted such social attitudes" (p. 12). They explain that:

> Newly forming notions of whiteness at the turn of the Twentieth Century, for example, played into how silent melodramas of the 1900s and 1910s portrayed mixed race romances between European Americans and characters of partial American Indian, Asian or Mexican descent. Such melodramas typically based their dramatic conclusions on last minute revelations of one or both partner's "real" racial status as based on the "one-drop" rule.
>
> (p. 12)

The film industry established barriers to ensure that interracial interaction remained at a platonic level. Beltran and Fojas (2008) explain that the Production Code of 1937 clearly stated that "the representation of sexual relations between people of different races was forbidden" (p.13). This Code was rooted in and reflected the larger legal, social, and cultural bans and policies against "marriage between whites and African Americans, and at times between whites and Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, and American Indians, that were reinforced in the U.S. legal arena in this period" (Beltran and Fojas, 2008, p. 13). The authors clarify that mixed race romances were still represented on screen, since the Production Code Administration reviewed each film individually. When mixed race romance was represented, it never showed a positive outcome such as marrying and having children or living "happily ever after." Studios were very cautious in the way that they represented these relationships, so much so that even in the 1960s many of the minority characters were played by White or racially

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mixed White actors so as not to give the impression that a romantic interaction was actually happening between two races. These written portrayals reinforced current social values. Similarly, news stories and blogs reinforce ideologies through terministic screens. Although the media conversations I examine do not use portrayals in the same way, they create representations of race using terministic screens, labeling, naming, and framing.

As social values shifted, so did the representation of mixed race couples in film. The increase of mixed race marriages the United States transformed the way that these couples were portrayed in the media. Rather than have a temporary or tragic ending, these couples were presented in a positive light (Beltran & Fojas, 2008). A similar evolution occurred for biracial characters as well. As noted earlier, most of the first biracial characters in film were "sympathetic but tragic figures whose lives turned on the discovery of their mixed race status" (Beltran & Fojas, 2008, p. 16). Films such as *Birth of a Nation* (1915) presented the mulatto character in a way that resonated with the public's disapproval of racial mixing. The tragic mulatto, always emotionally unstable, deceptive and selfish, evolved into a staple character in classical film (Beltran & Fojas, 2008).

Through time, this representation shifted to include varied portrayals of biracial characters in the media. According to Beltran and Fojas (2008), "in contrast to the eras of only tragic and shameful mestizaje, such figures have been represented alternately as neutral, ordinary, positive, or even heroic" (p. 19). Although these representations are a sign of progress, there is still some debate about the way that biracial characters are presently portrayed. Nishime (2005) argues, "even when biraciality does appear as an issue, it is a relic of a bygone era, as in *Devil in a Blue Dress* . . . Whether this silence is

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due to the unpopularity of issue films in general or the creeping ideology of colorblindness, the issues surrounding multiraciality have moved off the radar screen." (p. 36). Nishime also explains that although biracial characters may not be prevalent in films, biracial celebrities are present. "Witness the oft-repeated story of Halle Berry who grew up with a white mother and an absent black father, or the hue and cry over Mariah Carey's "outing" by the tabloid and legitimate press" contends Nishime (2005), "of course, there are the longstanding discussions about Michael Jackson's supposed attempts to pass as white. In each case, there is anxiety over the blurring of racial categories and classifications that belies the cinema's apparent silence concerning such issues" (Nishime, 2005, p. 36).

Nishime (2005) presents the argument that the film industry portrays the biracial character in a new way, as a cyborg. "If…anxieties and fantasies of a culture are projected onto the image of the cyborg," explains Nishime (2005), "then the cyborg must be read as a powerful metaphor for the historical bogeyman of contamination—racial mixing" (Nishime, 2005, p. 34). Nishime (2005) argues that films discussing cyborgs are a safe avenue for the exploration of multiracial identity. The film portrayals of characters influence the way people think about race and are related to the newspapers and blogs about pivotal Obama discourses.

This chapter details the relevant literature regarding racial identity construction, mixed race media representations, and framing and rhetorical features. The interpretations will take into account existing theory and expand upon it in the subsequent chapters. This literature informs my investigation of the presentation of the rhetorical

construction of mixed race identity on the news media and on blogs as well as the

framing and ideological analysis.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODS

As the researcher, I look at the ways that news media as well as blogs construct

discourses on race and mixed-race identity during significant events in the Obama era.

This study examines how Obama's race is discussed in blogs and news media stories and

the implications these conversations have for understanding ideological constructions of

race and mixed-race identity in the United States. In this chapter, I describe the media

texts, explain the data collection, re-introduce my research questions, and outline the

analyses techniques used for this study.

Discursive Moments

The data for this study is discourse around four pivotal moments in Obama's

presidential campaign and early presidency in which issues of race and mixed-race

identity were of primary concern. Two of the discursive moments are from the 2008

presidential campaign; two come from Barack Obama's presidency. These include (1)

Obama's announcement of his presidential candidacy; (2) Obama's "A More Perfect

Union" speech; (3) Obama's election to the presidency; and (4) the arrest of Harvard

professor Henry Gates, Jr.

I refer to these moments as discursive moments because they are rhetorical

situations in which an exigence exists that invites a discursive response. Bitzer (1968), in

his discussion of the rhetorical situation, claimed that there are problems or urgencies that

bring discourse into existence. He states that "any *exigence* is an imperfection marked by

urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other

than it should be" (Bitzer, 1968, p. 6). I argue that these four incidents brought discourse about race into the foreground of public debate, the discourse that centered on Obama and invites a discursive response about race, racism, and mixed race identity. So each of the discourses that constitutes my database will be a response to an exigence created about race because of Obama's own mixed-race identity. In other words, these situations probably would not have developed had Obama not been a mixed-race man running for or elected president. Thus, these discursive moments make up significant political events in Obama's campaign and early presidency that deserve rhetorical attention because of what they can reveal about personal and public constructions of race.

The first event is when Barack Obama announced his candidacy for President of the United States in Springfield, Illinois, on February 10, 2007. This significant event-- the official commencement of his presidential run--stimulated a large quantity of conversations about race because he was considered a "Black" presidential candidate. One article on cnn.com stated "if the 45-year-old Obama were elected, he would become the nation's first African-American president" ("Obama declares he's running for President", May 2, 2007). In addition, he was officially introduced into a very historic campaign against Senator Hillary Clinton where race and gender became salient sources of discussions and points of contention.

The second discursive moment is the March 18, 2008, speech titled "A More Perfect Union," made by Obama during the 2008 presidential campaign. Obama gave this speech to resolve the media created conflict that arose when media broadcast a YouTube video of Rev. Jeremiah Wright, Obama's family pastor, saying "God bless America? No, God damn America!" Obama delivered a speech in Philadelphia to address the

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controversy that arose with his pastor's comments. The media claimed Obama's speech was as a step toward racial reconciliation and an effort to bridge a racial divide. Reverend Jeremiah Wright, a pastor at a prominent Black church in Chicago's Southside that the Obamas attended, was accused by conservative media news outlets as being anti-American based on segments of his politically charged sermons. These excerpts from Wright's sermon were first posted on YouTube. Obama's relationship with Wright came to the forefront, and Obama responded to this criticism with his speech in Philadelphia that contextualized the pastor's sermons and explained Obama's relationship with Wright. But the largest issue that he addressed was that of race in and its prominence discourse of the U. S.

The third event is Obama's presidential election on November 4, 2008, as the 44th President of the United States. Obama won the presidential race against Senator John McCain and that day is considered historic. Several news reports indicated a rise in voter turnout and his victory marked the end to a year and a half long campaign. Given that Obama was cast as the "first Black U.S. President" by media around the world, the theme of racial identity emerged again as a prominent issue.

The fourth and final event is the media event involving Professor Gates. On July 15, 2009, Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates Jr., one of the nation's pre-eminent African-American scholars, was arrested at his home by Cambridge police investigating a possible break-in. The incident was seen by many as a case of racial profiling. On July 22, President Barack Obama commented on the incident at a press conference, criticizing the arrest and the response by the Boston police. Obama was criticized, particularly by law enforcement organizations for the content of his speech. In the aftermath, Obama

stated that he regretted his comments on the situation and invited both Professor Gates

and the arresting police officer to the White House to discuss the issue over beers.

Data Collection

The purpose of this research is to examine the discourses around race and mixed-

race identity during Obama's campaign and presidency in order to uncover the ideologies

about race, and mixed race specifically, and what these ideologies signify about the

current conceptualization of race in the United States. I gathered data from two sources

that address the four discursive moments and present discourse on race: blogs and news

articles.

The first set of media texts for analysis is newspaper articles. The newspaper here

is defined as a daily newspaper published in a community. In the United States, news

stories generally conform to an expository writing style (Rivers, 1964; Roshco, 1975;

Sloan, 1990; Tuchman, 1978). News stories in newspapers are generally thought to

follow journalism ethics and standards that present the information "information of

importance to readers as citizens and members of community" with a considerable degree

of objectivity (Iggers, 1999, p. 2). Many news organizations aim for the ideals of

objectivity, fairness, and balance as major factors in presenting information (Evensen,

1995). Journalists are typically trained to structure a news story as an inverted pyramid

(Warren, 1951). The reporters place the essential facts of the story in the opening, with

supporting elements following in order of diminishing importance.

News stories are not the only type of material that appears in newspapers. Longer

articles in newspapers are considered "features." These articles differ from the standard

news article in that a feature article is more likely to use first person, anecdotal and fosters human interest (Stein, Paterno, & Burnett, 2006).

I collected 170 articles from three newspapers: *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Chicago Sun Times*. I used a Lexis/Nexis on-line database to collect articles given specific time parameters and key word search. The search string included a list of key terms used for identification of the critical discourse moments. Each of the events was given date parameters of six days starting with the day of the event. Articles from the *New York Times,* the *Chicago Sun-Times,* and the *Washington Post* were chosen because they are based in cities with large populations, are in various regions across the country, and are considered "mainstream."

The *New York Times* is a daily newspaper founded and published in New York City since 1851. This newspaper remains both the third largest newspaper in the United States (Perez-Peña, 2009). The *New York Times* is owned by The New York Times Company, which also publishes 18 other regional newspapers including the *International Herald Tribune* and *The Boston Globe*. The same family has controlled the paper since 1896 (mediaowners.com). This newspaper is organized into sections: News, Opinions, Business, Arts, Science, Sports, Style, and Features (nytimes.com). *The New York Times* has won 101 Pulitzer Prizes, the most of any news organization (Pérez-Peña, 2009). I collected 46 articles from the *New York Times*.

The *Washington Post,* established in 1877, is Washington D.C.'s largest and oldest daily newspaper. While other newspapers have a section labeled "Politics," the *Washington Post* includes several subsections: White House, Congress, The Fed Page, and Campaigns. The newspaper is ranked 7th among the top daily newspapers in the

United States, a ranking based on circulation in 2008. The *Washington Post* won 25

Pulitzer Prizes and runs under the Washington Post Company. I collected 64 articles from

the *Washington Post*.

The *Chicago Sun-Times* is a daily newspaper based in Chicago, Illinois, and is the

oldest published daily newspaper in the city. According to Burrelles*Luce*, the newspaper

was ranked 21 among the top daily newspapers in the United States, a ranking based on

circulation. The newspaper is organized into sections: Metro, News, Sports, Business,

Entertainment, Classifieds, Columns, Lifestyles, Health, and Travel (suntimes.com). The

Chicago Sun-Times is the flagship paper of the *Sun-Times Media Group*, which includes

various suburban and neighborhood newspapers in the Chicago area

(www.thesuntimesgroup.com). I collected 60 articles from the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

These particular newspapers were selected because they are established

newspapers. The *Washington Post* offers an in-depth Washington perspective; the

Chicago Sun-Times provides coverage from a significant region in Obama's political

career; and the *New York Times* affords a perspective from one of the most circulated

newspapers in the United States. In addition, all of the newspapers had significant

amounts of newspaper articles in the database search on Lexis/Nexis, which provided

more data than other well-known and established newspapers.

For each newspaper, I located all of the articles about each incident for six days

from the event. The search string included words specific to the specific discourse

moments. For the first event, Obama's candidacy announcement, I used the terms

Obama, announcement, candidate, and *president* and the date parameters were set to

February 10, 2007 through February 15, 2007 for each newspaper. Twenty articles were

collected. I used the terms *Obama, speech* and *race* for the second event, Obama's "A More Perfect Union" speech, and set the date parameters from March 18, 2008 through March 22, 2008. Thirty-seven articles were collected. The terms searched in Lexis/Nexis for the third event, election night 2008, were *Obama* and *election* within the parameters of November 4, 2008 through November 9, 2008. Eighty articles were collected. For the fourth event, Obama's response to the arrest of Professor Gates, I used the terms *Obama* and *Professor Gates* from July 22, 2009 to July 27, 2009. Fifty articles were collected. In total 170 articles were generated, or approximately 500 pages.

The second set of media texts for analysis is blog posts. The blog consists of entries, in reverse-chronological order, of descriptions of events, comments, or other material such as photographs or video. Blogs differ in the type of information they provide where some bloggers strictly present commentary on a particular subject and others are personal online diaries. According to Carpentier and Cammaerts (2007), blogs "can be deconstructed in a variety of ways: as alternative 'citizen' journalism; as participatory instruments for citizens/ activists to produce their own media content; as websites of opinion; as a social platform to inform friends and family within everyday contexts; and increasingly as a new marketing and propaganda tool for elites" (p. 89). Blogs provide an open space for self expression and social commentary that is dynamic, continually evolving and changing as the entries change

I chose to include blogs as part of the media texts for this dissertation because they offer a perspective to the discursive events that may not be presented in newspapers. Blogs, in their nature, differ from newspapers because a blogger is not held to the expectations of objectivity, as a result, presenting a unique component of public opinion.

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More importantly, the blogs selected present the perspectives of people who identify as

mixed race, a point of view that would be scarce in mainstream news media.

In order to locate the appropriate blogs, I used a Google on-line search,

identifying those blogs relating to topics of mixed-race identity. In doing so, I located the

Mixed Heritage Center website which describes its site as a:

> collaborative project between MAVIN and AMEA (Association of Multiethnic
>
> Americans), is a clearinghouse of information and resources relevant to the lives
>
> of people who are multiracial, multiethnic, transracially adopted, or otherwise
>
> impacted by the intersections of race and culture. It is an organic resource that
>
> will grow and change with the contributions of users like you.
>
> (mixedheritagecenter.org)

This website included a comprehensive database for blogs and websites focusing on

mixed heritage topics. From the search of the database, I selected four blogs in which

mixed-race identity was a salient theme for the authors who identify with more than one

race. All of the information presented on the blogs is a matter of public record. The

selection of the blogs is based on relevance but does not rule out the fact that other blogs

may deal with mixed race but those are beyond the scope of this dissertation. The four

blogs selected are: Mixed Roots, Beige-World, Light-skinned-ed Girl, and Twisted Curlz.

The blog Mixed Roots: Blogging while mixed (mixedroots.blogspot.com) has a female

author who describes the blog as:

> Commentary on being biracial, challenging perceptions of race & religion
>
> in life and politics. Connecting all Cultures. Unity and Peace. Dedicated to
>
> celebrating all cultures, including mixed-heritages, inter-racial & inter-

religious families and unions while educating others about the unique

mixed-race and multicultural experience. Bridging the gaps between

racial, ethnic, cultural & religious differences (mixedroots.blogspot.com).

The author first started the blog on July 21, 2006. According to her first blog post,

the author expressed the need to get involved with the mixed race community for

some time and thus started her blog. She adds that:

she was frustrated with the television and film industry for not

representing the mixed-race family and the unique personal and social

experiences associated with being biracial or inter-racially married

(mixedroots.blogspot.com)

This blog ranges in the number of postings each month from zero to ten, and covers a

variety of topics, from autobiographical, to entertainment, to politics.

The second blog from which blog posts were collected is Twisted Curlz

(http://twistedcurl.blogspot.com/). It presents itself with the following tag line:

"Unraveling the unruly strands of my life for all to see." This particular blog, also written

by a woman, discusses various topics of the blogger's choosing, including the 2008

presidential election. The first posting was in November 27, 2005, but the blogger does

not explicitly state her purpose in creating the blog. A frequent blogger, the author has

over 300 postings.

The blogger behind Light-skinned-ed Girl

(http://www.lightskinnededgirl.typepad.com/) uses the tag line "a mixed chick's mixed

thoughts on a mixed-up world." According to the blog tracker, she has 339 readers. She

includes the following excerpt in her biography:

I co-host a weekly podcast called Mixed Chicks Chat

(www.mixedchickschat.com) about being racially and culturally mixed with

actor and educator Fanshen Cox. And I co-founded and co-produce the free

public annual Mixed Roots Film & Literary Festival (www.mxroots.org) held

each year which celebrates stories of the Mixed experience. The 3rd Annual

Festival will be held June 12-13, 2010"

(http://lightskinnededgirl.typepad.com/about.html)

This blogger created the blog on March 9, 2006, and has categorized her blog

with 26 different labels for postings including travel, entertainment, and "that

thing called race" with several (from three to twenty) postings in each category.

Unlike newspaper reporters, bloggers are not restricted to publication deadlines.

As a result, the collection of blog postings could not have the parameters defined by the

date of publication. Thus, I collected the postings by doing a search of the word

"Obama," then I identified specific posting relating to the four discursive moments were

selected for analysis. When no search option was available for a particular blog, I

scanned each posting for relevance to the study.

The aspect of blogs as data is critical to this dissertation in order to provide a

nuanced look at the social construction of race and mixed race in media. Blogs and news

articles are chosen for this dissertation because of the relationship they form for taking a

comprehensive look at discourses. Andrews (2003) argues that blogs and news articles

provide a holistic approach to an event. Both contribute to the conversation about race by

providing discourses from traditional news sources that follows a standardized structure

and language as well as new discourses with public opinion and emerging constructions

of racial identity. This new media platform serves to voice opinions about particular events. According to Gamson and Modigliani (1989), "rather than a single public discourse, it is more useful to think of a set of discourses that interact in complex ways" (p. 2). Blogs are distinct from news media because a blogger is not confined to and is not held to the same expectations of objectivity, thus providing the element of public opinion.

There are several differences between the newspaper article and the blog. Newspapers are deliberately public, claim objectivity and neutrality. In addition, the newspaper is given a certain amount of authority. The newspapers selected for this study are all well established, well respected, and mainstream. Newspapers are a traditional institution in the United States culture. Blogs, on the other hand, are purely opinion, for the most part. There is less expectation on blogs being objective. They also adhere to a level of decorum and language that follows journalistic standards, and perhaps confines the way issues like race are discussed. Blogs are not held to a journalistic standard and may, therefore, use less conventional and more direct ways of discussing race. The expectation is that there is a difference in the way that these texts are framed to talk about race, which makes including both types of media texts very important.

Research Questions

Five main questions guide my analysis of rhetorical discourses that shape these symbolic meanings media representation and the resulting social constructions of identity:

RQ1: How do pivotal discourses during Obama's campaign and early presidency stimulate conversations about race, mixed race identity, racism?

RQ1a: How do newspapers frame race and mixed race identity?

RQ1b: How do blogs frame race, mixed race, and racism?

RQ2: What ideologies about race, racism, and mixed race emerge from newspapers and blogs?

RQ3: How do media discourses contribute to constructions of race?

RQ4: In what ways do the constructions suggest the possibility of a post-racial United States?

RQ5: How do newspapers and blogs set agendas that reinforce and oppose each other?

Methods

My methodological perspective is that of interpretive and critical approaches. Combining an interpretive and critical frame in this study allows me to understand media discourses as arising out of political and historical contexts. Critical methods focus on uncovering power dynamics. This approach includes the study of the complex relationships between power, discourse, and knowledge (Linloff & Taylor, 2002). Critical methods also emphasize the need for context, specifically historical context (Flores, Moon, & Nakayama, 2006). This methodological approach to research helps critical paradigm researchers to describe which beliefs and values are being privileged in a social situation. In addition, reflexivity is a process by which researchers recognize that they are inseparable from the settings, contexts, and cultures they are attempting to understand and represent.

Interpretive methods emphasize description and understanding of the meaning-making process, which aids, in the case of my study, in gaining understanding of how racial identities are constructed and negotiated. This approach to research emphasizes

how culture is created and maintained through discourse (Linloff & Taylor, 2002). An important aspect of interpretive methods is looking at the context in which the discourse takes place. For this dissertation, the context in which the discourse in the newspaper articles and the blog posts takes place is an imperative element. By combining these methodological approaches, I am able to examine the meaning making process while also uncovering the power relations at the macro level.

