

PATHOS IN INCOME TAX DEBATES: THE “AMERICAN DREAM” AS *PATHEME*

by

WILLIAM EDWIN MOSLEY-JENSEN

(Under the Direction of EDWARD PANETTA)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation theorizes the *patheme*, a new rhetorical figure most simply defined as an emotionally full signifier. The method used to theorize this figure is applied rhetorical history with a focus on the *pathos* of significant public address deliberating about the income tax. The findings of the rhetorical history are then synthesized with theoretical approaches to emotion and metaphor to craft the theory of the *patheme*. Beginning with the proposal of the first peacetime income tax in 1894, this project’s analysis continues through 2013 with President Obama’s campaign for “A Better Bargain for the Middle Class.” This analysis tracks the oscillation of public feelings about the nation and the place of the individual in upholding national values. Tracing the tension between justice and virtue, which is expressed in income tax deliberations, illuminates shifting attitudes towards the “American Dream.” President Obama deploys the “American Dream” as a *patheme* in order to unify conflicting approaches to the Dream, emphasizing a democratically secured virtuous individualism.

INDEX WORDS: pathos, patheme, income tax, deliberation, public address, rhetoric, rhetorical theory, rhetorical history, emotion, persuasion, affect, Teddy Roosevelt, FDR, JFK, Reagan, Obama

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In July of 2013 President Obama kicked off a campaign entitled “A Better Bargain for the Middle Class.” He did so with a speech delivered at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois outlining his agenda for the economic future of the United States. The speech discusses how to recapture the basic bargain where an individual’s hard work pays off by propelling them into the middle class. For Obama a key barrier to address is the increasing wealth inequality in the U.S., which has been exacerbated by a number of factors including tax cuts for wealthy individuals. The speech proposes a number of policies designed to remedy economic inequality and promote upward mobility including income tax reform. Obama justifies his economic approach by appealing to “what makes this country special – the idea that no matter who you are or what you look like or where you come from or who you love, you can make it if you try.”¹ For Obama this is “the American Dream”² and is “what we’re fighting for.”³ This statement fits into a rich rhetorical history of negotiations over the income tax and the implication that the status of the American Dream has on their outcome. These negotiations occur in political dialogue in the United States as a central part of the dispute regarding the role of government and the importance of the individual. The disputants simultaneously modify and rely on the emotional commitment to competing visions of social reality, either justice promoted through government secured equality of opportunity or prosperity manifested through the exercise of virtuous individualism.

¹ Obama, Barack H., "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

When evaluating the arguments that have been made for and against the income tax one is struck by the quick departure from a paradigm of economic rationality.⁴ In the debate over the very first peacetime income tax proposal in 1894 Representatives William Jennings Bryan (D-NE) and Bourke Cockran (D-NY) grappled over the meaning and future of the country, not simply the economics of a 2% tax on incomes over \$4,000 (over \$100,000 in 2010 inflation adjusted values).⁵ Bryan declared he was “clad in the armor of a righteous cause,”⁶ while Cockran argued such an income tax would be a “betrayal of our ancient principles.”⁷ Their perspective is characteristic of the challengers and defenders of the income tax throughout time. In 1935 Franklin Delano Roosevelt called the income tax “the most effective instrument yet devised”⁸ to promote a just society, while 50 years later Ronald Reagan lamented “our tax system has come to be un-American.”⁹ The rhetoric surrounding income taxes is not generally a cool economic analysis but often passionate articulations of the effect on the country and the hope for a better life. It is this hope for a better life that Obama is discussing when he mentions the “American Dream” in 2013.

The rhetorical entanglement of income taxes and the American Dream is the subject of this project. The starting point for the rhetorical analysis is 1894, nearly 4 decades before the phrase “American Dream” was popularized in 1931 by James Truslow Adams. At its base the American Dream is a vision of economic success for both the country and the individual. Despite

⁴ The consensus conceptualization of economic rationality is that “every person is supposed to behave as a rational maximizer, which entails the calculation of the gains and losses from every economic decision one takes. This is the widely portrayed image of the *homo economicus*” (Zouboulakis, Michel. *The Varieties of Economic Rationality: From Adam Smith to Contemporary Behavioural and Evolutionary Economics*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2014, p. 1).