I argue that critical and interpretive are part of rhetorical criticism. I work with the definition that rhetorical criticism is "the process of systematically investigating and explaining symbolic acts and artifacts for the purpose of understanding rhetorical processes" (Foss, 1996, pp. 6-7). The rhetorical critic looks at the symbolic processes, seeking to understand how symbols work. Rhetorical criticism as a method offers flexibility. This is an appropriate method because it allows me to thoroughly scrutinize discourses to understand the underlying principles behind the communication and ultimately to get at the ideologies in place. This method has been used to analyze a variety of discourses including speeches (Rushing, 1986), television shows (Dow, 1992), public events (Foss & Dominici, 2001; Fraser, 1998), cultural revolutions (Lu, 2004), and advertisements (Taylor, 1992). Rhetorical criticism should go beyond a surface observations and descriptions of the events or rhetorical artifacts and produce valuable insights that contribute to understanding and perhaps shift social meanings and raise consciousness about how symbols work (Foss, 1996). The rhetorical critic analyzes discourse to explicate meaning that may not be evident during the actual discursive moment. Rhetorical criticism permits an analysis that may yield techniques that may have taken for granted by the audiences.

Frame Analysis

Frame analysis tries to interpret meanings in encoded media texts (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). In framing analysis, framing of the issues or events shaped by the media based on their interpretation of the situation (or social condition) is important (Lane, 1998). A frame is "a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue" (Gamson, 1989, p. 157). A frame is a slant or point of view. Rhetorical methods can examine a variety of frames, such as media framing, narrative framing, and ideological framing.

Political communication scholar Jim A. Kuypers defined framing analysis from a rhetorical perspective; that is, a frame is a process where people, consciously or unconsciously, aim to construct a point of view that encourages the facts of a particular situation to be interpreted in a specific manner (Kuypers, 2009). He looks for themes that persist across time in a particular text, specifically news narratives on an event, and then analyzes how sources frame these themes in the message they construct and disseminate. The first assumption is that frames are rhetorical constructions that influence people to filter perceptions of the social world in making some portions of reality more salient than others (Kuypers, 2009). Key features shaping a frame or point of view are names, metaphors, and stereotypes. These key features of language help to construct social reality through terministic screens. The features used to describe the world present a specific reality.

The definition of frames varies based on the location of framed discourse and the audience to which the discourse is targeted. Gitlin's (1980) defines frames as "principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what

exists, what happens and what matters" (p. 7). Specifically, Gamson and Modigliani (1987) view media frames as a "central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events" (p. 143). Entman (1993) offers a prominent explanation of framing as the selection of "*some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text*" (p. 52, original emphasis). Based on these definitions of framing as a construction of the message from the point of view of the source, I identified news by coding newspaper frames according to four elements: 1) facts are what happened in an event; 2) context includes history or other related information used to help the audience understand the event; 3) attribution includes the following three elements: a) the cause of the event; b) the agent responsible for the event; and c) the justification for the event; and 4) criteria provide the standards for evaluating an event (Huang, 1996). I identify the frames that emerged from the units of analysis, the news articles and blog posts.

Ideological analysis

I will use ideological criticism, a type of rhetorical criticism, as part of my rhetorical method approach in this study. Lu (2004) suggests that "ideological/cultural criticism allows the critic to investigate the manner in which cultural products function rhetorically within certain historical contexts and social structures" (p. 39). As a method, ideological criticism concentrates on uncovering patterns of beliefs and values that are embedded in the particular rhetorical artifact (Foss, 2004). I am interested in the ways discourses on race are constructed in the significant moments of the campaign of the first mixed-race individual running for U.S. President as the candidate of a major party.

Ideology is a concept with several definitions. For the purpose of this study, I define ideology as a set of shared beliefs and values of a group of people; either positive, negative, or neutral; that influence social interaction and institutional structures, operating mainly on a subconscious level. According to Cavallaro (2001), the term *ideology* first was coined by French philosopher Destrutt de Tracy to describe "the science of ideas: that is, the discipline that would enable people to recognize their prejudices and biases" (p. 75). The importance of any given ideology comes from the impact its expression has on worldviews, and how that impacts every day life. McKerrow (2009) states that "an ideology exists in and through the symbol system that gives it meaning"(p. 496). Therefore, an ideology functions as a rhetorical construct.

Ideology is closely connected with texts as well as discourse. Every day discourse provides an ideological orientation to culture. van Dijk (1995, 2006) expands on this definition of ideology as a conceptual triangle of society, discourse, and social cognition. Since reality is shaped by ideologies and humans communicate discursively, an analysis of discourse provides insights for ideology. "When group members explain, motivate or legitimate their (group-based) actions, they typically do so in terms of ideological discourse" (van Dijk, 2006, p. 121). In other words, ideologies shape and are shaped by identities, which are expressed through discourse.

Ideological criticism, then, presupposes that an analysis of texts can reveal the unstated or hidden features of an ideology, since ideologies are embedded in human explanations for actions. I am assuming that when individuals blog about race and their particular racial/mixed-race identities, they are rather directly offering ideological positions. Furthermore, because those whose identities are mixed-race will more likely

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gravitate to blogs about these subjects, they will offer a particular and even alternative

perspective about race that might be found in dominant U.S. discourses. The newspapers,

on the other hand, more likely to be present are constructions of race as generally agreed

upon by the "governing" forces in society—those who have control of institutions such as

newspapers, for example. And given newspaper's effort to attain "objectivity," the

ideologies discovered in the media texts might be aligned with more traditional

ideologies about race in the U.S.—race as soon from primarily a white perspective.

Furthermore, the newspaper articles will be third-party accounts of Obama's action not,

as with the blogs, first-person accounts of experiences and their effects on racial and

mixed-race identity. The data I used for this study, then, are representative of different

contributions to the public conversations about race, ranging from those who self-identify

as mixed race of for whom race is a major part of their identities, to sources that discuss

this topic in regard to others (such as Barack Obama).

The process of analysis for ideological criticism involves two steps. First, I will

code the blogs and newspaper articles, noting each time the word *race* or *mixed-race*

identity appears. I will look specifically at what terms cluster around those terms (Foss,

2004). By charting what clusters around words referencing race, I will be able to engage

step two in ideological criticism—constructing the ideologies that appear in the

discourse. By coding, categorizing, and then looking at the patterns across all of the

instances in which terms about race and mix-race appear, I will be able to determine the

clusters and patterns of discourses that constitute contemporary ideologies about race at

the time of Obama's campaign.

Throughout this process, I am interested in whether these ideologies about race shift as the discursive moments I am investigating progress through time. In other words, as the discourse on race continues, does it change in any way from the constructions evident in the first episode? If shifts or evolution of any kind can be detected, it suggests perhaps that the discourse on race is changing because of Obama's candidacy and the opportunities it has allowed for dialogues about race.

Locating myself in the research

I write this paper as a BlaXican@. I identify as both Black and Mexican, and Chican@ and also advocate for equal gender labels. I am informed by a social activist upbringing and understand the privilege I experience in being an educated, straight, able-bodied U.S. citizen. This paper is an attempt to think through and conceptualize the meaning of mixed race identity in the current political climate as manifested in media conversations of news stories and blogs. Informed by my own simultaneous position as oppressed and oppressor, I understand that my perspective influences my choice of subject matter, the selection terms, and the categories of interpretation. As a result, this impacts my interpretation and analysis of the rhetorical artifacts.

The methodological approach for this study is based on interpretive and critical assumptions to research and incorporates both framing and ideological analysis of the discourse from four pivotal moments in Obama's presidential campaign and early presidency in which issues of race and mixed-race identity were of primary concern. This study focuses on the constructions of race in blogs and newspapers.

CHAPTER 4:

FRAMING ANALYSIS

The findings presented in the next two chapters emerged from two separate

rhetorical analyses involving newspaper articles and blogs. Rhetorical framing as well as

ideological rhetoric guided the analysis of the newspaper articles and the blogs. Framing

analysis facilitated the analysis of the news articles and blogs and answered the research

questions related to media effects: How do newspapers frame race, mixed race, and

racism? And how do blogs frame race, mixed race, and racism?

The data for the framing analysis of news article comes from discourse around

four pivotal moments in Obama's presidential campaign and early presidency in which

issues of race and mixed-race identity were of primary concern. Two of the discursive

moments are from the 2008 presidential campaign; two come from Barack Obama's

presidency. These include (1) Obama's announcement of his presidential candidacy; (2)

Obama's "A More Perfect Union" speech; (3) Obama's election to the presidency; and

(4) the arrest of Harvard professor Henry Gates, Jr.

Framing Analysis

Framing analysis is one method of interpreting meanings in encoded media texts

(McCombs & Shaw, 1993). In this type of analysis, the media producer's framing of the

issues or events are based on their interpretation of the situation (or social condition)

(Lane, 1998). A frame is "a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events

and suggesting what is at issue" (Gamson, 1989, p. 157), and a frame is a slant or point of

view. Rhetorical methods can examine a variety of source-constructed frames, such as media framing, narrative framing, and ideological framing.

Defining Frames

Political communication scholar Jim A. Kuypers (2009) describes framing as a process where people, consciously or unconsciously, aim to construct a point of view that encourages the facts of a particular situation to be interpreted in a specific manner. He looks for themes that persist across time in texts, specifically news narratives of an event, and then he analyzes them. His first assumption is that frames are rhetorical constructions of the sources of messages that influence how people filter perceptions of the social world, and make some aspects of reality more salient than others (Kuypers, 2009). Key features shaping a frame or point of view are words, phrases, and scripts that help to construct social reality for audiences.

The definition of frames can vary based on to research method and data. I identified news by coding newspaper frames according to four elements: 1) facts are what happened in an event; 2) context includes history or other related information used to help the audience understand the event; 3) attribution includes the cause of the event, the agent responsible for the event, and the justification for the event; and 4) criteria provide the standards for evaluating an event (Huang, 1996). I identify the frames that emerged from the units of analysis of the news articles and blog posts.

Framing Analysis of Newspapers

This section presents the findings from the data and provides some preliminary analysis. Three dominant frames emerged from the news coverage on the four discursive moments: race, dialogue, and history. I define the race frame as stories about the issues

concerning race and racism; the dialogue frame as stories about a conversation, specifically at the national level; and the historical frame as stories about historic events. Each frame is supported by several sub-themes that can be thought of as scripts. A script is a common theme that consists of phrases or words that evoke and support an overarching frame. Scripts are condensed arguments that provide evidence that support the point of view of the news writer.

Race Frame

Consistent with hooks' (1998) argument that "the issue of race" is a common narrative in the U.S. media, the first frame in the news coverage from the discursive moments is Obama as racialized. The combination of attribution and context provide the basis for the race frame. This frame appears in the employment of the "racialized Obama scripts," the "race is biological scripts" and the "progressing past racism scripts" throughout the news narrative for each discursive moment.

Racialized Obama script.

The way newspapers discuss Obama's race(s) is heavily influenced by Obama's autobiography and his speeches and interviews. The script emerges from a combination of context criteria as well as from attributions in terms of the agent responsible for the event. The newspaper reporters use strategic phrasing, often appropriated from Obama's own words, to present topics of race. By using Obama's words and phrasing, the news articles are able to play it safe when it comes to this delicate issue.

Across all discursive moments, with all of the articles taken together, I found 51 instances where the media refers to Obama as Black and/or African American. A typical reference to Obama as Black goes as follows:

[He is] the first black candidate with a good chance at becoming a presidential

nominee, in a country in which racial distrust runs deep and often unspoken,

embarking at a critical juncture in his campaign upon what may be the most

significant public discussion of race in decades. (Scott, 2008, p. A14)

Several news articles identify Obama as African American. Since Obama is

considered the first Black president, his racial identity is salient to news frames. While

the news media referred to other candidates in this campaign by different characteristics

(age or gender), they were rarely described in terms of their racial identities. This

reinforces the invisibility of Whiteness and highlights how race is thought of as nonwhite

or as just Black. He is also described as African American in the following excerpt from

the *Washington Post*:

Even before he won the seat and became the only African American in the

Senate, Obama was seen as a rising star in his party because of the keynote

speech he gave at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. (Balz &

Kornblut, 2007, p. A1)

What is important to note in the excerpt above is that the newspaper reporters

frame Obama as African American only, despite the fact that the article refers to his DNC

speech where Obama introduces his "diverse heritage" to the audience. When Obama is

referred to as only Black, the audience likely views him as Black. This frame keeps his

Whiteness invisible and simplifies racial categories into the binaries of Black or White, a

common attribution in the United States.

The news reporters describe Obama as mixed race infrequently. Of all the articles

included in this study, only ten articles allude to his mixed race. Typically, when a news

article describes Obama's racial identity, it does so by describing his mother as White and his father as African and Black. A typical example of Obama described as mixed race comes from the *Washington Post* in its coverage of Obama's candidacy announcement:

Obama, 45 and the son of a black Kenyan man and a white Kansas woman, worked as a community organizer in Chicago before graduating from Harvard Law School and returning to the city to become a civil rights lawyer. (Balz & Kornblut, 2007, p. A1)

In the preceding excerpt, reporters racialize Obama and Obama's parents.. As previously stated, the news media appropriates Obama's framing of his own racial identity. When covering a different moment, Obama's speech on race, the *New York Times* refer to his parental heritage in framing Obama as mixed race. They state:

Mr. Obama again condemned the more incendiary remarks of the pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr. But, drawing on his experiences as the son of a white mother and a black father, Mr. Obama went on to try to explain to white voters the anger and frustration behind Mr. Wright's words and to urge blacks to understand the sources of the racial fears and resentments among whites. (Zeleny, 2008, p. A1)

In the preceding excerpt, the news reporters describe Obama as using his mixed race parentage to help him address the intricate issues of race from two opposing positions. In covering the same moment, the *Chicago Sun-Times* also indirectly describes Obama as mixed, again, by way of his parents: "In the midst of this ugly debate, Obama was able to draw on his mixed-race parentage to appeal to a sense of reason" (Mitchell, 2008, p. 4).

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Though rare, this frame of Obama places Obama in the racial middle, a unique position from which to speak for both White and Black constituents. In another example, the *Washington Post* states that Obama "was uniquely equipped to give this speech" on race because he is "the child of a mixed-race couple" and "has struggled with this topic his entire life" (Balz, 2008, p. A4). The racialized Obama script operates strategically depending on context. When it seems relevant, the news reporters describe Obama as Black or African American. Mostly, this occurs to highlight and enhance the significance of his campaign and presidency. His mixed race identity becomes politically salient when the news article highlights his ability to speak to both Blacks and Whites because he understands both perspectives from his mixed race heritage.

Race is biological.

In addition to the racialized Obama script, race as biological script also supports the race frame. None of the articles gave a definition for race, but a few of the articles framed race as biological through words such as "genetic" and references to "blood." This script is based on context includes and criteria from historical discourses. A typical biological script appeared in the *New York Times* coverage of the speech in Philadelphia on race:

> He invoked his own biography as the son of a black Kenyan man and a
> white American woman, grandson of a World War II veteran and a
> bomber assembly line worker, husband of a black American who carries
> "the blood of slaves and slave owners." Seared into his genetic makeup, he
> said, is "the idea that this nation is more than the sum of its parts -- that out
> of many, we are truly one." (Scott, 2008, p. A14)

Similarly, in coverage of the 2008 presidential election, the *Washington Post* covered international reactions to the election of Barack Obama and included the following interview:

Still, for some in China, the Obama glass remained only half-full.

"Obama is half-white, half-black, so the progress in the U.S. is not that big," said Hu Jing, 25, a paralegal. "It will take dozens of years to elect a person who is 100 percent black." (Sullivan, 2008, p. A26)

In this case, the newspaper framed race in terms of a genetic percentage. This particular article, addressing the reaction to Obama's election overseas, highlighted the common assumption that race is biological and genetic, as opposed to a social construction. The article does not challenge the biological assumptions about race because it fits with a common script on race and racial identity that reporters have accepted.

Obama's own words contribute to some of the biological discourse of race. In the coverage of Obama's candidacy announcement, the *Chicago Sun-Times* provides the following quotation from the Senator Obama:

The son of a black African father and a white mother from Kansas, Obama also addressed his racial identity and how he came to consider himself a black man. "I'm not sure I decided it," he said. "I think . . . if you look African American in this society, you're treated as an African American." (Fornek & McKinney, 2007, p. 3)

In this excerpt, Obama states that his phenotype influences his racial identity. By doing so, Obama reinforces pre-existing ideological boundaries of race that confine one's

identity to phenotype. Race as biological script is one way to understand how race is framed in the newspaper discourses.

Progressing past racism script.

The third script that supports the race frame is the common language of progressing past racism. Closely linked to the idea of upholding the invisibility of whiteness is the theme of colorblind racism. This frame mainly functions in terms of context. When the newspaper articles frame these events as evidence of progressing past racism, they uphold colorblind racism; that is, people are guided to believe racism is no longer an issue. The newspapers reinforce the belief that voting for a Black president proves that an individual is not racist. What this framing leaves out is the intricate and complicated nature of racism.

The progressing past racism frame appears in both direct and indirect news references to racism, prejudice, and discrimination as part of a larger script that people in the U.S. are progressing toward a non-racial society. The following two excerpts are typical of the progress past racism scripts. The first from the *Chicago Sun-Times* takes a retrospective view:

> Instead of cringing at war rioters and club-wielding National Guardsmen,
> America cast aside centuries of racial prejudice and elected its first black
> president. (McKinney & Pallasch, 2008, p. A3)

The second from the *Washington Post* takes a predictive view:

> With the election of its first black president, it can now begin to erase one
> of the stains on that reputation, one that repeatedly shamed us in front of
> other countries. (Merida, 2008, p. A1)

In the first excerpt from the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the people of the United States "cast aside" the history of racism. And in the second excerpt from the *Washington Post* Obama's election will "erase" the racial history of the past, which has been deeply embedded with racism and discrimination. The important element of the progressing past racism script is that it occurs frequently, regardless of the discursive moment. The implications of this script are that this is an issue of the past, or an issue that the nation is progressing forward from the past. For example, the coverage of the Gates' arrest in the *Washington Post* seems to implicate this script when it features a quotation from a Police Chief in a different city and state:

> "I'm not saying racial profiling doesn't exist, but I don't think we get as
> many complaints as we did 10 or 20 years ago," said Atlanta Police Chief
> Richard Pennington, adding that what happened to Gates was not a case
> of racial profiling because Crowley received a call of a possible crime in
> progress. "It's not like he was walking through the neighborhood, saw
> Gates and demanded to see his identification. That's racial profiling."
> (Thompson & Thompson, 2009, p. A1)

This article explains racial profiling from the perspective of a police chief, someone with authority. The police chief describes racial profiling as a less common occurrence than in the late 1990s or late 1980s. By including this police chief's statement, this article gives a definition of racial profiling from a credible source and then juxtaposes it with other comments from individuals who believe that this arrest was an example of racial profiling.

The coverage of the 2008 presidential election included the following statement from the *Washington Post*:

"Americans overcame the racial divide and elected Obama because they wanted the real thing: a candidate who spoke from the bottom of his heart," said Terumi Hino, a photographer and painter in Tokyo. "I think this means the United States can go back to being admired as the country of dreams." (Sullivan, 2008, p. A26)

Here the *Washington Post* reporter addresses international perspectives, claiming Americans can overcome "the racial divide" and restore the idea of the American dream. Similarly, the *New York Times* infuses Obama's election with the emphasis of excitement, not racism:

Two in 10 voters said race was a factor for them, and more of those voters favored Mr. Obama than Mr. McCain, perhaps suggesting the excitement of some white and black voters to elect the first black president. (Calmes & Thee, 2008, p. P9)

This excerpt implies that people are excited to vote for Obama because he is Black. His race is an advantage, not a disadvantage, implying that issues of racism are no longer an issue. An important aspect of this frame is that Obama resides in the middle of this divide or these "two worlds." For example, the following headline ran in the *Washington Post* during the coverage of Obama's speech on race: "Obama Finds Pulpit in Center of Racial Divide" (Banks, 2008, p. B11). Similarly, another headline in the same newspaper read: "Invited to Wrestle in a Racial Mud Pit, Obama Soars Above It" (Milloy, 2008, p. B1).

This headline frames Obama as living in the "in between" and either combating racism or transcending issues of race, especially from the coverage of his speech on race.

Another example of placing Obama in the role of mediator or negotiator appears in the *New York Times*:

> After running a campaign that in many ways tried not to be defined by race, Mr. Obama placed himself squarely in the middle of the debate over how to address it, a living bridge between whites and blacks still divided by the legacy of slavery and all that came after it. (Zeleny, 2008, p. A1)

Taken together, these scripts (racialized Obama, biological, and progressing past racism) frame race as a taken for granted concept that marks someone biologically but can be overcome with a possibility of transcending this idea of race. Issues of race are often compounded and left to the perception of the individual, in this case Barack Obama. He is not viewed as a case in the history of race and racism in the United States. Rather his racialized presence in the media places him as the mediator and the solution to that racial history.

Dialogue Frame

The second frame is the dialogue frame, a recurring phrase in the news report of each of the discursive moments that concerns dialogue. The words "dialogue," "conversation," and "discussion" appeared 36 times. The heavy use of such words clearly communicates a message about the importance of dialogue in the United States when it comes to topics of race and racism. As Ghanem (1996) points out, the frequency with which a topic is mentioned in media content is arguably the most powerful framing mechanism, the repetition of key words call attention to the framing of a "national

dialogue" concerning Obama's role in that dialogue. A typical use of the "dialogue" frame is as follows:

And that may have been the most significant aspect of the speech: the

fact that Obama proposed a conversation, not a monologue.

(Robinson, 2008, p. A15)

In this except, the *Washington Post* reports on Obama's speech on race by placing importance on the way that Obama's candidacy presents an opportunity for a dialogue, not a monologue. In other words, Obama invites multi-sided conversations about race at the same time his election campaign participates in that dialogue.

This characterization of Obama's speech on race is significant because Obama spoke for 45 minutes. Several other articles refer to this speech as a starting point for dialogue, or as a plea from Obama to enter into conversation. For example, the *New York Times* ran the headline: "Groups Respond to Obama's Call for National Discussion About Race" (Rohter & Luo, 2008, A21), and in the subsequent article stated that "Religious groups and academic bodies, already receptive to Mr. Obama's plea for such a dialogue, seemed especially enthusiastic" (Rohter & Luo, 2008, p. A21). The *Washington Post* also specified that the journalists' presence at the news conference indicated that the media had a role in this dialogue on race:

By inviting journalists to join a nuanced conversation about race, the

Illinois senator was poking at a sore spot. News organizations are

skittish about racial subjects, preferring to wrap them around the flap of

the day rather than deal with underlying anger and grievances. (Kurtz,

2008, p. C1)

By framing Obama as inviting a conversation that journalist do not like to have, the *Washington Post* depicts the news media as deliberately avoiding issues regarding race and racism in contrast to Obama, who is frank about the issue.

National script.

The national script supports the overarching dialogue frame. Although several of the articles frame racial dialogue as progress created by Obama's speech on race, other articles state the importance of dialogue in relation to other discursive moments, such as Professor Gates' arrest, Obama's announcement of candidacy, and his speech on race. This frame characterizes race as both the cause and the justification for the event. The specification of a national dialogue or conversation appeared in the articles 24 times. A typical example of the importance of a national conversation or dialogue appeared in an excerpt from the *Washington Post* regarding his response to Professor Gates' arrest. The author declared the United States is "a society so sensitized that even the implication of racism, as in the Henry Louis Gates case, triggers a national discussion" (Steele, 2009, p. B4). When covering Obama's announcement of candidacy, the *Chicago Sun-Times* stated, "In excerpts from the interview released Friday, he (Obama) addressed how his candidacy is opening a dialogue about race in America" (Fornek & McKinney, 2007, p. 3)

Another typical example of the importance of a national conversation or dialogue appeared in this *New York Times* excerpt regarding his speech on race: "While commentators and politicians debated its political success Wednesday, some around the country were responding to Mr. Obama's call for a national conversation about race" (Rohter & Luo, 2008, A21).

In general, most of the references to a national conversation relate to a dialogue on race, across the various discursive moments. The term dialogue was never explicitly defined; rather it was used as a buzzword with a positive connotation. By framing these moments as catalysts for a national conversation on race, the news articles indicated that these conversations do not occur otherwise.

Debate script.

The debate script also supports the dialogue frame. Though not occurring as often (only a handful of times), the framing of the events imbedded in a racial debate carry a certain level of intensity. This script contains the element of attribution, specifically addressing the cause of the event and the agent responsible for the event. For example, the *Chicago Sun Times* quoted Obama as saying "I notice that . . . I've become a focal point for a racial debate" (Fornek & McKinney, 2007, p. 3) during coverage of his candidacy announcement. The *Washington Post* also referred to a public debate about race in their coverage of the Gates arrest:

> Instead, in a country where one in nine young black men are in
>
> prison, where racial profiling is still practiced, the arrest of a
>
> renowned scholar on a charge of disorderly conduct in front of his
>
> house last Thursday has fueled an ongoing debate about race in
>
> America in the age of its first black president. (Thompson, 2009, p.
>
> A1)

The importance of this distinction resides in the connotation of these words carry. The idea of a conversation implies that there is mutual respect and opportunity to express a perspective. The connotation of a debate, on the other hand, is as if opposing sides that

express their position in order to win an argument or gain political advantage or that at least two sides exist in a debate, Black versus White, Republican versus Democrat, liberal versus conservative. Conversation implies the possibility of joint meaning and understanding whereas the term debate focuses on contested or unsettled questions regarding race. Specifically, in response to the Professor Gates moment, at least two sides of the media conversation agreed or disagreed with Obama's response.

An interesting aspect of this frame is that the media locate Obama as the mediator of this debate/dialogue. For example, the *Washington Post* described Obama's response to Professor Gates' arrest as an invitation for dialogue in the following excerpt: *"The town where a white police officer and a black scholar ignited a national conversation on race and law enforcement has begun to open the dialogue that President Obama invited"* (Thompson & Thompson, 2009, p. A1). By placing Obama in the middle of the discussion, the media made the conversation about the incident part of Obama's responsibility.

There are assumptions that underlie the newspapers framing of these events as controversy and an opportunity for dialogue. First, all have equal voice in this conversation; second, the conversation starts with the particular event as opposed to a conversation that has always existed but is magnified by the media during certain key moments when news writer's assumptions are embedded in the scripts.

History Frame

The third frame in this analysis is the history frame that relates to all of the discursive moments. The newspaper articles frame events in terms of history, either by relating some aspect of the event to past events or by referring to an event as an historic

moment in its own right. Throughout the news discourse for each moment this frame, based on the element of context, is constructed through the employment of "from the past script" and the "witnessing history script."

From the past script.

The first support of the history frame is the "from the past" script. The concept of public memory helps to make sense of this script. History is the official story of events, while public memory is the recollection preserved by the public about political or social events. Consistent with the concept of public memory, several of the articles refer to past events in order to describe the discursive moments related to Obama. I found a total of 33 references to the making of or witnessing of history. For example, in the *New York Times* coverage of Obama's speech in Philadelphia on race and racism in the United States, the newspaper described the event in this way:

> In a speech whose frankness about race many historians said could be
>
> likened only to speeches by Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson, John F.
>
> Kennedy and Abraham Lincoln, Senator Barack Obama, speaking across
>
> the street from where the Constitution was written, traced the country's
>
> race problem back to not simply the country's "original sin of slavery" but
>
> [to] the protections for it embedded in the Constitution. (Scott, 2008, p.
>
> A14)

Making public memory about political figures and events reinforces nationalistic values at the same time that is recollects violations of those values. Public memory lives on through memorials and stories. Such references to past events contextualize the

current event and also help the reader to emphasize the historical significance and
potential that a new event and young visionary leader may have.

For this reason it is not surprising that the news media recalled President John F.
Kennedy in its historical framing, referencing to this past U. S. President a total of seven
times across the discursive moments. For example, the *Washington Post* stated the
following in referring to Obama's candidacy announcement: "But in issuing a call for a
new generation to take its place at the center of public life, Obama summoned up
memories of President John F. Kennedy and his 1960 campaign" (Balz & Kornblut,
2007, p. A1).

The newspapers also referred to other Presidents, such as Abraham Lincoln and
Lyndon B. Johnson, sparingly. The connection to John F. Kennedy may indicate the
significance of the public memory of this young and visionary Democrat that became the
U.S. president. The public memory of John F. Kennedy is significant in the United States
because of his youth when he was elected, his role as a political outsider due to his
religion, and his vision of change for younger voters. This public memory is recent
enough so that the public audience can remember his campaign presidency and
assassination or historical narratives embedded in the U.S. national consciousness. It also
has been long enough so that a generation of voters did not live through the JFK era,
shared stories about him in the media and in history books preserve the public memory in
ways that today's citizens can make comparisons between Kennedy and Obama.

In addition to references to former presidents, the news articles also referred to
significant moments in the United States racial history. In coverage of Gates' arrest, the
Washington Post referred to the United States' history of racially charged events:

In the 1990s, after high-profile cases such as the beating of Rodney King

in Los Angeles and the fatal shooting of Amadou Diallo in New York,

departments began requiring officers to document whom they stopped as a

way of monitoring their work. Others beefed up cultural diversity training,

formed partnerships with the community and, more recently, began using

video cameras and other technology to record interactions. (Thompson &

Thompson, 2009, p. A1)

Similarly, when discussing Obama's speech on race, the *Washington Post* referred to

other current racially charged events:

Getting out of that stalemate, he said, requires Americans to see one

another as connected to a common purpose and to no longer "tackle race

only as a spectacle"—the O.J. Simpson trial, Hurricane Katrina, the

comments of a Geraldine Ferraro or a Rev. Jeremiah Wright. (Merida,

2008, p. A1)

Though brief, the emphasis on race in the history script is a progressive frame

because it places racism in context in history, as opposed to keeping a surface level

description of an isolated moment.

Audiences use public memory as a social, cultural, and political resource. Jasinski

(2001) explains "in short, public memory contributes substantially to the constitution of

collective identity. What it means to be an American is determined, in part, by what we

remember (and what we are encouraged to remember) about our past" (p. 358). The

historic frame incorporates past references about events with public memories that

provide a context for understanding the significance of the event. When readers recall

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historic events, they evoke a particular emotion about this nation's potential and its problems. Referring to the events as historic reinforces the events' relevance to Obama.

Witnessing history script.

Another script that supports history is the witnessing history frame. In addition to infusing their framing of news stories about the discursive moments with references to historical events of the past, news stories also describe these moments as being historic for a total of 38 times. This script emerged as the most frequent during coverage of Obama's presidential election victory. The following excerpts are examples of the witnessing history script:

> The election ended what by any definition was one of the most remarkable
>
> contests in American political history, drawing what was by every
>
> appearance unparalleled public interest. (Nagourney, 2008, p. A1)
>
> The historic Election Day brought millions of new and sometimes tearful
>
> voters, long lines at polling places nationwide, and celebrations on street
>
> corners and in front of the White House. (Barnes & Shear, 2008, p. A1)

Although this type of script appeared frequently in the coverage of Obama's election, it also appeared in the other moments. For example, during coverage of Obama's speech on race, many articles frame his speech as historic and monumental. The example from the *New York Times* during Obama's speech on race of features a typical witnessing history script:

> Julian Bond, the longtime civil rights activist, said the speech
>
> moved him to tears. Orlando Patterson, a professor of sociology at
>
> Harvard, said he believed the speech would "go down as one of the

great, magnificent and moving speeches in the American political

tradition." (Scott, 2008, p. A14)

There is no doubt that Obama's campaign and election as president are significant

moments in the United States political and social history. The news articles reinforce a

particular meaning of these events involving Obama.

This script also appeared during coverage of his candidacy announcement in

2007. The following two excerpts are typical example of this frame. The first excerpt

highlights the significance of the first African American president:

Barack Obama reflected on the historic nature of the weekend when he

addressed his campaign donors. If elected, he would become the nation's

first African-American president. (Fusco & Sweet, 2007, p. 4)

The second excerpt emphasizes that his candidacy is the beginning of a new

historical moment.

Thousands of supporters, some of whom had driven long distances to be

here, braved freezing temperatures to join Obama at an event described by

many as history in the making. (Balz & Kornblut, 2007, p. A1)

Both frame Obama's candidacy announcement as a historic event, although he is

not the first African American to run for president. The historical framing emphasizes

the distinction between Obama as a potential candidate, the possibility of his election,

and the significance his election would have for the future of politics in the United States.

The previous section presented the various frames that emerge from the news

articles and the following section identifies the frames that emerge from the blog posts.

Framing Analysis of Blog Posts

In contrast to its mainstream newspaper counterpart, the blogs from individuals who identify as mixed race constructed a generally favorable and positive image about the Obama in its coverage of the various moments. The four blogs selected for analysis are: Mixed Roots, Beige-World, Light-Skinned-ed Girl, and Twisted Curlz. Unlike newspaper reporters, bloggers are not restricted by publication deadlines. As a result, the collection of blog postings could not have the parameters defined by the date of publication. Thus, I collected the postings by doing a search of the word "Obama," then selected specific postings relating to the four discursive moments for analysis. When no search option was available for a particular blog, I scanned each posting for relevance to the study. The majority of the blogs were posted in 2008. This section presents the findings from the data and provides some preliminary analysis. Three dominant frames emerged from the discourse on the blog posts: awareness, personalization, and racism. The awareness frame consists of postings about news and celebrity in mixed race community; the personalization frame as personal postings; and the racism frame as postings relating to issues concerning racism. Each frame is supported by several sub-themes that can be thought of as scripts.

Awareness Frame

Each of the blogs sought to bring awareness to various issues concerning topics in the mixed race community. The bloggers are the one's who are doing the framing, which leads to a reframing of the news as well as personal framing of the issues. What is important is not just that bloggers raise awareness about issues, but that they highlight particular issues. This frame is primarily focused context as well as on facts of an event

or person, while also providing an avenue for readers to contribute to the awareness. One of the ways the bloggers frame is through the dissemination of information about mixed race issues they have based on the news or the "mixed race news' script. The second is through the bloggers' highlighting of mixed race celebrities, and the last, through the bloggers' awareness frame, supported by the question script.

Mixed Race News script.

While the news articles discussed the specific discursive moments and reported them as news, the blogs often reported or spread the news, especially when it came to topics concerning mixed race. This particular script is based on the criteria of providing context for the various events discussed.

Across all blogs, with all of the posts taken together, I found 26 instances where the bloggers refer to some type of mixed race news. A typical reference to mixed race news goes as follows: "According to NewsBusters.org, CNN's Veronica De La Cruz (*American Morning*) is looking for biracial people who are planning to attend the Obama inauguration to possibly interview for a documentary she's putting together" (Beige-World, 2008, "DOCUMENTARY," para. 1). Beige-World blogger in particular presented and disseminated information regarding mixed race issues. Often, the mixed race news script consists of an introduction of a news article and a link to the article. For example, "Recently, *The Huffington Post* featured an interesting commentary on the subject of classifying a biracial person: Black Or Biracial? Who Gets To Decide?" (Beige-World, 2009, "COMMENTARY," para. 2).

The blogs do not claim to be objective, and this is clear in the way that the news is presented. Typically, "positive" news about mixed race is presented in a positive manner

and any threatening or negative news is presented with judgment or reservation. For example, Mixed Roots blogger shares that there is "an article in the New York Times [sic] . . . interesting. There is a new found attention and light being shown on the mixed race identity and experience" (Mixed Roots, 2008, "A New Interest," para. 1) and includes the link to the article for reader access.

Many of the blog posts disseminate news discourse regarding mixed race identity and issues, particularly when it comes to Obama, and then the bloggers reframe this information and by doing so often present the information in order to invite dialogue (this is further explored in the conversation frame). While the posts often present positive news in a way to create dialogue, some of the blogs work as a challenge to media representation of Obama as well:

> The *New York Times* reports today: "While Mr. Obama has made great
> strides in appealing to white and black voters, his campaign has proved
> less effective in drawing Latino support. While a few experts point to
> longstanding rivalries between blacks and Hispanics over jobs and other
> opportunities, most faulted him as doing too little, too late." Really?
> Long-standing rivalries? Maybe someone could enlighten me about these
> long-standing rivalries because I am unaware of them. (Light-skinned-ed
> girl, 2008, "The Black-Brown Racial Divide?" para. 2)

In the preceding excerpt, the blogger presents the news regarding Obama's appeal and disagrees with the assumption that there are racial tensions between Blacks and Latinos. She shared the link to the article and then presented questions to the blog reader, but she expresses her subjective perspective. The bloggers are disseminating news and

then reframing it by challenging the ideas and expressing dissent. This excerpt also highlights the impact that Obama had on the blog posts, especially in 2008. Bloggers initiated several of the posts at the time of the event or as part of a discussion concerning Barack Obama.

Another example of the impact of Obama appears in the way mixed race news was presented in Beige-World. The blogger explains "Essayist Richard Rodriguez writes about changing views on multiracial identity in the aftermath of Barack Obama's presidential election victory" (Beige World, 2008, "ESSAY," para. 1). The purpose of this script seems to be to help bring awareness to various issues by framing the information as either positive or questionable. So while the information presented in news articles may be framed in a particular way, the blogs reframe the information and give a personal perspective to the issues.

Celebrity script.

One of the ways that bloggers raise awareness is by pointing out particular celebrities who are mixed race and emphasizing their accomplishments and importance. It is similar to the idea of creating a public memory for the mixed race community that creates a bonding among bloggers and readers and a shared sense of mixed race identity. The bloggers discuss celebrities and historical figures such as Los Angeles Clippers basketball player Blake Griffin, reggae singer and cultural icon Bob Marley, Civil Rights activist Malcolm X, as well as singer and actress Lena Horne. A typical example of the celebrity script goes as follows:

It wasn't until later when I learned about Malcolm X being of mixed-race

and Bob Marley being biracial-- like me-- that I took a studder step and

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began to reflect upon, what being mixed meant to me. I began a journey to

discover it was ok to be mixed. (Mixed Roots, 2008, "Malcolm & Marley,"

para. 5)

Typically, a blogger presents a mixed race celebrity and provides some reflection or

factual information regarding the individual. The reflective statement in the preceding

excerpt calls attention to the importance of knowledge that others are mixed and indicates

why awareness of this matters to them. The bloggers often provide context and facts with

information about mixed celebrities. For example, Mixed Roots blogger states:

Of course you remember Lisa Bonet (a biracial actor, of the Cosby show &

A Different World) and her former husband Lenny Kravitz- a biracial

musician and son of Roxie Roker, actor (Helen Willis on "The Jeffersons).

Their daughter Zoe (whoa, I remember when she was born!) makes an

appearance on this video. (Mixed Roots, 2008, "Featuring…Zoe Kravitz,"

para. 1)

In this excerpt, the blogger names several celebrities and provides the context for their

mixed racial identities and calls attention to the importance of their work. This

background information allows blog readers to associate with the celebrities and to "keep

up" with mixed race celebrities.

Within the increasing of awareness of mixed race issues and celebrities is the

specific emphasis on Obama as a mixed race figure. Several of the blogs share their

admiration and support of Barack Obama and highlight his mixed race identity. This is

seen in the language used in the blog posts. The blogs often use words such as "inspired,"

"wondrous," "amazing," and "thank you." For example, Light-skinned-ed Girl discusses

the writes that "Obama was in command, speaking with such energy and eloquence about real ideas," and that she has "never felt so inspired by someone's example of integrity and intelligence" (Light-skinned-ed Girl, 2008, "The Obama Celebration," para. 1). Similarly, regarding Obama's election speech, Beige World states, "Obama gave such an uplifting and positive speech. It was the perfect ending for such an historic campaign" (Beige World, 2008, "Election Night Party," para. 8). Mixed Roots also provides an example of the expression of praise some bloggers use regarding Obama as a mixed race influential celebrity:

> It's noteworthy to recognize that a formative flicker happened when I was
>
> immensely inspired by Sen. Barack Obama in the summer of 2004, when he
>
> opened his speech making reference to his diversity . . . his MIXED ROOTS.
>
> Mr. Barack Obama, I thank you for recognizing your gifts to influence
>
> polarizing positions towards unity and peace. Furthermore, thank you for
>
> taking up the responsibility of sharing, educating others and having faith that
>
> a racial & cultural background like yours, like mine, like ours and millions of
>
> others has a rightful and important place in America and world history
>
> (Mixed Roots, 2008, "The Power of Diversity . . . at birth," para. 5)

In this post, the blogger states that she feels connected to Obama because he has a similar racial identity. In another blog post, Mixed Roots blogger praises Obama because of his influence on the increased interest in mixed race issues:

> Bravo to Barack Obama and the divine power that fashioned this -finally
>
> forward thinking- dialogue. I don't agree with every aspect of the opinions
>
> expressed in the article, but that's the beauty of being mixed and sharing

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ideas and opinions. It's simply important to build awareness about the

experience. There's always work to be done...now let's see where being in

this space takes us or where we can direct it... I really don't believe we'd be

here- in this space- if it weren't for a biracial presidential candidate named

Barack Obama. (Mixed Roots, 2008, "A New Interest in being mixed," para.

2)

In this excerpt, the blogger refers to an article in the *New York Times* that discusses the

"new dialogue on Mixed Race" (Navarro, 2008, para. 1) and emphasizes Obama's mixed

race, which differs from the news articles. The blogger's point of view reinforces pride

and support of Obama.

The mixed race news and celebrity scripts, taken together, highlight the

importance of seeing a celebrity/public official who is successful and challenges many of

the tragic mulatto stereotypes confronting mixed race individual. The awareness frame

implies that there is a way to build community through an online medium.

Questions script.

The blog posts not only disseminated information about news and celebrities, but

also presented a platform for conversation. The dialogue frame previously described

emerged from the analysis of the news articles. Similarly, a conversational frame

emerged from the analysis of the blog posts. The difference in this frame is that the blog

posts used the question script to present their contributions as the start of or continuation

of a conversation. This frame operates in terms of criteria that provide the standards for

evaluating an event. The question helped establish the main script for the conversation

frame.

Each of the blogs uses questions to invite conversation with readers. While the news articles also employed questions, these questions were typically rhetorical; that is, a question that does not have a specific answer. With the blogs, on the other hand, the questions truly invite conversation by posing opinion questions to the blog readers. The questions call for a direct answer. All of the blogs have the "comment" location where readers can respond to the blog posts. The blog Beige-World often presents the "Question of the day." These are provocative questions based on current issues illustrate that desire for conversation and the multiplicity of voices. The following are a few of the questions the bloggers posted:

What did you think of Barack Obama's nomination speech? How did you think he did? Feel free to post a comment, regardless of your party affiliation (Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, Green, etc.) (Beige World, 2008, "What do you think of Barack," para. 1)

Here's today's Beige World Question of the Day: Based on your own personal experience, do you feel that there's a greater acceptance of Beige people now than in the past? (Beige World, 2008, "Greater Acceptance of Beige," para. 1)

Do you believe that Barack Obama's rise in the polls is a sign that racism is on the decline in the U.S.? (Beige World, 2008, "Obama's rise in the polls," para. 1)

Do you believe that America is ready for a Beige president? (Beige World, 2008, "Is America Ready," para. 1)

Each of the questions is an opportunity for others to join the discussion on current events in the campaign and election. The questions assume blogger's acceptance of being "Beige" or mixed race.

In the blog post "On Michelle Obama," Light-skinned-ed girl presents a link to a *Newsweek* article and asks a reflective question regarding the article. She states: "What do you think of this Newsweek essay [hyperlinked]? She makes him 'blacker'? I think maybe I agree" (Light-skinned-ed girl, 2008, "On Michelle Obama," para. 1, original emphasis). This question invites the conversation of Obama's race based on a mainstream article. She adds the quick response of "I think maybe I agree." She qualifies her opinion in order to allow there to still be a conversation or discussion with her readers. The majority of the questions encourage perspectives on race. "Feel free to post a comment about the event (if you were there), or if you have anything to say about the election" (Beige World, 2008, "Election Night Party," para. 14).

By presenting questions to readers, the bloggers are able to connect to mixed race readers/users and therefore add a personal perspective to the information they are posting. The next frame for this analysis, the personalization frame, differs from the awareness frame because of the blogs' emphasis on the self as opposed to others.

Personalization Frame

One of the key aspects of the blog that makes this medium distinct from any other, especially news, is the element of personalization within the blog posts. In addition to disseminating news information on mixed race issues, each of the bloggers presents opinion, stories, and personal experiences. This is often done in a free form of writing. The personalization frame is based on a combination of providing context and criteria. In terms of style of writing, the bloggers present their opinions in an unfiltered manner. Their positionality and personal narrative scripts support the personalization frame. Typically, personalization came from describing an experience.

Light-skinned-ed Girl wrote about her political leanings in a very personalized way. For example, she blogged about a dream she had about Obama. In the March 4, 2008 blog post titled "I Have A Dream" she states:

> and it was about Obama. As an admitted Obamaholic, I am surprised that this is the first dream I've had about him. I …I know it was a silly dream. Still, it is a testament to how much Obama has entered my consciousness--I have so much hope pinned on today's elections. By tomorrow morning we very well could be on the way to having a black-biracial man as a major party candidate and then, well, I think he'll win. (para. 1)

This blogger describes her personal experience of dreaming about Obama. By doing so, she asserts her opinion of him as a presidential candidate and emphasizes his public popularity.

Positionality.

Another key element in personalization frame is explaining one's positionality. Positionality is defined as how people position themselves to be able to speak on a topic. The bloggers often state how they identify racially as a way of framing their perspective. Similar to Obama, many state their racial identity by way of their parentage. For example, Mixed Roots blogger states "As a biracial woman: having a black father and white mother, I have had many, many years to consider the aspects of what affects race relations and witness race relations from a unique biracial perspective. ("Where is the Empathy," para. 1). Similarly, Twisted Curlz indicates that she is "I have known that, as the biracial child of a black Jamaican and a white American, I have been an American

with an asterisk" (Twisted Curlz, 2009, "A reflection at the dawn of Obama's inauguration," para. 7). The bloggers articulate their own racial identity and provide context to the topics they choose to address in their blogs.

2008 election experience.

One of the most prominent ways that bloggers personalized their blogs is through their connection to Obama. Either through the campaign or the election, several of the bloggers discussed not only their admiration, but also their personal connection, especially since he is mixed race. Many blog posts were personal reflections on Obama's campaign. The following is a typical personalization of the campaign:

> I sat down this morning with my absentee ballot in front of the computer.
>
> I had no doubts about my presidential choice, but many of the ballot
>
> propositions were unfamiliar to me and I needed more information to
>
> make my choice. (Light-Skinned-ed Girl, 2008, "I Voted!," para. 1)

Light-skinned-ed Girl blogger describes her process of voting. She goes on to add, in detail, her emotions and experience as she fills out her ballot:

> I felt a little nervous about voting and read through the directions a couple
>
> of times. I don't want anything to disqualify my vote. I filled in the little
>
> bubbles expertly. I signed and stamped the envelope, and I'm headed to
>
> the post office to hand my little envelope to my favorite postal employee.
>
> I hope my vote gets counted (Light-skinned-ed Girl, 2008, "I voted," para.
>
> 2).

As she details her anxiety and puzzlement in the voting act, she is presenting her own personal experience with this part of the 2008 election. While the newspaper articles

could report the voting polls and results, the blogs provide details about the intimate or emotion of voting. The bloggers also shared their reactions to the election. Beige-World posted the personal reflections of Election Night at EXO in St. Louis, MO from the editor in chief David Burnett. He shares:

I'm probably not unlike most folks when I say that, for me, the days leading up to this night had sort of a Super Bowl-like feel, like we were all gearing up for the big game. At the beginning of the night, some were anxious, some were nervous about what the final results might be, but everyone was in a generally good mood. (Beige World, 2008, "Election Night Party," para. 4)

The editor in chief not only describes the overall excited mood of the election night, but also addresses the importance of the event on a personal level. He adds:

And then, at 10:00 PM CST, CNN declared Barack Obama the winner. The place went NUTS! I saw both cheers AND tears of joy throughout the club. And I thought to myself, "Someone who kinda looks like me is headed for the White House!" (Beige World, 2008, "Election Night Party," para. 5)

The excitement and reflection on Obama at a personal level did not stop with the election. Twisted Curls blogger discusses going to Washington D.C. for the inauguration and reflects on Obama being "bicultural":

I came to our nation's capital this week to witness progress, to create a live, indelible snapshot for my mental scrapbook and to share the experience here with my 9-year-old godson who, like President-elect

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Barack Obama and me, is bicultural. (Twisted Curlz, 2009,"A reflection at

the dawn," para. 4)

The element of personalization within the blog posts makes this medium distinct

from any other. The personal side of the blog posts allows a platform for individuals to

provide a unique perspective. In comparison with the news articles, the personal tone and

emotion of each of the bloggers appears in opinions, stories, and personal experiences.

Through this personal tone emerge sentiments of race and racism. The following section

addresses this frame.

Racism Frame

The language of challenging or uncovering racism is the third frame that emerged

from the posting relating to Obama in the four blogs. In contrast to the discourse in the

news articles, which emphasizes the idea of progressing past racism, the blogs often point

out, respond to, and challenge issues of racism. The blogs reinforce the belief that voting

for a Black president does not prove that an individual is not racist. Topics of racism

appeared 20 times across all postings analyzed for this study. Several scripts support the

racism frame, namely: racial divide, racial hatred, and stereotyping and racial profiling.

Racial divide.

The racial divide script supports the racism frame by highlighting issues where a

separation exists regarding race as well as a division in understanding racism. The

following excerpt from Mixed Roots is typical for the racism frame in calling attention to

the racial divide:

What is slowly being revealed as a result of this wacky political

presidential contest is not surprising to me. This country, sadly, still has

deep rooted issues with race relations, especially between blacks and

whites. (Mixed Roots, 2008, "Where is the empathy," para. 1)

The blogs directly challenge the idea of progressing past racism. In the following excerpt,

Light-skinned-ed Girl is responding to an idea that often prevails in colorblind racism,

that is, the idea that it is racist to call someone racist:

It is a strange time we live in now--one is allowed to be as outraged by

being called a racist as one is if one is a victim of racism. So change the

word--put lipstick on the pig of a word, but let's make sure we address the

truth of the matter! (Light-skinned-ed Girl, 2008, "Racist or Whatever,"

para. 4)

The blogger is challenging the reader to look at the underlying issues. She calls for

addressing "the truth of the matter" meaning that regardless of what "it" is called, it's

important to acknowledge the impact that the thinking has on race. Several of the

bloggers were compelled to respond to racist public discourse. The blog posts discussed

the topics of Reverend Wright's comments, Obama's speech on race, and Professor

Gates' arrest. Specifically on the topic of Reverend Wright, Mixed Roots blogger

expresses the need for context in looking at his comments. She states:

One point--Wright noted that the government may have been responsible

for the spread of the HIV virus. That is shocking and frightening to many,

but consider many African Americans were shocked by the lynchings,

being hosed down in the streets, being dragged from their beds, crosses

being burned in the front yard of their homes and a host more adversity,

abuse and offensives committed against them simply because of the shade

of their skin. I would say it's probably a bit difficult to remain 100%

patriotic after experiencing so much at the hands of your countrymen.

(Mixed Roots, 2008, "Where's the Empathy," para. 6)

While she is saying that Reverend Wright may be considered unpatriotic, (and later she

states that she does not condone what he said), she explains that there is a sentiment in

Black communities about the United States that would be considered unpatriotic but that

sentiment is based on the historical oppression. She mentions the violence that has been

endured by Black in terms of lynching Blacks and practices of the Ku Klux Klan. While

the news articles did mention atrocities of the past, she expressed a sense that these were

purely in the past and that as a society we are progressing beyond racism. The blogs on

the other hand, particularly in this excerpt, refer to the importance of having an

understanding of the United States racist history in order to understand the current

climate. In the news articles the emphasis on history for current understanding differs

from the emphasis on the historical as evidence of how far we have come.

Racial hatred.

Several of the blog postings are a reaction or reflection on a current event

involving racism, either on a personal level or in public discourse. These current events

pertain to issues of overt racial hatred. For example, Light-skinned-ed Girl describes

accidently coming across a white supremacist site when looking for information about

her favorite writer with biracial children. She states:

I was really shocked to have clicked through to a white supremacist site

discussing her work. Rather, the forum participants wrote many ignorant,

hateful, racist, and misspelled things about the writer's claim that she

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stopped "feeling white" when she became pregnant with her biracial

child. I read a few of the supremacist's posts, but then had to stop. I was

disgusted and also scared. How naive I am to think that just because it is

2008 and our next U.S. president likely will be a biracial African-

American, that white supremacists wouldn't still enjoy a lively forum.

Still, it's really frightening to think about. (Light-skinned-ed girl, 2008,

"Hate on the internet," para. 1)

In this excerpt, the blogger indicates that she is shocked and scared by blatant

racial hatred on the Internet. She calls out her own naiveté in thinking that the year 2008

and Obama's candidacy would create a racist free United States and challenges the idea

of a colorblind society. While she is describing her personal experience with overt

racism, the issue of covert racism is also addressed in the posts.

Challenging stereotyping and racial profiling script.

Several of the bloggers also challenged stereotypes and questioned racial

profiling. For example, blogger Light-skinned-ed Girl discusses an interview she heard

where a White woman stated that she didn't have a problem with Blacks but "wouldn't

vote for Obama because he would be 'for the blacks.'" (Light-skinned-ed Girl, 2008,

"Racist or Whatever," para. 1). She states:

I can only assume the interviewee has stereotypes (racist stereotypes)

about black people that has led her to this conclusion. Racist. (Light-

skinned-ed Girl, 2008, "Racist or Whatever," para. 3)

This particular blogger is calling out what she sees as racist and what may not have been

addressed as racist during the interview in mainstream news. Obama's response to

Professor Gates' arrest also sparked reflection for the bloggers, particularly Twisted Curlz. She writes:

> Gates opened up discussion on Blacks and relationship with police
>
> The recent case of Dr. Gates has many black and brown folks talking about what they have learned to suck their teeth and roll their eyes at as routine, even if an exception these days. In the LA Times, there's a story headlined "Black males' fear of racial profiling very real, regardless of class" that attempts to explore the topic. (Twisted Curlz, 2009, "Psychological profile," para. 1, original emphasis)

In this blog post, Twisted Curlz provides the context for the Gates event in terms of the relationship between Black communities and the police. She bases her response on an article in mainstream news discourse. She goes beyond just stating that this particular event sparked discussion to explaining the intricacies of being approached by the police as a person of color. She explains:

> They know too well the pivotal moment Gates faced at his Massachusetts home. It was that moment of suspicion when confronted by police, the moment one wonders, in a flash of panic, anger, or confusion -- *Maybe I am being treated this way because I'm black.* Next comes the pivotal question -- *Do I protest or just take it?* (Twisted Curlz, 2009, "Psychological profile," para. 4, original emphasis)

She also explains that there is a process that occurs when one racialized by the police. She adds that she experiences her self and that there are certain things that cross her mind:

To this day, that is always the case when it comes to my infrequent

encounters with police with that particular power relationship. It's not a

question of whether they approached me because they see black.

Ultimately, that doesn't matter. It's usually, for me, more about the

uncertainty of how they will treat me because they see black. (Twisted

Curlz, 2009, "Psychological profile," para. 17)

In the preceding excerpt the blogger indicates that there is a power relationship between

her self as ascribed a Black woman. The blogs challenge the belief that voting for a Black

president does not prove that an individual is not racist. By uncovering colorblind racism

the blogs challenge the mainstream frame of progressing past racism.

The bloggers frame racism as an ongoing and systemic issue and use the platform

of their blog to challenge racist discourse. The basis of this frame is to not only present

opinions on certain events, but also provide historical context specifically when it seems

that nuanced issues of race and racism are not addressed in mainstream discourse but are

present in people's understanding of race.

CHAPTER 5: IDEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Ideological criticism facilitated the analysis of the news articles and blogs and allowed me to answer the following research question: What ideologies about race and mixed race emerge from newspapers and blogs? Just as with the framing analysis, the data for the ideological analysis focuses on the content of the framed discourse from four pivotal moments in Obama's presidential campaign and early presidency in which issues of race and mixed-race identity were salient: (1) Obama's announcement of his presidential candidacy; (2) Obama's "A More Perfect Union" speech; (3) Obama's election to the presidency; and (4) the arrest of Harvard professor Henry Gates, Jr.

Defining Ideology

As previously described in chapters 2 and 3, ideology is a set of shared beliefs and values of a group of people; either positive, negative, or neutral; that influence social interaction and institutional structures and operate mainly on a subconscious level. Ideology is embedded in the content of the discourse and this content creates meaning as part of audiences' interactions with that content. According to Bartolome (2004), "ideology refers to the framework of thought constructed and held by members of a society to justify or rationalize an existing social order" (p. xiii). Because ideologies function to maintain the social order and reinforce the "norm," they are not recognized until people are confronted with a differing ideology, then people are able to identify those taken for granted beliefs and frameworks. Ideology pervades "everyday discourses" as a rational system of thought that "provide codes of meaning" (Henry & Tator, 2002, p. 21) manifested in the discourses of newspapers as well as blogs.

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As a method, ideological criticism concentrates on uncovering patterns of beliefs and values that are embedded in the particular rhetorical discourses (Foss, 2004). van Dijk (2006) states "when group members explain, motivate or legitimate their (group-based) actions, they typically do so in terms of ideological discourse" (p. 121). The process of analysis for ideological criticism involves identifying the terminology in the discourse, the underlying assumptions of the ideology (the terminology that is included and excluded), as well as explaining the rhetorical strategies used to support the ideology. By looking at the assumptions about reality and values embedded in the media discourses, I can isolate the foundation of the ideology. The preliminary analysis of framing precedes the next step of identifying the ideologies embedded in the news articles and blog posts. By coding, categorizing, and then looking at the patterns across all of the instances in which terms about race and mix-race appear, I discovered the patterns that constitute contemporary ideologies (the internal logic embedded in the discourses) about race that emerge from the discourses related to each pivotal moment.

Ideological Analysis of News Discourse

The following section presents the findings from the newspaper data and provides ideological analysis. The following four ideologies emerged from the news coverage on the four discursive moments: invisibility of Whiteness, Black and White binary, hybrid heroism, and erasure of racism. The invisibility of Whiteness is assumed and implied in the Black/White binary that discusses discourse about race as consisting of two parts, Black and White. Hybrid heroism is the belief that mixed race individuals will end racism in the United States; and erasing racism as refers to the ideological belief that racism can be eradicated by Obama's election.

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Invisibility of Whiteness

Whiteness is the first ideology that emerged from the newspaper article,

reinforcing the belief that whiteness is invisible. According to Flores et al. (2006),

"whiteness operates and maintains its dominance in part through its invisibility" (p. 183).

Whiteness is assumed as a norm and is often not mentioned and "much of the rhetorical

power of whiteness is founded in its ability to avoid any explicit statements about or

claims to racial centrality" (Chidester, 2008, p. 158). Endres and Gould (2009) add that

"possessing or performing Whiteness is simultaneously an enactment and a masking of

power and privilege" (p. 419). Several examples support the invisibility of whiteness

ideology. An example of Whiteness as invisible is found in the following excerpt from

the *New York Times* after Obama's election night victory:

> The apparent breadth of Mr. Obama's sweep left Republicans sobered, and
>
> his showing in states like Ohio and Pennsylvania stood out because
>
> officials in both parties had said that his struggles there in the primary
>
> campaign reflected the resistance of blue-collar voters to supporting a
>
> black candidate. (Nagourney, 2008, p. A1)

Though subtle, in this excerpt the reporter refers to the resistance of "blue-collar voters."

In this case the author paints a picture of White dominance by identifying predominately

White states like Ohio and Pennsylvania and referring to the blue-collar workers.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Pennsylvania is 81.9% White and Ohio is 82.7%.

This speaks to aspects of race and class simultaneously. In this case, class hides race

when referring to Whiteness. The reporter and reader are able to assume whiteness

without naming it as such. The most salient identifier for this group of voters, who would

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be resistant to Obama's race, is class. Similarly, the *Washington Post* also included language that emphasized race as equating with Black, and White as invisible. In covering the incident with Professor Gates, the newspaper published the following excerpt:

> In Cambridge this time last year, a young black man was removing a lock
>
> from a bike on campus when a Harvard police officer pulled a gun and
>
> demanded identification, according to a six-member committee report on
>
> the practices of the police department ordered by Harvard President Drew
>
> Faust. The youth showed the officer his Boston Public Library card, began
>
> crying and said he was a high school student working at the university.
>
> (Harvard police were also called to Gates's home.) (Thompson &
>
> Thompson, 2009, para. 16)

The underlying assumption in this particular excerpt is that Harvard is a substitute for White privilege. While the news article is presenting an ongoing issue of racial profiling on the campus, the underlying ideology continues to keep White invisible. The racialized young man, identified as Black, was pulled at gunpoint by the police. Although the race of the police officers is not identified, the author implies that they are White by linking the incident with that of the Professor Gates' arrest in which the police officer was White.

Whiteness ideology is also perpetuated by the way that the news articles say what not to do. According to Foss (2009), one way to identify the nature of ideology of a group is by looking at "what the artifact suggest[s] is unacceptable, negative, undesirable" (p. 297). During Obama's election, a *New York Times* article focused on the way television channels geared towards Black audiences presented their preferences and biases toward

Obama. In an article titled "Black TV Is Wearing Its Politics On Its Sleeve" (Stelter, 2008, headline), the author points out the way Black Entertainment Television (BET) did not hold back their expression of excitement for the election of Barack Obama. Ideologies can often be identified by looking at what is "not normal" or acceptable. The idea is that the *New York Times* would not display bias, but they likely emphasize what is normal and acceptable to their readers. Also, the underlying assumption of the public is that Black television can be identified as racialized yet "mainstream" media is considered race free, and as Flores et al (2006) explain, "always able to speak from the objective location of human, whiteness and its practices remain outside of culture" (p. 184).

Black and White Binary

While the newspapers reinforced the ideology of the invisibility of Whiteness, when Whiteness was addressed or named, it typically was juxtaposed to Blackness. In other words, reporters assumed a common sense understanding of the Black/White binary, meaning that they discussed race as composed of two parts (only Black and White). For example, in the following excerpt from the *Washington Post* during Obama's election, the author quoted David Lammy, a black member of Britain's Parliament, saying: "Now black and white can raise their shoulders high and can turn a page on issues of inequality" (Sullivan, 2008, p. A26). Lammy implied that Blacks and Whites are the only people dealing with issues of inequality.

The Black and White binary can also be seen in the articles regarding Obama's speech on race is presented. The *Chicago Sun-Times* reported "Obama 'right on target'; Blacks, whites [sic] generally praise honesty, balance" (Ihejirika, Esposito, & Spak,

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2008, headline) again emphasizing the binary. In another excerpt from the *New York Times*, the author stated:

> He noted that his [Obama's] candidacy had been successful in
>
> predominantly white states and in largely black states, but he conceded
>
> that the nation's racial divisions remained firmly ingrained and that black
>
> anger and white resentment was rarely interchangeably understood.
>
> (Zeleny, 2008, p. A1)

In this excerpt the *New York Times* highlights Obama's success in certain states and attributes it to issues of race based on Black and White demographics. This ideology presents race not just as binary but also as dichotomous or oppositional.

The *Washington Post* also perpetuated the ideology of Black/White binary while covering the Reverend Wright incident: "Another friend, Sidney Strickland, an African American attorney and co-founder of a bank in Laurel, said: 'He spoke frankly about the racial divide, the gap in black and white perceptions of reality'" (Milloy, 2008, p. B1)

This ideology may be attributed to the notion that Obama can identify with both Blacks and Whites and therefore coverage of his campaign and presidency would emphasize these two aspects of his identities. While this is an important aspect of the data, the discourse both makes explicit and assumes this binary in its coverage of Obama. The news articles perpetuate an assumption that to talk about racism is to talk about inequalities of the past by Whites against Blacks. The tendency of the news reporters to rely on the Black/White binary allows them to ignore the contemporary issues of race and racism. Reporters associate race with having only two sub-groups, and all others are left

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out of the conversation. This binary and its salience in the news articles are problematic. News articles tackle racism as only Black and White, ignoring other racial histories and other groups and their problems with racism, which helps to keep the debate simple as opposed to complicating and looking at the nuances in the United States racial history. In this way news discourses simplify and distort the issue of race and racism.

Hybrid Heroism

The third ideology that emerged in the news articles is hybrid heroism. This is the ideology that promotes the idea that mixed race individuals, specifically Obama, can and will end racism and the race "problem" in the United States. This ideology emerged in juxtaposition to the tragic mulatto archetype. Rather than the archetype of the tragic mulatto, where the mixed race individual is seen as problematic, unstable, and likely to encounter psychological problems, the news articles presented a modern ideology for mixed race that is hybrid heroism. The hybrid is seen as a hero, a kind of savior, when it comes to issues of race. While these archetypical depictions of mixed race seem oppositional, they can be thought of as two sides of the same coin. There is no longer the fear that the mulatto will have psychological problems and will be the demise of society (as was the stereotype in the past), now the hybrid is seen as the tool to cure racial trauma and wounds. This ideology is supported by two underlying themes: Obama is the answer to Dr. King's dream and Obama is the "bridge" between Black and White.

Obama is the answer to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream.

A commonly quoted line from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I have a dream" speech is that his wish for his children to one day be judged by the content of their character and not the color of their skin. While this noble idea promotes justice and

implies to end racism, what has happened as a result is the fear of addressing race for fear of being labeled racist. The post-Civil rights era still continues to reference Dr. King's speech with the hopes that this colorblindness may some day come true. Obama as an example of hybrid heroism was characterized in the news articles as the answer to Dr. King's dream.

During Obama's election, the *Washington Post* describes the event's significance in relation to Dr. King's work during the civil rights movement in the following excerpt: "Adam Bradley, an expert on hip-hop and author of a forthcoming book on rap lyricism, understands that many of an older generation see Obama's victory as a culmination of Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream" (Merida, 2008, p. A1). In this excerpt, the author describes Obama's election as the "culmination" of Dr. King's dream in the eyes of many. Similarly, the *New York Times* made references to Dr. King's "dream" and the way Obama will help the United States achieve that dream:

> Considering that past, perhaps the most incisive comment on Mr. Obama's election actually came long ago. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. addressed the Hawaii Legislature in 1959, two years before Mr. Obama was born in Honolulu, and declared that the civil rights movement aimed not just to free blacks but "to free the soul of America." (Kristof, 2008, p. A33)

In this excerpt the author recalls the Dr. King and his call that the soul of America needs to be freed, and the author specifically states that this is a comment on Obama's election.

Obama is the "bridge" between Black and White.

Similar to the notion of Obama answering Dr. King's dream is the idea that Obama is the answer to the race problem simply because of his racial identities, which work to promote hybrid heroism ideology. For example, while discussing Obama's speech on race, the *New York Times* made the following statement:

> After running a campaign that in many ways tried not to be defined by race, Mr. Obama placed himself squarely in the middle of the debate over how to address it, a living bridge between whites and blacks still divided by the legacy of slavery and all that came after it. (Zeleny, 2008, p. A1)

In this excerpt the author refers to Obama as "the bridge." This metaphor of the bridge emphasizes the divide and Obama's ability to reach across to both sides and provide unity. Some other news articles spoke to the idea that Obama is able to do this specifically because of his "non-white" identity. For example, in the *Washington Post* during Obama's election one author quoted individuals in different countries and stated the following: "'An African American president appears to have more sensitivity to the cross-cultural diversity of the world, and this is a promise of a more creative and flexible foreign policy,' he said" (Sullivan, 2008, p. A26). This excerpt implies that people of color will be more sensitive to global issues and that will have an impact on foreign policy.

While newspapers referred to Obama's ability to "bridge the gap" because he is African America, more often, his ability to cure racism was attributed to his mixed race identity and upbringing. Newspaper reporters used language related to Obama's ability to rise above, Obama as special because he is mixed race, and as a result the one for the job of curing the United States of its racial problems. In discussing Obama's speech on race,

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the *Washington Post* states that "he presented himself -- the son of a black African and white American, whose own ancestors did not suffer Southern slavery -- as uniquely able to rise above the fray" (MacGillis & Saslow, 2008, p. A6). Obama is characterized as unique and able to "rise above the fray." During Obama's election the *Washington Post* recalled his campaign and specifically his speech on race:

> The whole affair allowed Obama to address head-on the elephant in the room--race. Obama did it with candor and a sensitivity that reflected an insightful understanding of this American dilemma. It was a rare and reassuring performance by a presidential hopeful. (King, 2008, p. A17)

In this excerpt, Obama is described as having insightful understanding of the "dilemma" of race. Rather than being seen as the downfall to racial order, Obama is represented as the answer to the problem. Hybrid heroism ideology emphasizes the idea that Obama's hybridity positions him as a leader who can bring racial unity and harmony to the United States.

Erasing Racism

The last ideology that emerged from the analysis of the news articles was that of erasing racism. This ideology mainly focuses on the idea that racism can be eradicated by Obama's election. For example, *Washington Post* states, "With the election of its first black president, it can now begin to erase one of the stains on that reputation, one that repeatedly shamed us in front of other countries" (Merida, 2008, p. A1). Similarly, the *New York Times* described Obama's election as "sweeping away the last racial barrier in American politics with ease as the country chose him as its first black chief executive"

(Nagourney, 2008, p. A1). The underlying assumption is that a president of color, and specifically a Black president, is what is needed to cure the United States' racial wounds.

The fact that this ideology is present becomes apparent when there is a shift in discourse, specifically with the arrest of Professor Gates. The Gates incident itself was a challenge to the ideology that Obama was the answer to racism. Since his arrest occurred soon after Obama's election, this was a reminder that racism exists and that it is much more complicated. This shift was evident in the way the news articles reported the event. For example, in the *Washington Post*, the reporter describes Professor Gates arrest with surprise and disappointment:

> Instead, in a country where one in nine young black men are in prison,
> where racial profiling is still practiced, the arrest of a renowned scholar on
> a charge of disorderly conduct in front of his house last Thursday has
> fueled an ongoing debate about race in America in the age of its first black
> president. (Thompson, 2009, p. A1)

In the same article, Gates is quoted and he states that Obama's election did not end racism:

> Barack Obama's election as the nation's first black president was "huge
> and important," Gates said, but "did not translate to structural change.
> Given the demographics of Cambridge, [the officer] probably voted for
> Barack. That wasn't much help to me." (Thompson, 2009, p. A1)

When the article states that this racial discrimination is occurring during the age of a Black president, it upholds the assumption that by merely electing

Obama racism would cease to exist. In a different article in the *Washington Post*, a doctoral student

> "It's disappointing," said Lawrence Neely, a 33-year-old doctoral student
>
> at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who lives in a university-owned
>
> apartment building next-door to Gates's yellow wood-frame house. "We're
>
> in Cambridge, Massachusetts. We have an African American mayor. We
>
> have an African American governor. We have an African American
>
> president." (Thompson & Thompson, 2009b, p. A1)

In this excerpt the doctoral student speaks to the same assumption that Black representatives in public office would equate with less to no racial discrimination. This is evident in the way that she expresses her disappointed. This excerpt perpetuates the idea that racism can be fixed at the individual level, when perhaps the individuals are still operating in a racist system.

The most problematic aspect of the hybrid heroism ideology is that it reinforces the colorblind ideology that if "race" no longer exists, racism will not exist either. The assumption is that the existence of race leads to racism, as opposed to looking at the actual issues of racism. This ideology upholds colorblind racism and perpetuates the discourse of not "seeing" race for fear that by merely seeing it, one will be considered racist. This sounds progressive and perhaps seems like the way to eradicate racism, but I argue that this is "faux progress" because it allows covert racism at the institutional level to continue but individuals who are mixed race still must take on the difficult task of solving racism through mere existence. Flores et al. (2006) explain that "strategically, colorblindness secures white privilege" (p. 184), glossing over the nuances and

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complexities of race and racism. Taken together, the ideologies of invisibility of Whiteness, Black/White binary, hybrid heroism, and erasing racism all maintain colorblind racism.

Ideological Analysis of Blog Discourse

In contrast to its mainstream news counterpart, the blogs from individuals who identify as mixed race constructed an internal logic in their discourses that showed a bias toward the election of Obama while emphasizing the importance of mixed race identity. This section present data from ideological analysis from the four blogs selected for analysis: Mixed Roots, Beige-World, Light-Skinned-ed Girl, and Twisted Curlz. Ideological criticism focuses on uncovering systematic beliefs and values that reside in the internal logic in rhetorical discourses (Foss, 2004). Three ideologies emerged from the blogs: Obama for President, mixed race matters, and anti-racist work. Obama for President is discourse that supports and defends Obama's candidacy, election, and presidency. Mixed race matters is the underlying assumption for the bloggers' claim that mixed race individuals need a voice. Finally, anti-racist work is discourse claiming racism is both personal and systemic but has the potential to change.

Obama for President

All of the bloggers showed their preference for Obama through his election and presidency; some presented direct statements and others implied their support through covert campaigning. Obama for President is the ideology of favoritism for Obama's presidential campaign, election, and presidency. The Obama for President ideology was evident in discourses of support as well as discourses of defense. Discourses of support surfaced in each of the blogs in distinct ways, and some of the blogs overtly asserted their

partiality for Obama. Light-skinned-ed Girl made this distinction between a politician and a leader. She states, "Hilary [sic] is a Politician. Simply put. There are good ones, mediocore [sic] and bad ones. I happen to think Hilary [sic] is a good one. But I like a leader. Barack Obama is in my opinion a leader" (Mixed Roots, 2008,"Politicians and Leaders," para. 2-4). In this excerpt the blogger states that although she believes Hillary Clinton is a good politician, she argues that the United States needs a leader, and that leader is Barack Obama, not Hillary Clinton.

Both Light-skinned-ed Girl and Mixed Roots bloggers expressed their outspoken support for Obama's campaign. Light-skinned-ed girl stated, "I can't wait until he is our president!" ("Obama celebration," para. 1). Similarly, Mixed Roots blogger declared, "I believe Barack Obama, has demonstrated his desire to be a good and respected public servant, one who serves the people. I believe he could become the people's President" (Mixed Roots, 2008, "Politicians and Leaders," para. 5). Not only did the bloggers share the impression of Obama's campaign and election in relation to their own lives, but also Mixed Roots blogger noted the impact that Barack Obama had on her young daughter. For example, Mixed Roots blogger stated that her "her daughter-at age two- decided for herself that she was a supporter of Barack Obama. (Mixed Roots, 2008, "Much Ado about Nothing…really," para. 1). Mixed Roots blogger discussed her three-year old daughter's preference for Barack Obama. Although she discusses her own support, by highlighting her daughter's preference, she reinforces the popularity of Obama for President by asserting that even a child can see why he should be president. In other words, she uses her daughter as an example of what others should believe. Her daughter, she states, is brilliant for her age, ambitious, astute and visibly mixed (the Blue-eyed

Black baby). "My daughter had a dream come true on Monday, she got to see Barack

Obama, live and in person" (Mixed Roots, 2008, "Two Living Legends" para. 1) She

implies that if this daughter feels this way at such a young age, we should all be smart

enough to believe this about Obama.

The support for Obama goes beyond simple preference for him as President, but

supports for his decisions as well. For example, Light-skinned-ed girl states: "Hear hear,

Sen. Obama, for deciding not to use the announcement of Palin's 17-year-old daughter's

pregnancy for political advantage. I hope young Miss Palin gets through this already

difficult situation okay" (Light-skinned-ed girl, 2008, "Isn't it really about choice?," para.

1). In this excerpt, the blogger commends Obama for not taking cheap shots at his

opposition like other politicians often do. In other words, he conducts the campaign with

a sense of dignity as opposed to resorting to partisan political innuendos.

Among the four blogs, Beige World was the only blog that did not directly state

support for Obama's candidacy. While Light-skinned-ed girl claims, "I'm an

Obamaholic" and Mixed Roots states, "I do favor Obama," there was no such discourse

from Beige World. However, support for Obama's candidacy surfaced in the apparel and

merchandise created and promoted by Beige World bloggers. After the election, Beige

world posted the following: "To celebrate Barack Obama's historic presidential election

victory on November 4th, the Beige World Store is now offering two new designs, both

of which are available on a variety of merchandise" " (Beige World, 2008, "Beige World

Store," para.1). The logos for the merchandise include: "Wow – we actually have a Beige

president!" and "Beige Commander in Chief" (Beige World, 2008, "Beige World Store,"

para.1). Although this blog never directly expresses that people should vote for Obama,

their choice of merchandise implies support for Obama based on his mixed race and the blogs identification with this concept.

Some of the blogs were clear in expressing the obstacles that Obama needed to overcome in order to be elected. Specifically, after the election Mixed Roots blogger outlined each of the challenges that Obama encountered and overcame during his campaign:

> Barack Obama wasn't taken seriously during the first round of debates.
> He wasn't suppose [sic] to get far. He wasn't suppose [sic] to defeat
> Hilary or the Clinton's for that matter. But after 54 primaries, Barack
> Obama defeated the former first lady, the Rev. Wright controversy, the
> racial disparity, the fear mongering, the verbal attacks by Bill Clinton, the
> desperate jump Hilary made when she reference[d] [that] McCain brings
> his experience to this campaign and Obama brings a speech, the Rev.
> Pfleger['s] controversial mockery of Hilary [sic] Clinton, the threats on his
> life, he pushed through, he gained support and trust. After a long
> campaign rooted in hope and change, he made history. (Mixed Roots,
> 2008, "Candidate for Change," para. 2)

The blogs exhibited partiality for Obama in various ways. Discourses of support emphasized Obama's ability to make honorable decisions as well as pointing out the obstacles he was able to overcome. Another important aspect of this particular ideology is the defense of Obama.

Defending Barack Obama.

Beyond merely supporting Obama, bloggers defended Obama, sometimes to the point of attacking others. The bloggers not only framed certain events in a particular manner as addressed in chapter four, the bloggers emphasized their liberal ideology by promoting Obama and democrats using language that defended Obama and showed inconsistencies in the arguments presented by oppositional political factions and misrepresentation in media. For example, Light-skinned-ed Girl states, "I think I will scream if I hear one more person interviewed on NPR who says I am 'scared' of Obama. What the heck does that mean? "(Light-skinned-ed girl, 2008, "Information Over Outrage," para. 1). Blog posts during the primary campaign often seemed to defend Obama by distinguishing him from Hillary Clinton. After Obama won the nomination for the democratic ticket, the bloggers portrayed the opposition along partisan political lines by presenting John McCain, Sarah Palin, George W. Bush, and conservatives and Republicans as the villains. For example, Mixed Roots posted the following sarcastic reaction to support of Palin's nomination as vice president based on a speech:

Skkkkuurrrt!! Rewind. Come again. Delivering a great speech makes

her a LEADER that the Republican party can be proud of. I get it. I

understand it, because that's just the type of chick I am. I'm understanding

and I try to be open. So yeah I can see how they can equate ONE speech to

her being a potential good leader. I had that same feeling on July 27,

2004. But what's up with the sudden change of [republican] heart?

Haven't many in the party made statements referring to Sen. Barack

Obama...[sic] a good speaker yes, but a leader that does not make him. Is

he ready to lead? That's been the badge and shield and the battle cry the

entire campaign (of those who oppose him.) Well, the barre [sic] is raised

again on Barack.

So with that said... in the words of John McCain "My Friends".... I

seriously think Barack Obama is better suited as a WORLD LEADER.

 United Nations maybe? (Mixed Roots, 2008, "The Barre," para. 5-6)

The blogger presents the premise that support for Palin as a leader came from one

speech she gave. The blogger does not reveal how she constructed this premise, but

presents her argument as though the audience already heard this information and agrees

with her [the blogger]. She then rationalizes her argument by calling attention to her

personal ethos, or credibility, by explaining that she is an understanding person. She then

defends Obama by pointing out the inconsistencies in the arguments of those who oppose

him. She makes the claim that Palin is seen as a leader and is praised because of one

speech, yet Obama is criticized when similar logic is used to support his candidacy. This

blogger also points out the inconsistencies in the discourse of those who oppose Obama

based on the Reverend Wright incident:

Why is the Pastor Wright topic such a hot topic? Why aren't the many

politicians who are supported by Bob Jones University or the preachers

who support and live by the Bob Jones way - which are many- why aren't

they scrutinized or pressured to disown or denounce Bob Jones University

or their pastor who may have even graduated from that university? (Mixed

Roots, 2008, "Where's the empathy," para. 2)

In the preceding excerpt, the blogger points out the inconsistencies that opponent make in

the scrutiny of Obama's relationship with Reverend Wright when Republican politicians'

arguments are not associated with Bob Jones University, which has a history of racially

discriminatory practices.

The blogs also pointed out the unrealistic expectation placed on Obama and the

misapplication or stereotypes about him. For example, Light-skinned-ed Girl challenged

comments made by an unknown source that claimed Obama to be an "uppity negro." She

began her post with a quotation from Zora Neale Hurston "A college-bred Negro still is

not a person like other folks, but an interesting problem." She then added:

> Obama has defied traditional categories of black people in the American
>
> imagination. His highly-regarded speech on race--reasoned and eloquent--
>
> made it difficult to stick him with the Radical Black label. Now, the "tar
>
> brush" is out again. This time he's being painted as the "upppity Negro"--
>
> a type traditionally considered dangerous because s/he DOES NOT
>
> KNOW HER PLACE. (Light skinned-ed girl, 2008, "An Interruption,"
>
> para. 2)

This blogger points out that Obama has challenged stereotypes during the campaign

because of his speech on race. Since the "Radical Black" stereotype could not be applied,

the blogger argues that Obama is labeled with a different stereotype, that of the "uppity

Negro." She adds that this is not just problematic but "sickening and deplorable:"

> That Clinton has seized upon using Obama's remarks against him by
>
> painting him as an uppity Negro is SICKENING and DEPLORABLE.
>
> Obama is elitest? And Hillary--Yale Law School -educated now with an

income that is out of the stratosphere of what any "lunch-bucket

Democrat" will make in His lifetime--is not?   (Light skinned-ed girl,

2008, "An Interruption," para. 3)

She uses caps for emphasizing on her disgust of opponents calling Obama an "uppity

Negro." She bases her argument on the assumption that Clinton is herself very wealthy,

and therefore elitist, not Obama. She renounces any loyalty or support she previously

expressed for Clinton. She then relates it back to herself by stating "So here we are close

to a half a dozen decades since Zora Neale Hurston wrote those words--and still, we, the

college-bred Negroes, are a problem for the American imagination" (Light skinned-ed

girl, 2008, "An Interruption," para. 4).

Defense of Obama also included anti-Bush discourse. For example, Mixed Roots

blogger stated:

Bush actually compared "Democrats" to a Nazi-Appeaaser [sic] while in

Israel for the 60th anniversary!

Humm, who's he talking about? What's he talking about, what a joke.

He doesn't say "Obama" right out so who's he talking about?

Half the country... Carter, Obama, Clinton, JFK just who is he talking

about.

Appeaser I don't think so....but a level headed, educated, brilliant

THINKER.....

One who sees merit in having a dialogue with hostile nations.. [sic] Well, I

say it might be a better approach than that one of a cowboy boot wearing,

strut'n [sic] around kicking up dirt... itchy trigger finger having dude at the

helm. We know what that gets us... a mortage crises [sic], a food crisis, oil

crisis, environmental [sic] issues denial, invasion, ignoring DARFUR.

(Mixed Roots, 2008, "Ganging up," para. 3-9)

In this excerpt the blogger defends Obama as a "brilliant thinker" and portrays President

Bush as a "cowboy boot wearing dude." She reinforces her bias by disagreeing with

Bush's policies and approach and claiming that he has caused several crises during his

presidency. The bloggers not only defend democrats, several of the blog posts

specifically defend Obama. Blogs defending Obama uphold the ideology that Obama is

the best choice for presidential leadership, and refute arguments opposing Obama by

claiming oppositional arguments are inconsistent. The blogs ask the readers to accept the

claim that Obama is mistreated and is a victim of subversive racism that needs to be

acknowledged.

Mixed Race Matters

The second ideology that emerged from the analysis of the blog posts was mixed

race matters. Each of the blogs assumed mixed race identity is important, should be

discussed, and is unique. This is inherent in the nature of the blogs selected for analysis,

and the ways in which mixed race matters are presented. Bloggers presented the

significance of mixed race identity through the concept of acceptance and the emphasis

of Obama as mixed race.

Acceptance.

The concept of acceptance is employed by the blogs to highlight the salience,

complexity, and importance of mixed race identity. Beige world exhibits an ideology of

racial acceptance by posing questions to blog readers about the current state of

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acceptance for "Beige people." For example, "Based on your own personal experience, do you feel that there's a greater acceptance of Beige people now than in the past? Post a comment, and let us know what you think." (Beige world, 2008, "Question of the day: Greater acceptance," para. 4). Beige World's questions are based on particular and familiar topics in the mixed race community that allow readers to respond acknowledge the importance of the mixed race identity and allow for all those in that community of readers to voice their opinions and share their experiences. This format, which differs from the other three blogs, reinforces the common identity of blogger and readers and builds a community of acceptance while also reflecting on the larger societal level of acceptance of mixed race people.

One of the shared beliefs of bloggers and readers on these sites is the need for acceptance but the struggle to attain it. For example, in the wake of Obama's election, Twisted Curlz reflected on her own experience as an American and states, "I have known that, as the biracial child of a black Jamaican and a white American, I have been an American with an asterisk." (Twisted Curlz, 2009, "A Reflection," para. 7). She points out her sense of always feeling "other" because of her mixed race identity, never feeling truly accepted as American. Similarly, Light-skinned-ed Girl shared why she chose the blog name "light-skinned-ed." This name is what someone called her as a child because they did not know she was mixed. She shares:

> Now, I claim the term as my invitation or pass into black womanhood. (I
>
> say black womanhood specifically because I felt most estranged from
>
> black women growing up--even though I wanted so much to belong.)

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When I claim my light-skinned-ed-ness, it's not to valorize my skin color,

but to accept the way that in some ways I belong to the world of black

womanhood. I can look like this and not have to Prove [sic] my

allegiance.

Yes, well, then why claim it at all? Why not be on firm ground and

simply identify as a black woman? Many women -- more light-skinned-ed

than I--have done that through the ages. The answer is simply that it

would negate my actual experience--it doesn't tell the whole of the story I

want to tell.

It's complicated this naming business. I'm not sure that I've figured it out

completely myself. (Light-skinned-ed Girl, 2009, "This Thing Called

Race," para. 2-5)

In this excerpt, she relates the lack of acceptance of her Black womanhood; her

reclaiming of the term "light-skinned-ed" allows her to feel more accepted. She also

speaks to the complexity of naming a lived experience. The bloggers chronicle their

journeys, but they also advocate a need for more awareness on mixed race issues.

Specifically, Mixed Roots blogger expresses the need for her blog and for her advocacy

of mixed race issues because there is still a lack of social acceptance. In reaction to a

news article, she states:

This is why I do what I do. People, and yes, even some biracial people

I've talked to, like to pretend race and being mixed-race is not an issue in

this country 'any longer.' I know better. And the NY Times [sic]

published a piece that confirms biracial people are still not accepted and

biracials are still considered an enigma. (Mixed Roots, 2008, "What

some people," para. 2)

Mixed Roots blogger justifies her blog and her activism as a way of bringing awareness

to mixed race issues because she feels several people are not conscious of its importance.

She uses the news article as evidence that other people still consider mixed race strange

and they do not accept it as a legitimate identity. In addition to calling for acceptance,

this blog relates the process of gaining acceptance.

It wasn't until later when I learned about Malcolm X being of mixed-race

and Bob Marley being biracial-- like me-- that I took a studder step and

began to reflect upon, what being mixed meant to me. I began a journey to

discover it was ok to be mixed. The journey actually still continues. Every

day when I have conversations with people who come to me because the

want to be apart of Mixed Roots Movement, or when I'm giving a speech

about the mixed-race experience, even as I interview people for my book,

I discover something new about myself and my experience. I enjoy the

exploration and the opportunities to teach others about the mixed-race

experience. I'm excited about my role in building and watching a

movement grow that is serving so many families and mixed-race people. It

is at times overwhelming- but many times more rewarding, especially

when the opportunity to inform mono-racial people about the mixed-race

experience presents itself. (Mixed roots, 2008, "Malcolm & Marley," para.

5)

The blogger describes her eventual acceptance of her own identity as a journey that began when she learned of other iconic figures being mixed race. She also expresses the sense of responsibility to continue to spread awareness. Mixed Roots blogger discusses the need for the stories and voices of those in the mixed race community to be heard. She states:

> Mixed People live full lives with experiences like this and who cares? Anyone? Anyone outside of the "mixed" community? I certainly hope so. If not, just listen, our stories are on the way. There are several mixed race people and organizations that have being doing work for years that if not already are public, have found the strength to go public. The stories real and fiction are and will be gripping and compelling and certainly noteworthy. (Mixed Roots, 2008, "Passing for Black," para. 3)

The ideology of mixed race matters to bloggers because of its salience to the bloggers personal identity and the need for their acceptance in society is evident in the blogs. The blogs ask the audience (blog readers) to think about the importance of a mixed race identity and acknowledge it as a legitimate marker of identity. One of the ways bloggers shaped and emphasized identity was through their description of themselves in relation to Barack Obama.

Obama is mixed.

The importance of mixed race identity was also emphasized in the way that the bloggers discussed and related to Barack Obama. Since Obama does not directly identify as mixed race, for these bloggers, his acknowledgement of his mixed roots allowed them to relate to and advocate mixed race issues.

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Bloggers often described Obama's mixed race. For example, Twisted Curlz states: "I came to our nation's capital this week to witness progress, to create a live, indelible snapshot for my mental scrapbook and to share the experience here with my 9-year-old godson who, like President-elect Barack Obama and me, is bicultural" (Twisted Curlz, 2009, "A Reflection," para. 4). In this excerpt, the blogger relates to Obama as "bicultural" as a basis of personal connection. There are many aspects of Obama to which bloggers can relate, but this blogger emphasizes Obama's mixed race identity in order highlight her own and her godson's racial identity.

Several of the blogs addressed the impact that Obama has on bringing awareness to mixed race issues. Overall, a sense of gaining acceptance as mixed race individuals exists through, and perhaps, because of Barack Obama. His campaign, election, and presidency require some public acceptance of his mixed race identity. Twisted Curlz stresses the magnitude of Obama's election when she says, "The ability to see yourself reflected in your leaders, particularly when it seemed a certain impossibility, is important" (Twisted Curlz, 2009, "A Reflection," para. 9). This blogger recognizes the way mixed race individuals see themselves in Obama because of a shared experience and understanding of identifying with more than one race. In one blog post, Mixed Roots writes a letter to Obama thanking him:

> thank you for taking up the responsibility of sharing, educating others and
> having faith that a racial & cultural background like yours, like mine, like
> ours and millions of others has a rightful and important place in America
> and world history. (Mixed Roots, 2008, "The Power of Diversity," para. 5)

In another letter to Obama, Mixed Roots blogger states, "You have also ignited a unique special interest in the mixed-race experience and I thank you, we all thank you" (Mixed Roots, 2008, "Speech of a Lifetime!!" para. 5). It is clear that there is an expectation about what Obama as president means for mixed race people. Obama symbolizes mixed race hope; he has become the mixed race representative. When Obama discussed getting a dog, he stated that he would probably get a "mutt" and then referred to himself as a mutt. Mixed Roots blogger commented on this phrasing, and said, "Mr. President makes this term sorta charming. :) yeah, mutts like us. Listen, if you're not mixed, please don't call me the 'M' word. It's only endearing if you're mixed 'like' me. (Mixed Roots, 2008, "Mutts Like Me," para. 1-2)

Both Twisted Curlz and Mixed Roots address the impact that Obama has on the awareness of mixed race identity. In her reflection of Obama's election, Twisted Curlz stated that she always felt like an "American with an asterisk." Later in her reflection, she shared the positive impact that witnessing his inauguration had on her:

> Disbelief that what I feared to even imagine has actually come to pass and
>
> pride in my country for being more than I had believed it was able to be. I
>
> may finally begin to reconcile and reconfigure my American life, asterisk
>
> erased. (Twisted Curlz, 2009, "A Reflection," para. 13)

Similarly, Mixed Roots expressed the change she saw in the United States and the hope she felt about her own identity:

> Its [sic] as if some sort of barriers have been torn down.   This is a
>
> phenomenal time. I'm so proud of this country. And furthermore...If I'm
>
> really being open and bearing my deepest thoughts when it comes to my

mixed-race (black/white) heritage... I feel like I finally fit in this country.

(Mixed Roots, 2008, "Still No Words," para. 3)

Some blogs also idealize Obama and what he represents for them. While the news articles expressed the expectation that he will solve the issues of race and racism, the blogs also expected Obama to solve the issues of mixed race. The assumption inherent in this ideology is that one prominent person can make a difference for others who are ordinary citizens.

Anti-Racist Work

Several of the blogs addressed racist discourse in the news and defended Obama. The blogs also discussed racism with a sense that though it exists there is hope that racism can be erased, through anti-racist work. The third ideology that emerged in the ideological analysis of blogs is anti-racist work.

As discussed in chapter 4, one of the frames that emerged from the analysis of the blog posts was the racism frame. The ideology that supports this frame is the position of anti-racism, and the anti racist work begins with identifying and calling out racism. For example, Twisted Curlz reflected on her relationship with law enforcement:

To this day, that is always the case when it comes to my infrequent

encounters with police with that particular power relationship. It's not a

question of whether they approached me because they see black.

Ultimately, that doesn't matter. It's usually, for me, more about the

uncertainty of how they will treat me because they see black. (Twisted

Curlz, 2009, "Psychological profile," para. 13)

In this excerpt, the blogger expresses a strained relationship with police based in historical and current racism. She brings attention to issues of racism that are often common between law enforcement and communities of color. By bringing attention to issues of racism, not just race, the bloggers vocalize the need for anti-racist work. Mixed Roots blogger explains why her blog is necessary as well as the work that needs to be done:

> Read this, from the NY Times today, as evidence that the race issue is not
>
> going to fix itself. The year we're in is not going to fix it. I don't know
>
> what will, but I'm working myself ragged trying to make a difference on
>
> this race thang! (Mixed Roots, 2008, "What some people," para. 3)

This excerpt is a reaction to a news article. The blogger gives her perspective by posting that the issue of race is difficult, but that she is ready to do the "work." When discussing a new interest in mixed race identity because of Obama, Mixed Roots blogger addresses the need to continue to "work." She states:

> There's always work to be done...now let's see where being in this space
>
> takes us or where we can direct it... I really don't believe we'd be here- in
>
> this space- if it weren't for a biracial presidential candidate named Barack
>
> Obama. (Mixed Roots, 2008, "A New Interest in Being Mixed," para. 2)

This excerpt highlights the importance of moving beyond a particular awareness and understanding that work towards an anti-racist society is possible. The blogger credits the step towards a progressive stance on racism with Obama's presence in the presidential campaign. In a different blog post, Mixed Race blogger reinforces the idea that Obama as President does not equate racism being over. She says:

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Ok, so the barriers have been torn down, but if you know me, you know

I'm thinking "ok they're torn down, but we've got to work and do our part

in the change to sweep those barriers away." Don't let them clutter up our

lives and be road blocks in our continued path towards a better nation.

The work is not over people, this is just a huge inspired step, we must

keep advocating for one another, we must continue to think and be

positive, we must continue to be kind to one another. We must honor our

blessings. (Mixed Roots, 2008, "Still No Words," para. 4)

The ideologies in the analysis of the blog posts are Obama as President, mixed

race matters, and anti-racist work. Each of these ideologies functions to provide codes of

meaning for mixed race identity and the association with Obama. Bloggers apply these

meanings to their own and others mixed race identity in relation to Obama's words

during and after the campaign and his election to the presidency.

Ideological criticism facilitated the analysis of the news articles and blogs and

allowed me to uncover several ideologies about race and mixed race emerge from these

discursive constructions. The newspapers perpetuated the invisibility of Whiteness, Black

and White binary, hybrid heroism, and erasure of racism ideologies. The preference for

Obama as President, the salience of mixed race matters, and promotion of anti-racist

work are ideologies in the blogs.

CHAPTER 6:

INTERPRETATION

The goal of this dissertation is to examine the conceptualizations of race and mixed race in newspapers and blogs. Taken together, ideological criticism that analyzed the internal logic of the discourses and framing analysis that analyzed how sources construct the discourses, facilitated the conceptualizations of race and mixed race in the news articles and blogs and allowed me to answer the following research questions: How do media discourses contribute to constructions of race? In what ways do the constructions suggest the possibility of a post-racial United States? How do newspapers and blogs set agendas that reinforce and oppose each other? While the blogs and news articles are different in format style and purpose, taken together they give a look at the ongoing conversation that impacts discourse on race, racism, and mixed race. The blogs are a response and commentary to the news articles, giving a subjective perspective. This chapter will focus on the social construction of race, the rhetoric of race, agenda setting, and the each of the discursive moments in order to discuss current conceptualizations of race in the United States.

Social Construction of Race

The social construction of race anchors the theoretical interpretations for this study. The way race was socially constructed in the news articles and blogs indicates that there are tensions in the way various media outlets conceptualize racial identity. As previously discussed in the literature review, racialization is the process by which a systemic power categorizes its citizens (Omi & Winant, 1996). The construction of race

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occurs through communication and Omi and Winant use this concept to describe racial formation. Social construction is a symbol using process that draws from legal, political, and social discourses of the past as well as from the interaction of media users and constructs present meanings and identities.

Certain frames and ideological content emerged from my analyses that contribute to the social construction of race. Specifically, the race frame, the racism frame, and the invisibility of whiteness ideology highlight the process of racial formation. Together these analyses reveal current conceptualizations of race.

The two forms of media selected for this study, blogs and newspapers, construct race in particular ways. The newspaper's framing of race as biological and racism as a thing of the past promotes racist colorblind ideologies. The blogs, on the other hand, frame race in a socio-historical perspective by unveiling and naming racism, which perpetuates -- an internal logic in the discourse that advocates anti-racist ideology. The goal of the social constructivist perspective especially when taking an interpretive and critical approach, is to identify and also question taken-for-granted knowledge about society (Allen, 2007). The newspapers presented opposing, yet equally dominant, constructions of race that reveal ideologies that also are part of how media users frame information they present about race. My analysis revealed the following frames: (1) race is biological and essentially divides society; and (2) post racial United States is ideal and possible.

The first newspaper construction is that race is biological and divides society into racial groups that differ from one another. The race frames that emerged from my analysis of the news articles emphasize the biological of race through reporters'

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conceptualizations of the biological roots of race in the words choices such as "genetic" and references to "blood." The newspaper accounts reinforce pre-existing ideological concepts of race that confine human identity to biological inheritance even though this belief is scientifically unfounded. A dominant assumption of this categorization that accompanies the belief that race is biological and a permanent feature of identity. The *Chicago Sun-Times* provides the following quotation from the Senator Obama that emphasizes his biology:

> The son of a black African father and a white mother from Kansas, Obama also addressed his racial identity and how he came to consider himself a black man. "I'm not sure I decided it," he said. "I think . . . if you look African American in this society, you're treated as an African American."
> (Fornek & McKinney, 2007, p. 3)

Obama's own words reinforce this type of categorization and reify the theory of hypodescent, which is the "the institutional practice of assigning racially mixed people to the status of the subordinate group" (Middleton, 2008, p. 569). This definition is historically and legally based on the one-drop rule in the United States. The emphasis on hypodescent confines race to traditional racial conceptualizations that do not allow for mixed race to exist. As a result newspapers reinforce this biological definition. For example, a *New York Times* article states that his race is "seared into his genetic makeup" (Scott, 2008, p. A14). The analysis in this dissertation reveals that key moments in Obama's presidency stimulated media conversations that demonstrate that reporters still accept biological race as the definitive marker of racial identity.

In addition to the supposed scientific based biological assumptions of race, the news articles also emphasized that races are separate from each other. The newspapers often emphasized a racial divide and Black and White race relations. These newspaper accounts seemed to appropriate such ideologies from outdated science that emphasizes a Black and White binary in which race is composed of skin color and has only two parts (Black and White). Newspapers often contextualized a Black person as "other," and they equated race and Blackness with difference and Whiteness with what is common or mainstream. This is to say that a "race" issue really meant a "Black" issue. Specifically, by racializing Obama and emphasizing his Blackness while not doing so for the White candidates, the invisibility of Whiteness perpetuates the idea that White is dominant race and it masks privilege afforded to whites.

The second construction of race in the newspapers is that post-racial United States is ideal and possible. In other words, race is a problem and the way to solve the problem is no longer to consider race as important. If society solves the problem in this way, then a post racial state would exist. Several frames and ideologies reinforce this vision of a post-racial United States. The newspapers reinforce the belief that voting for a Black President proves that an individual is not racist, which is one key indicator of a post racial Unites States. Obama's election victory has led some in the public to believe that racism is less of an issue than it was prior to Obama's assent to political power.

Omi and Winant's (1996) definition of race moves beyond the two assumptions of race as either an essence and biological or a pure illusion. They describe race as a social force with very real implication for societal relations. The discourse on the blogs I analyzed challenges some of these mainstream assumptions about race. These bloggers

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emphasized the fact that voting for a person of color does not prove that an individual is not a racist. I discovered several related scripts that supported this way of framing racism--racial divide, racial hatred, and stereotyping and racial profiling--that align with Omi and Winant's definition of race and racial identity as different from the phenotype. By drawing attention to this topic, bloggers presented a personal and emotional way of explaining their own social constructions of race, racism, and mixed race identity. This is a sharp contrast to the newspaper discourse, which stressed the importance and possibility of the U.S. progressing past racism.

Rhetoric of race.

The social construction of race occurs through communication; that is, the sources construct frames and audiences respond by reflecting on the symbols used in the framing and these reflections help them to make meaning of the discourses they hear and read. Several rhetorical strategies are embedded in the way sources of messages frame their ideas and how the messages they frame contain an internal logical that reveals the ideology of the newspaper and blog discourses. Both types of media rely on labels and metaphors to construct different rhetorics about race and relate them to Obama's campaign and early presidency and to their own political ideal about race and their own mixed race identity.

Labels. The newspapers and blogs overlap as well as differ in the labels used to discuss race and mixed race identity. Labels are an important aspect of the communicative function of racial identity. Word choice is usually an indication of the way people think about someone who is of two or more races (Rockquemore, 1998).

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While conducting the framing and ideological analyses, I identified various labels that the bloggers used to refer to someone who identifies with more than one race. These bloggers selected a variety of labels to represent their own and their community's racially mixed identity, including beige, biracial, light-skinned-ed, mixed, bicultural, and half. Rooted in the discussion of racial identity is theoretical concept that language and labels used by a group are discursive interpretations of their identity (Burke, 1966; Mokros, 2003). For example, Beige World used the term "beige" to refer to the notion of racial mixture. This is a play on the concept of racial identity represented by a color label that shows the importance of a label has for unifying people previously labeled as separate. It also shows that color inherently contains mixtures or "in between" categories that do not force people into biological and racial color categories of just Black, just White, or just Brown. The beige label represents a mixture of colors that represent how the bloggers view their own identities as mixes or blends that make them unique.

Similarly, Light-skinned-ed Girl places emphasis on skin color to highlight her lived experience. Light-skinned-ed Girl and Mixed Roots bloggers note their preferred racial labels for representing their identities. Light-skinned-ed Girl describes a childhood experience when someone called her "light-skinned-ed" and she has reappropriated the term for her own identity. She states:

> When I claim my light-skinned-ed-ness, it's not to valorize my skin color,
> but to accept the way that in some ways I belong to the world of black
> womanhood. I can look like this and not have to prove my allegiance.
> Yes, well, then why claim it at all? Why not be on firm ground and
> simply identify as a black woman? Many women -- more light-skinned-ed

than I -- have done that through the ages. The answer is simply that it

would negate my actual experience -- it doesn't tell the whole of the story I

want to tell.

It's complicated this naming business. I'm not sure that I've figured it out

completely myself. (Light-Skinned-ed Girl, 2009, "This thing called race,"

para. 4-5)

Without her explanation, her choice of the term 'light-skinned" can be interpreted

as emphasizing a certain privilege assumed in the hierarchy of race, or pigmentocracy.

According to Middleton (2008), pigmentocracy is the belief of a hierarchy in racial

structure is based on skin color gradations. This association with privilege and skin color

is a notion that has socio-historical roots in Black communities. This blogger describes

being told to just claim the label of Black, which speaks to the notion of hypodescent, but

she argues that this label doesn't represent her own experience. Each label is problematic

in its own way, yet the bloggers use labels as a rhetorical strategy to resist the labels of

others and to adopt labels that reflect their personal preferences and their concepts about

their own racial identities.

My framing and ideological analyses shows that newspapers rarely represent or

frame Obama as mixed race, yet the bloggers emphasize his mixed race identity and

associate it with their own. My analysis of newspaper framing analysis demonstrates that

the newspapers typically utilize the labels of "Black" and "African American" to describe

Obama, especially when referring to the historical impact of his presidential election. The

blogs, on the other hand, clearly described Obama using the terms they preferred, such as

the first "beige" president, as biracial, bicultural, and often referring to his "mixed roots."

Newspapers rely on historical and normative labels that appear in current public discourses about race. The bloggers, on the other hand, construct new labels to talk about their own race and apply that to Obama's race. The discourses of the Obama 2008 campaign and presidency enable bloggers to deviate from the common public discourses and permit them to create and appropriate language that reflects their own understanding of race and politics and their own personal identities.

The newspapers and blogs did overlap in the way they described mixed race identity through parentage. What I found was that news articles describe Obama's mixed racial identity by way of his parents. In other words, instead of calling Obama mixed, reporters described his mother as White and his father as African and Black. For example, the *Washington Post* states "Obama, 45 and the son of a black Kenyan man and a white Kansas woman" (Balz & Kornblut, 2007, p. A1). Likewise, blogs use this type of language to express their own racial identities. For example, Mixed Roots blogger states that she is "a biracial woman: having a black father and white mother" ("Where is the Empathy," para. 1). In this case, she identifies herself as biracial, but also adds the explanation of her identity through her parents.

The language used in the newspapers and blogs creates a lens or filter (what Kenneth Burke calls a terministic screen) that screens in some features of a reality and screens out others. For example, when reporters refer to Barack Obama as the "first Black President," their language used refers to his racial identity while simultaneously erasing his mixed race, and any other identities as well. The vocabulary newspaper reporters use to describe mixed race individuals reinforces mainstream terminology and the vocabulary

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of bloggers invents a new vocabulary that accounts for differences in the way they view race and racial identity.

Based on the use of labels and the various ways newspapers and bloggers refer to mixed race identity, my analysis shows how complicated the discussion has become because a lack of language exists to communicate what mixed race is and how it is part of one's identity, social concerns, and public issues. The main rhetorical constraint is that reporters and bloggers lack the nuanced language to talk about mixed race. There is evidence in the blogs that specific word selections can capture the concept of both/and when discussing racial identity. Though the blogs provide new and different labels to express their identities, newspapers rely on public labels that have been used in the past and by other mainstream media. In addition, the blogs are also limited in their way of explaining mixed race to others, and so they connect mixed race to the race of their own parents.

My analysis does not demonstrate that Obama's candidacy and election directly create social change on a large scale. However, my analysis shows that reporters and bloggers did refine the terminology that is typically used to refer to mixed race in ways that have the potential to change labels and phrases about mixed race identity in ways that correspond to nuanced social constructions of race rather than relying and reusing old science and its biological terminology. While terminology in mainstream discourse did not drastically change, the moments from Obama's campaign and election did enable a more nuanced language for addressing race, racism, and mixed race identity.

Metaphors. Metaphors also operate as terministic screens that shape the way mixed race is thought about. The main metaphor that emerged from the newspaper data is

that of Obama as a bridge or in the middle. For example, the New York Times states

Obama as "squarely in the middle of the debate over how to address [race], a living

bridge between whites and blacks still divided by the legacy of slavery and all that came

after it" (Zeleny, 2008, p. A1). According to the news articles, Obama lives in the racial

middle where he can speak to and for White and Black audiences. In an excerpt from the

Washington Post, Obama was described as "uniquely equipped to give this speech" on

race because he is "the child of a mixed-race couple" and "has struggled with this topic

his entire life" (Balz, 2008, p. A4).

The tendency of the news reporters to rely on the Black/White binary allows them

to ignore the contemporary issues of race and racism. The ideology in the newspaper

articles pertaining to a White and Black binary show the need for terms that will mediate

or change the binary. In other words, the bloggers' metaphors of biracial, mixed race or

beige work because they undermine the ideological terminology of biological race and

show that racial identity is a complex and socially constructed identity.

The mixed race and bridge metaphors promote the idea that a mixed race

President, specifically Obama, can and will end racism and the race "problem" in the

United States. This will occur because Obama can become a hybrid hero who will

demonstrate that racial labels do not apply to him, that he can win in spite of his race, and

the way mixed race is conceptualized in the United States. While not belonging

completely to one "side" the mixed race individual is placed in the middle. Those who

identify with more than one race are also expected to act as a bridge that unites races

together. By placing this responsibility on racial mixture, this metaphor is doing two

things. First, it is perpetuating colorblind racism by emphasizing the idea that the

existence of race is the basis for racism. Second, it removes the responsibility of erasing racism from the public overall, and places that responsibility in the mere existence of mixed race people.

Deification. The newspapers and blogs are similar in that both deify Obama by representing him as a larger than life political figure who can change deep-seated ideas about race in the U.S. According to Brookey and Westerfelhaus (2001),"in contrast to demonization, which depicts those outside of culture's center as inferior to those within, deification depicts the culturally marginalized as unrealistically superior in some significant way to those who occupy a culture's center" (pp.143-144). The mainstream newspapers and the alternative blogs included positive portrayals and descriptions of Obama. Based on the framing and ideological analysis, this positive framing demands critical scrutiny to determine how it reinforces the invisibility of Whiteness. On the surface, the blogs and newspapers both seem to celebrate Obama's intelligence, eloquence, and ability to mediate. In fact, both types of accounts frame him as a man who is superior to many other politicians, past and present. They claim he is able to transform a nation into a post-racial society. The blogs reinforce Obama's discursive representation of the mixed race community by eventually labeling him as mixed race, not just Black. As a result, both reporters and bloggers emphasize that Obama represents Blacks and mixed race communities. This hybrid heroism elevates Obama above other political and social celebrities, and thereby removes him from the American mainstream. He is portrayed as someone with power, partially enabled by his mixed race identity and his ability to transcend the racial divide. In this way he is different for an ordinary person and is not as human as they are. For this reason, I claim that both reporters and bloggers

tend to deify Obama when they reinforce the ideology of the hybrid hero, which limits

the extent and frequency of pejorative racial terms and negative conversations about race,

racism, and mixed race.

Agenda Setting

As part of mainstream media, the newspapers reinforce agenda setting theory

particularly as it pertains to political news. Media researchers recognize that media set the

agenda for how media audiences perceive political and societal issues (Dearing &

Rogers, 1996; Shaw and McCombs, 1977). This theory explains that media do not tell

people (including bloggers) what to think, but are very successful in telling people what

to think about (McCombs & Shaw, 1977). Newspapers cannot cover every topic and as a

result have to be selective in what they report. Editors and reporters in mainstream

newspapers serve as gatekeepers, someone who controls information, who make choices

about what and how to report topics. Most importantly, studies show that the more the

media covers a topic, the more important the topic becomes to the public (McCombs &

Shaw, 1972; McCombs, 2004; McNelly & Izcaray, 1986; Wanta & Hu, 1993).

There are two levels of agenda setting that pertain to my study (Littlejohn, 2002).

The first level establishes the general issues that are important. The second level

establishes the parts or aspects of those general issues that are important. For example,

Obama announced his decision to run for president in 2007 in a speech in Springfield,

Illinois. First, the widespread coverage of Obama's announcement established his speech

as an important event and its content as substantive. Second, news reports of his

announcement focused the on the historic implications of Obama's potential election as

president, establishing his race as an important issue. At first, the media highlighted

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Obama's Black identity, not his mixed race identity, framing Obama, should he be elected, as the first Black president. The historical impact of this event was to focus the f political and social discussion on race as much as on political competencies.

In another example, when Obama was asked a question about Professor Gates' arrest at the end of a press conference that was primarily on healthcare, newspaper reporters focused on the last question and Obama's response, establishing Professor Gates' arrest as an important racial rather than a legal issue. The media covered the arrest and Obama's response extensively, framing his remarks as part of the national racial debate and framing Obama's role as mediator in that debate. Race was the issue of the reporters political and media framing more than any other aspect of this press conference. In agenda setting theory, reporters typically frame their news stories in ways that serve the economic interests of the corporate entity that owns their newspapers. They do this by highlighting what will gain audience attention and increase readership. The newspapers frame political news in ways that fit with the goals of making money for the corporations that owns them.

These mainstream newspaper agendas often reinforce dominant ideologies of Black and White as mutually exclusive and hybrid heroism, and they reify the power that mainstream media have in reinforcing and establishing conceptualizations of politics in particular and culture in general. Newspapers are powerful producers and reinforcers of ideology because what mainstream media produce is visible and consumed by a broader audience than alternative media or blogs are. Due to their inherent credibility with subscribers, newspapers present and reinforce dominant ideologies to a large audience while other ideologies are ignored or relegated to the back pages and buried in editorials.

In other words, alternative media, such as blogs, do not have the support of a powerful mainstream industry. However, bloggers serve a particular target audience and occasionally the news reporters use blogs as secondary sources for their own reporting and as a contrast to what the mainstream media report.

Media scholars recognize the existence of multiple ideologies and alternative voices in media (Crumlish, 2004). Nevertheless, these alternative voices do not have the same level of power and therefore cannot make their messages as accessible and widespread as the large-scale newspapers. Moreover, alternative media, in this case blogs, often are identified by the mainstream as outsiders or as radical voices that are discounted to certain degree. In my analysis, the bloggers did question certain mainstream ideologies in the newspapers and promoted an anti-racist stance that served as a challenge to the colorblind ideology. Bloggers also functioned in a different way than mainstream media because they appealed to the personal and the experiential, they could attract an audience interested in mixed race issues that is quite different from the political audience of the mainstream media.

The blogs offer a citizen-centered framing of discourse on race, mixed race, and racism by emphasizing dialogue, awareness, and activism. In one sense, these blogs function as a means for democracy because they cultivate decentralized citizen centered approach to information as opposed to top-down approach found in newspapers (Meraz, 2009). The interactive format design of blogs supports participation, citizen-to-citizen dialogue, alliance building, and community, and leads to a shift from top-down control (Haas, 2005; Meraz, 2009). The alliance and community building are parts of how the blogs I analyzed construct their identity as mixed race and connect with Obama's

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political campaign and election.

Newspapers and blogs reinforce and deviate from each other in the way that they present information as well as the type of information. Blogs often reinforce newspapers, but the newspapers very rarely referenced blogs. Instead the quotations from the people that the reporters interviewed provided evidence to showcase public opinions regarding Obama and race. As a result, reporters do not quote people that represent divergent opinions from the newspaper's perspective, since the newspapers are expected to remain objective since the newspapers try to frame the content of their news from the point of view of the corporations that own the newspapers and the readers that subscribe to them.

To be clear, this is not "citizen's journalism" since the blogs used for this study are not, and do not claim to be, political or news blogs. Rather these blogs discuss various topics, from personal to political and do so by emphasizing their mixed race identity. Their ability to do so without the constraint of editors, objective expectations, or credentials enables bloggers to voice a unique personal and political perspective in relation to the key discursive moments of Obama's campaign and early presidency.

The newspapers and blogs deviate from each other in the way that they discuss information. For example, the newspapers need to have an objective stance when reporting on the events highlighted in this dissertation. Blogs, on the other hand, are not held to this standard and many of the blog posts in this study take a personalized and subjective approach to race and politics. The blogs and newspapers disseminate information in different ways. While they both have the idea of an audience and the goal capturing the audience's attention, the reporters are guided by editors and newspaper standards in what they need to cover, whereas, blogs in this study are not confined to any

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journalistic principles. The blogs are able to cover whichever topic they choose in whatever way they choose. They are their own editor. As a result, the blogs work to highlight racist discourse in the way of their choosing.

These two types of media work in an interactive way in that the blogs hyperlink to news articles. In other words, when writing a blog post, the blogger can reference an article and provide the link to that news article within the text of the blog post. This means that the blogs further disseminate the information, along with dominant ideologies, in their blogs by leading readers to the news articles. The mainstream news media frame information in certain ways that are appropriated and sometimes are reframed by bloggers. For example, in the Professor Gates controversy, the newspapers made statements questioning whether his arrest is evidence of racial profiling, leaving the audience to decide whether this is evidence of racism. The blogs link to articles on this topic and present their own interpretation and conclude that this is in fact racism and give their personal accounts that describe racial profiling in their own lives.

Evidence of agenda setting also surfaces in the way mainstream media discuss each of the four pivotal moments addressed in this study. The more the newspapers report on Obama and race, the more the bloggers post their reaction to and opinion about Obama. Again, the newspapers are not telling the blogger what to think, but are clearly setting the agenda for what bloggers should think about and influencing the content of the blogs.

Four Pivotal Moments in Discourses on Mixed Race

The data for this study centers on four pivotal discourses in the Obama era. In this section I revisit each of the four moments to examine what each reveals about discourse

on race, mixed race, and racism on these blogs and newspapers. These occurrences are moments created by pivotal public discourses that produce media conversations on race. This dissertation used four critical discourse moments in the Obama era as parameters for context. The four discourses are (1) Obama's 2008 candidacy announcement, (2) his March 18, 2008, speech on race, (3) the 2008 presidential election, and (4) his July 22, 2009, response to the incident about Professor Gates. This section revisits each of the events and addresses how these Obama era moments stimulated conversations about race, mixed race, and racism. The issue of race emerged as a key themes in Obama's candidacy announcement. He demonstrated that race is a legitimate topic and that it should be addressed. He allowed the public to engage in conversations about race, first as a descriptor for a historical moment during his election and later as an expression of disappointment after the Gates incident.

Obama's 2008 presidential candidacy announcement is the first event I emphasize. This announcement was how Obama officially declared his status as a presidential candidate. Though there was no direct reference to racial identity in Obama's announcement, this moment initiated news content about his race and his political importance as a "Black" presidential candidate. As a result, this moment stimulated several conversations about race in the newspapers. First, Obama's candidacy was framed as a historic moment because describing him as Black. For example, in one article, the reporter states, "other African Americans who have run for president have demonstrated some of the same qualities and abilities. But none has displayed them in the same measure and with the same flair as Obama" ("Obama just might," February 11, 2007, para. 5).

Although all four newspapers addressed Obama's speech multiple times, the blogs did not focus as much attention on this moment. Of the four blogs, only one made mention of Obama near the time of his candidacy announcement. Twisted Curlz mentioned that Obama was in the news shortly before his announcement. The other blogs discussed personal narratives unrelated to the moment. After the announcement, Twisted Curlz blog post primarily discussed mixed race identity and racism:

> And so it has begun: the talk of whether a biracial/bicultural candidate is black enough to appeal to black voters. Barack Obama is one of the few black presidential candidates the mainstream media (aka the MSM) have deemed viable. Remember Alan Keyes, Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton? (It's almost painful to put Jackson in the same sentence since I think more voters took him seriously than they did the other two.) But here we are with an identifiably biracial man, and the measurement of blackness is being discussed in the MSM. (Twisted Curlz, 2007, "One Drop Not Enough?" para. 1)

In this excerpt the blogger comments on the topic of Obama's Blackness as it was presented in newspapers. Though the newspapers and blog both mention that Obama is not like other candidates of color, there is a difference in the way each discusses his race. The newspapers highlight his race as Black whereas the blog describes him as biracial.

There are a few reasons that explain the absence of blog posts regarding the candidacy announcement. First, the nature of blogs is that they are not required to discuss particular topics, it's up to the blogger to decide if and what they will blog about. As a result the bloggers blog on what is most salient to them at the time. As more discussions

on race, mixed race, and racism began to circulate in the news, it seems that the blogs

chimed in more to the conversation. Also, as the 2008 presidential election became more

eventful, the blogs also discussed their political preferences, expressed their opinions, and

continued to disseminate news information by linking news articles in their blog posts.

Again, giving evidence to agenda setting by the newspapers.

The second discursive moment is the March 18, 2008, speech titled "A More

Perfect Union," which often referred to as Obama's speech on race. This speech centered

on race and was a response to criticism that his pastor, Reverend Jeremiah Wright, was

himself a racist. In his response, Obama explained his own racial identities, noting "I am

the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas" (para. 8). This

particular speech led to conversations about race and racist rhetoric in newspapers and

blogs.

The newspapers and blogs discuss Obama's role in stimulating a conversation

about race when they point out race is not typically discussed in mainstream (read:

White) audiences, but usually confined to Black audiences (Mitchell, 2008). The

newspapers and the blogs acknowledge the stereotyping that occurs with public figures of

color. The *New York Times* describes Obama's campaign as one that was supposed to

"transcend the issue of race" and "try to build a broad coalition of racial and ethnic

groups favoring change" (Scott, 2008, p. A14). Through his speech, newspapers indicate

Obama is getting away from the typical Black politician, "in the issues he has

emphasized and the language he has used, as well as in the way he has presented himself,

he has worked to elude pigeonholing as a black politician" (Scott, 2008, p. A14). In the

same way, the blogs highlighted Obama's ability to challenge stereotypes. Light-skinned-

ed Girl states, "Obama has defied traditional categories of black people in the American imagination. His highly-regarded speech on race--reasoned and eloquent--made it difficult to stick him with the Radical Black label" (Light-skinned-ed Girl, 2008,"An Interruption," para. 2). This content is important because the blogs and the newspapers both identify particular and assumed parameters of race, specifically Blackness. When they speak about Obama and his speech on race, he is characterized as different from other politicians, and other Black media/political representations, and not able to categorized using certain stereotypes.

The implication from the conversation on race and racism that emerged from this event show that there are differences in perceptions of what it means to talk about race. Blogs and newspapers describe Obama's speech as effective because Obama did not take an angry approach. Additionally, the newspapers and blogs describe his speech on race as an opportunity to start a conversation on race without feeling bad or fear of sounding offensive, implying that race as a topic of discussion has a negative connotation, fraught with guilt for Whites and anger for Blacks. According to these media, Obama was able to address this topic without presenting his own anger or igniting White guilt.

The third moment is Obama's election. On November 4, 2008, Obama was elected President of the United States. This event was widely covered in newspapers and celebrated in the blogs. Both bloggers and newspaper reporters describe his election as historic, but they differ in which aspects they highlight as historic. The blogs addressed these issues by noting their personal impact and their impact on the mixed race community. Newspapers stressed the historical need for erasing racism and changing the meaning of racism for African Americans.

During coverage of Obama's election, the blogs wrote about racism at both the systemic and individual level. The newspapers associate racism with individuals not with the political and social systems. For example, a *New York Time*s article discussed issues of racism among voters and incorporated the following interview:

"For a long time, I couldn't ignore the fact that he was black, if you know what I mean," Mr. Sinitski, the heating and air-conditioning technician, told me. "I'm not proud of that, but I was raised to think that there aren't good black people out there. I could see that he was highly intelligent, and that matters to me, but my instinct was still to go with the white guy." (Sokolove, 2008, p. WK1)

By using words and phrases from individuals, the newspapers present various perspectives and let the conversation of racism remain at the individual level.

The fourth pivotal moment is the Professor Gates police profiling incident and Obama's response on July 22, 2009. In his response, Obama claimed, "that the Cambridge police acted" (para. 182) Obama's specific response was reframe this public controversy by providing a concrete example of race and discrimination in the United States.

The blogs and newspapers differed greatly in the way that they addressed this particular event. For the newspapers, this event was a revelation, a controversial moment that was meant to spark conversation. For example, a *Washington Post* article noted that this event stimulated thought about race: "Residents of Gates' neighborhood, mostly upper-middle-class whites and a transient but diverse group of students in university housing, have begun pondering the meaning of the incident" (Thompson & Thompson,

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2009, p. A1). The news reporters described the arrest as something that unearthed racism and as a singular event that may have suppressed or forgotten historical links.

The blogs, on the other hand, discussed this event not as a singular but as a drop in the bucket that is racism in the United States. This event was not seen as a surprise or as a way to start a conversation. This event is part of an ever-present ongoing conversation in communities of color. Obama's response reflected the sentiments of those community conversations. While the newspapers adopted a viewpoint of surprise and perhaps of seeing something new, the bloggers did not express surprise about Gates' arrest or for Obama's response, but they did express anger and complain that this was another example of ongoing racism.

Conclusion

The blogs and news articles are different forms of media that provide a way to look at the current conceptualization of race, racism, and mixed race in the United States. The way race was socially constructed in the news articles and blogs indicates that there are tensions in the way various media outlets conceptualize race. Mainly, the conversations on race are limited in their scope because race and racism are used interchangeably. The newspapers conceptualize race as equating racism. Since the newspapers are widespread and dominant, they are able to reinforce fear of race as a topic of conversation, which is problematic and makes discussions on race at a societal level more difficult. It is important to talk about racism when talking about race, but there is a clear distinction between the two. Race and racism are conflated, while the notion of mixed race is meant to equal post racial and post racist. The notion of the mixed race hero does not unify, but simply shifts responsibility from everyone *erasing racism* to mixed

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race individuals *erasing race*. This responsibility is seen in the way that Obama is deified

as a hybrid hero. The blogs challenge some dominant assumptions but also reinforce

mainstream ideologies by linking and leading readers to the articles. This chapter sorted

the implications of the ideological and framing analysis in reference to the theoretical and

rhetorical features from an interpretive and critical perspective by addressing how race is

socially constructed.

CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes my study. First, I revisit the research questions,

contributions to understanding political discourse and the public and private sphere

conversations. Then, I explain the contributions to theory, method, and my final thoughts.

Not only is this study timely, but the findings from both the framing, ideological and

rhetorical analyses are significant. The primary goal of this dissertation is to examine

how media conversations construct mixed race identity in significant events in the Obama

campaign and during the first months of his presidency. This study examines the ways

newspapers and blogs construct discourses on mixed race identity, race, and racism

through framing and ideological analyses that I combine together in my rhetorical

method.

Findings

The summary of findings related to the each of the four discursive moments derive

from the analyses the interpretation of the blogs and newspapers. Answers to the first

research question, the subset questions, and the second question result from the framing

and ideological analyses of the data. The answer to the third, fourth, and fifth questions

develop from the interpretation of the newspaper and blog content.

RQ1: How do pivotal discourses during Obama's campaign and early presidency

stimulate conversations about race, mixed race identity, racism?

This study focuses on four discourse moments during Obama's campaign and

early presidency. I selected these pivotal discourses because of the common themes of

racial identity, media responses to these controversies created by the discourses, the news

content of these discourses elicited about race, and links of media conversations to political themes. The four discourses are (1) Obama's 2008 candidacy announcement, (2) his March 18, 2008, speech on race, (3) the 2008 presidential election, and (4) his July 22, 2009 response to the incident about Professor Gates. Each of these contributed to numerous media constructions of Obama's mixed race identity and public consciousness about racial identity. Each of the pivotal discourses during Obama's campaign and early presidency stimulate conversations about race, mixed race identity, racism primarily through the framing analysis. These questions regarding the frames in the newspapers and blogs reveal the content of media conversations about race, mixed race, and racism.

RQ1a: How do newspapers frame race and mixed race identity?

As the source of the content of media message, the newspapers framed race and mixed race identity in three main ways. The first frame in the news coverage from the discursive moments is Obama as racialized. The frames include racializing Obama, reinforcing the scientific myth of race as biological, and the false claim that the United States can progress past racism.

Several news articles emphasize Obama's race as African American. Since Obama is considered the first Black president, his racial identity is obviously salient to news frames. Typically, when a news articles describes Obama's racial identity, it does so by describing his mother as White and his father as African and Black. His mixed race identity becomes politically salient when the news articles highlight his ability to speak to both Blacks and Whites because they assume he understands both perspectives from his mixed race heritage. A few of the articles framed race as biological through words such

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as "genetic" and references to "blood." In this case, the newspapers framed race in terms of a genetic percentage, a common frame borrowed from scientific approach to race.

The second frame is the dialogue frame. The repetitive use of such words clearly communicates a message about the importance of dialogue in the United States when it comes to topics of race and racism. Although several of the reporters frame the racial dialogue as progress created by Obama's speech on race, other reporters state the importance of dialogue in relation to other discursive moments, such as Professor Gates' arrest, Obama's announcement of candidacy, and his speech on race. Newspaper reporters frame these moments as catalysts for a national conversation on race: they indicate that these conversations do not occur otherwise. An interesting aspect of this frame is that the media locate Obama as the mediator in this debate/dialogue. By placing Obama in the middle of the discussion because of his racial mixture, the media connect the conversation about race and racism to Obama's leadership responsibilities.

The newspaper reporters also frame events in terms of history, either by relating some aspect of the event to past events or by referring to an event as an historic moment in its own right. Several of the articles refer to past events in order to describe the discursive moments related to Obama. Creating public memory from actions of political figures and events reinforces nationalistic values at the same time that is recollects violations of those values. Public memory about the United States racial conflicts of the past lives on through memorials and stories. Such references to past events of racial conflict contextualize the current event and also help the reader to emphasize the historical significance and potential that a new political era and a young visionary leader may have.

In addition to infusing their framing of news stories about the discursive moments with references to historical events of the past, news reporters also describe these moments as being historic because there is no doubt that Obama's campaign and election as president and that this is a significant moment in the United States political and social history. The news articles reinforce a particular meaning of these events involving Obama. The historical framing emphasizes the distinction between Obama as a potential candidate, the possibility of his election, and the significance his election would have for the future of politics in the United States.

RQ1b: How do blogs frame race, mixed race, and racism?

The bloggers are individuals who identify as mixed race so it is predictable that they would construct a generally favorable and positive image about the Obama in its coverage of the various moments. Three dominant frames emerged from the discourse on the blog posts: awareness, personalization, and racism. The awareness frame demonstrates that bloggers try to build community through an online medium. The bloggers posts not only disseminated information about news and celebrities, but they also established a platform for conversation about mixed race.

The personalization frame is based on a combination of the bloggers' opinions, stories, and personal experiences. The bloggers usually articulate their own racial identity and then provide context to the topics they choose to address in their blogs. One of the most prominent ways that bloggers personalized their posts is through their statements of their connection to Obama's race. Either through the campaign or the election, several of the bloggers discussed not only their admiration, but also their personal connection since

he is mixed race. By using this subjective approach and a personal and supportive tone emerge sentiments of race and racism.

The language of challenging or uncovering racism also emerged from the four blogs. In contrast to the discourse in the news articles, which emphasizes the idea of progressing past racism, the bloggers often point out, respond to, and challenge issues of racism. The bloggers reinforce the belief that voting for a Black president does not prove that an individual is not racist. The racism frame highlights issues in which a separation exists regarding race, racism, and voting. The blog content directly challenges the idea that the U. S. is progressing past racism. Instead several of the bloggers identified and responded to racist public discourse. The bloggers refer to the importance of understanding recent incidents of the United States' racist history in order to understand the public beliefs and attitudes about racism. The blogs challenge the belief that voting for a Black president does not prove that an individual is not racist. By uncovering colorblind racism the blogs challenge the mainstream frame that the U. S. is progressing past racism.

The bloggers frame racism as an ongoing and systemic issue and use the platform of their blog to challenge racist discourse. The basis of this frame is to present opinions on certain events, and also to provide historical context when nuanced discussions of the issues of race and racism are missing from the mainstream discourse but present in many people's understanding of race.

RQ2: What ideologies about race, racism, and mixed race emerge from newspapers and blogs?

Newspapers.

Whereas framing explains how the sources of the message construct content, ideology emphasizes the internal logic that is embedded in the message content. My analysis shows that framing and ideology are related. Although framing comes from the sources imposing their rhetorical slant on their construction of the message, ideology includes assumptions, beliefs, and systems of belief that are embedded in the internal logic of the message and are constructed through interaction of audiences with messages. Several ideologies emerge from news coverage on the four discursive moments: invisibility of Whiteness, Black and White binary, hybrid heroism, and erasure of racism. Reporters assume the invisibility of Whiteness, an ideology that emerged from the newspaper article, which demonstrating that ideology white dominance is invisible. Also, the underlying public assumption is that Black television can be identified as racialized, but "mainstream" media are considered race free.

The news reporters perpetuate an assumption that talking about racism is just referring to the inequalities of the past in which White privilege placed Blacks in a subordinate social position. The tendency of the news reporters to rely on the Black/White binary allows them to ignore the contemporary issues of race and racism. Reporters associate race with having only two sub-groups, and all others they leave out in their news stories. This binary and its salience in the news articles are problematic because reporters address racism as only Black and White, and in doing so they ignore other racial histories and other groups and their problems with racism, which keeps the

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debate simple as opposed to complicating it reflecting critically on the United States racial history.

Hybrid heroism encapsulates the belief that prominent mixed race individuals will end racism in the United States. Erasing racism refers to the public ideological belief that racism can be eradicated by Obama's election. This ideology is a direct opposition to the tragic mulatto stereotype. The hybrid concept is a heroic savior type of person who will use his or her power and popularity to change permanently the ideas about race. Using Obama as the answer to Dr. King's dream is one way that the public constructs the metaphorical "bridge" between Black and White that supports this ideology. Hybrid heroism ideology emphasizes the idea that Obama's hybridity positions him as a leader who can bring racial unity and harmony to the United States.

The last ideology that emerged from the analysis of the news articles was that of erasing racism. This ideology mainly focuses on the idea that practices of racism can be eradicated by Obama's election. The newspaper reporters assume that a Black president will cure the United States' racial wounds and that the existence of race leads to racism, as opposed to looking at the actual issues of racism. This sounds progressive and perhaps seems like the way to eradicate racism, but I argue that this is "faux progress" because it allows covert racism at the institutional level to continue. Individuals, however, who are mixed race still must take on the difficult task of dealing with racism through mere existence. Taken together, the ideologies of invisibility of Whiteness, Black/White binary, hybrid heroism, and erasing racism all maintain colorblind racism.

Blogs.

The blogs advocated Obama as a political leader and a charismatic national leader while emphasizing the importance of mixed race identity. Three ideologies emerged from the blogs: Obama for President, mixed race matters, and anti-racist work. Obama for President is discourse that supports and defends Obama's candidacy, election, and presidency.

All of the bloggers showed their support for Obama through his election and presidency and acted upon the ideology that Obama will be a competent and inspirational President. The Obama for President ideology was evident in discourses of support as well as discourses of defense. Discourses of support surfaced in each of the blogs in distinct ways, and some of the bloggers overtly asserted their partiality for Obama. The bloggers also defended Obama, sometimes to the point of attacking others. Bloggers upheld the ideology that Obama is the best choice for presidential leadership. The blogs ask the readers to accept the claim that Obama is mistreated and a victim of subversive racism, a fact that needs to be acknowledged by the public.

The second ideology that emerged from the analysis of the blog posts was mixed race matters. Each of the blogs assumed mixed race identity is important, should be discussed, and is unique. This is inherent in the nature of the blogs selected for analysis. Bloggers expressed the significance of their mixed race identity by linking it to the public acceptance and the emphasis of Obama as mixed race. They also advocated for more awareness of mixed race issues, specifically describing themselves in relation to Barack Obama. Since Obama does not directly identify as mixed race, for these bloggers, his acknowledgement of his mixed roots allowed them to relate to and advocate mixed race

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issues. The bloggers' acceptance of their own mixed race identity exists through, and perhaps, because of Barack Obama.

Several of the blogs addressed racist discourse in the news and defended Obama. The bloggers also discussed racism claiming that though it exists they still hope that racism can be erased, by providing evidence of racism and exposing it. The ideology of their anti racist work begins with identifying and calling out racism. By bringing attention to issues of racism, not just race, the bloggers vocalize the need for anti-racist work. Bloggers reinforce the idea that President Obama does not claim racism has ended.

Ideological analysis allowed me to uncover several ideologies about race, mixed race, and racism in these discursive content of the newspapers and blogs. The newspapers perpetuated the invisibility of Whiteness, Black and White binary, hybrid heroism, and erasure of racism ideologies. Their bloggers' expression of preferences for Obama as President, the salience of mixed race matters, and their promotion of anti-racist rhetoric are part of the ideological content.

RQ3: How do media discourses contribute to constructions of race?

The way race is socially constructed in the news articles and blogs indicates tensions in the way various media outlets conceptualize racial identity. Both types of media construct different rhetorics about race and relate them to Obama's campaign and early presidency and to their own political ideals about race and their own mixed race identity. My analysis revealed two main constructions in the newspapers: the first construction is that race is biological and divides society into racial groups that differ from one another; and the second is that post-racial United States is ideal and possible.

The bloggers construct their identity as mixed race and connected it with Obama's political campaign and election, and in the process forge alliances and build community.

The newspaper reporters and bloggers differ in the labels they use to discuss race and mixed race identity. Labels are an important rhetorical feature of racial identity construction. The bloggers selected a variety of labels to represent their own and their community's racially mixed identity. The newspapers typically utilized historical and normative labels of "Black" and "African American" to describe Obama. The bloggers, on the other hand, constructed new labels to talk about their own race and applied these labels to Obama's race. The discourses of the Obama 2008 campaign and presidency enabled bloggers to deviate from the common public discourses and permitted them to use language that reflects their own understanding of race and politics.

RQ4: In what ways do the constructions suggest the possibility of a post-racial United States?

A post-racial society is one in which the problem of race no longer exists because members of the society have transcended race. The blogs and newspapers differ in their beliefs about a in a post-racial society. The newspaper reporters construct race in a way that idealizes a post-racial United States by perpetuating the idea that race is a problem and by claiming the way to solve the problem is to no longer to consider race important. The newspapers reinforce the belief that voting for a Black President proves that an individual is not racist, whereas these bloggers emphasize the fact that voting for a person of color does not prove that an individual is not a racist. The newspaper articles uphold colorblind racism by framing the discourse moments as evidence of progressing past racism. This framing minimizes the intricate and complicated nature of racism. The blogs

challenged covertly racist ideologies presented in the newspapers, and they instead promoted an anti-racist stance that disputes the ideal of a past-racial society.

The newspapers place Obama in the middle of a racial divide by characterizing him as the hybrid hero who will lead the United States to post-racial society. Placing this responsibility on a person who is from a mixed race background perpetuates colorblind racism and emphasizes the idea that the existence of race is the basis for racism. This attribution also removes the responsibility of erasing racism from the public and society and places that responsibility on mixed race people.

RQ5: How do newspapers and blogs set agendas that reinforce and oppose each other?

As part of mainstream media, the newspapers reinforce some concepts of agenda setting theory. These mainstream newspaper agendas often reinforce dominant ideologies and they reify the power that mainstream media have in reinforcing and establishing conceptualizations of politics in particular and culture in general. Due to their credibility with the public, newspaper reporters present and reinforce dominant ideologies for their audiences. Bloggers do not have the same level of power and therefore cannot disseminate their messages as widely as the large-scale newspapers do. The bloggers can set an agenda for their readers by questioning certain mainstream ideologies in the newspapers and promoting an anti-racist stance that challenges the colorblind ideology. Bloggers also functioned differently than mainstream newspapers do because they appeal to the personal and the experiential and construct a citizen-centered framing of discourse on race, mixed race, and racism by emphasizing dialogue, awareness, and activism. In one sense, these blogs function as a means for deliberative democracy because they

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cultivate a decentralized citizen-centered approach for information that opposes and sometimes challenges the to top-down approach found in newspapers (Meraz, 2009).

The blogs and newspapers disseminate information in different ways. Reporters are guided by editorial policies and newspaper standards in what political information they need to cover and how they cover it; whereas bloggers are not confined to any explicit journalistic principles. The bloggers cover whichever topics interest them in their message constructions, that is, they are their own editors. As a result, bloggers work address race, racism, and racist discourse in ways of that they believe and relevant to their respective situations.

Contributions

This study generates new knowledge and insights into the construction of racial identity in newspapers and blogs as well as acknowledges the influence that political figures have on these constructions. I show theoretical distinctions between framing and ideology in media and note ways that the two rhetorical constructions work together. The contributions are substantive because they contribute new knowledge on race, mixed race, and racism in public discourse. In this section, I address the contributions for understanding discourse race, racism, and mixed race in public and private spheres as well as contributions to communication theory and methods.

This study explores the connection between a presidential campaign and early presidency discourses as political moments that influence mainstream newspapers and alternative blog conversations on race. Throughout the campaign, the 2008 election, and as president, Obama's political journey was intertwined with race. This study emphasizes these connections in a way that have not been done before. By juxtaposing the framing

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and ideology in the mainstream newspapers and the blogs, I was able to show direct correlations and oppositions in the way that each medium articulates the importance of race, the reality of racism, and the role of mixed race individuals.

There are a few political and social advantages from of politicizing of race in public sphere discussions in the mainstream news media and in private sphere discussions on blogs. While the blogs and news articles are different in format style and purpose, taken together they participate in ongoing conversations that impact other political and social discourses on race and mixed race. The bloggers respond to and make comments on the news articles, giving an anti-racist perspective that challenges dominant colorblind ideologies. The bloggers also acknowledge the importance of having a place to express, share, build community and challenge mainstream discourses. This study highlights the importance the blogs have for mixed individuals. The blogs allow them to connect with others who may be experiencing the same thing, share the same beliefs, and relate to a celebrity/public official who is successful. Additionally, bloggers challenge many of the tragic mulatto stereotypes that other media often construct.

There are also disadvantages for politicizing of race for public sphere discussions in the mainstream news media and for private sphere discussions on blogs. The main disadvantage is that newspapers perpetuate colorblind racism that masks as progressive discourse on race, mixed race, and racism and actually reinforces White dominance. The second disadvantage is that the blogs are unable to challenge the dominant ideologies of mainstream newspapers without also further disseminating the newspaper articles. This study reveals that bloggers rely much more on newspapers than newspapers rely on blogs for information.

My initial research focus was on mixed race identity. While conducting this study I found intersections between the various subthemes of race. For example, I found that arguments about racism combine and alter arguments about mixed race. In other words, one argumentation in the newspapers was that biological racial mixing would erase race, and as a result, eradicate racism. I also show that knowledge about Martin Luther King Jr. surfaces as a symbol of the vision for a non-racist society in both blogs and newspapers. The image of MLK promotes justice and gives hope for the end of racism. Through this interpretation of newspapers and blogs, I conceptualize mixed race identity and Obama through the development of the hybrid hero, who Obama is one answer to Dr. King's dream.

This study offers new insights on the way that dominant race ideologies are perpetuated and reinforced in mainstream news. This study reveals that race is constructed as biological and divisive as well as something that can and should be erased. The newspapers present these seemingly oppositional constructions of race, when in fact, they both serve to reinforce dominance and maintain the status quo. I also contribute to critical understanding of race by linking deification, post-racial society, and mixed race identity. Through deification, reinforces post-racial belief.

Finally, my study contributes to the academic research on Barack Obama. He is a public figure that has impacted and challenged discourse on race, racism, and mixed race identity. This study is timely in that the pivotal discourse moments are relatively recent events and the impact of this discourse continues to have ramifications in current political and social media.

Contributions to theory

This study provides additional insights into existing rhetorical and media theories. Rhetorical theory emphasizes the way in which symbols help construct social and political public opinion and social identity. My study uses the rhetorical perspective on language and labels that sheds light on how the use of symbols influences the public conceptualizations of race and mixed race through the way media sources frame messages and through the ideological content that is embedded in what is included and what is excluded from the messages. This study shows how labels, names, and rhetorical devices infuse newspaper and blog discourses on race and racism. Specifically, I detailed the differences in the newspapers and blogs use racial labels and uncovered new labels, such as beige and light-skinned-ed, that are used by mixed race individuals to increase understanding of how various labels matter to conversations on race.

This study also contributes to contemporary media theory, specifically public opinion formation that is influenced by media agenda-setting and framing. Agenda setting theory emphasizes how media frames tell audiences how to think about political information and political news (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). My study indicates that public opinion and political knowledge construction are not just a top-down process in which newspapers framing political information. The bloggers' discourse on Obama's mixed race identity, racial constructions, and racism provided information from the grass roots. I uncover the media conversations that take place in news and blogs contain rhetorical features, and newspapers and blogs reinforce each other's issues and points of view and when they construct consciousness about race, racialization, and the racial state in the United States.

Contributions to method

This study is unique because of the methodological approach. The two levels of analysis, framing and ideological analysis, when conducted together allow for a nuanced approach to the data so that multiple connections can be made between what is obvious in the discourse and what is sometimes hidden. My study is innovative because it maps the different rhetoric of messages about mixed race identity by looking at the underlying language and strategies in the content of media messages. The combination of mediums is also somewhat innovative approach because the newspaper articles are third-party accounts of Obama's action not, as with the blogs, first-person accounts of experiences and their affects on racial and mixed-race identity. The media data I use for this study are representative of different contributions to the public conversations about race, ranging from those who self-identify as mixed race of for whom race is a major part of their identities, to sources that discuss this topic in regard to others.

Future Research

Since research is an always-evolving process, there are some aspects of this study where I can expand on in future research. Research could continue to contribute to academic knowledge on race, mixed race, and racism by expanding the type of data used for analysis. Specifically, the bloggers selected in this study are all women and all identify as Black and White. Future studies could look at male bloggers, various racial identities, and perhaps blogs that are only dedicated to political news. In addition, Obama's avowed and ascribed identity is complex and perhaps one of the drawbacks of the blogs is that they impose their own ascription of Obama as mixed, despite his avowing a Black identity. Future research could focus strictly on Obama's discourse on

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race, mixed race, and racism to see if he upholds traditional racial constructions or challenges these assumptions. After the election, many conservative media and blogs continued to deal with Obama's race as part of what has become known as the "birther movement." These sources obviously were dissatisfied with Obama's election and framed their dissatisfaction as doubt that he was born in the U.S. and belief that he was born in Africa and that he was really an African Muslim, a fact that could be proved if he were born in Africa. While this veiled racism continued after the election, I did not discuss this in my dissertation. This birther movement does show how discussions of race, racism, and mixed race continue in other media and try to reset the agenda about how people think about race. I would like to look at this kind of media response in future research.

Final Thoughts

I opened this dissertation with a quote from Barack Obama "change has come to America" because this represents the hope that we have placed in the hybrid hero. Change has and has not come to America. I started this process with the hopes that perhaps change would be apparent in the data, but instead found that the same discourse continues as covert racism permeates our news institutions and is challenged by at the individual level in the blogosphere

Sometimes it is difficult to figure out how something like this dissertation could have any impact or influence. After attending a session at a university on the topic of mixed race identity, where students who identify with more that one race discussed various topics such as: how they identify; what they feel about the question "what are you?;" and how they deal with group/club affiliations when they may not phenotypically

be associated with the group, I was inspired to see that this topic is pertinent and important. Through this process in conducting this study, I have gained knowledge about how to talk about the complexities and beauty of mixed race identity for myself and how the media deals with mixed race identity of public figures.

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