⁵ Sahr, Robert C., "Consumer Price Index (Cpi) Conversion Factors 1774 to Estimated 2022 to Convert to Dollars of 2010." Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University, 2013.

⁶ Bryan, William Jennings. "Income Tax Speech - January 30, 1894." In *Congressional Record Containing the Proceedings and Debates of the 53rd Congress, 3rd Session*. Washington, D.C., 1894, p. 1655.

⁷ Cockran, W. Bourke. "Income Tax Speech - January 30, 1894." In *Congressional Record Containing the Proceedings and Debates of the 53rd Congress, 3rd Session*. Washington, D.C., 1894, p. 1654.

⁸ Roosevelt, Franklin D. "Message to Congress on Tax Revision." June 19, 1935.

⁹ Reagan, Ronald. "Address to the Nation on Tax Reform." 1985.

pre-dating the introduction and common usage of the phrase “American Dream,” the 1894 debate in the House of Representatives uses many of the themes that later crystallize into the Dream. These include feelings regarding the individual’s role in the construction of the country and the country’s role in governing the individual. Moving through an analysis of more than a century’s worth of income tax policies and the decisive rhetoric accompanying these demonstrates a significant impact arising from feelings about the “American Dream.” These feelings shape and are shaped by prevailing economic, social, and geopolitical trends.

In untangling (and in some cases re-tangling) rhetoric on income taxes and the emotional investment in the American Dream this project seeks to make two contributions to rhetorical studies, one directed at the practice of studying rhetoric and the other toward theories of rhetorical function. The construction of this project provides a series of practical models for evaluating and understanding *pathos*¹⁰ through a rhetorical history¹¹ perspective. The theoretical contribution comes from naming a new *pathos* oriented rhetorical figure, the *patheme*. These two contributions work in tandem for rhetorical scholars interested in broadening their view beyond a *logos* based approach to argument and discourse analysis, but who do not wish to abandon a focus on key textual elements and a belief in the rhetorical agency of the rhetor and audience. Providing a historically and textually detailed analysis complements a focus on *pathos*, while identifying specific emotionally laden rhetorical figures is possible through the *patheme*.

The practical contribution of this project to rhetorical studies is the demonstration of *pathos* oriented rhetorical analysis with a focus on the movement of feeling through time and in

¹⁰ Following Celeste Condit’s definition of *pathos* as “the deliberate art for the construction of shared emotion.” Condit, Celeste M. "Pathos in Criticism: Edwin Black's Communism-as-Cancer Metaphor." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 1 (2013), p. 3.

¹¹ Rhetorical history is defined as “the historical study of rhetorical events and the study from a rhetorical perspective of historical forces, trends, processes and events” (Zarefsky, David. "Reflections on Making the Case." In *Making the Case: Advocacy and Judgment in Public Argument*, edited by Kathryn M. Olson. Michigan State University Press: East Lansing, 2012, p. 11.)

response to specific historical conditions. While the emotional milieu of the United States is difficult to assess at a specific historical moment, pointing to trends is a much more doable task. For example this project traces the rise of populism in the late 1800s to the urban movements of industrialization and the accumulation of massed capital. This created momentum for communitarian feelings regarding government and regulation of the market. In the income tax debate of this era these feelings are played out in part through the rhetoric of the advocates and challengers as they describe the future of the country and the justification for taking wealth from one group and redistributing it to another. Recognizing and carefully tracing how historical trends effect the emotional mood in the country and assessing the impact of significant rhetorical moments could be useful in many different contexts, from analysis of social movements to the development of distinctly emotional modes of persuasion.

The theoretical contribution of this project comes in identifying a specific phrase containing a powerful emotional content. This project argues Obama's use of the phrase "American Dream" operates through *pathos* and is a special kind of term, a *patheme*. Combining a view of emotion as a process of physiological change with psychodynamic theories of metaphor provides an account of the *patheme*, an emotionally full signifier identified through three criteria. First, the word or phrase evokes a fundamental feeling, such as fear, anger, hope or pride. Obama's use of the "American Dream" crafts feelings of hope for individuals and pride in country as well as evoking fear at the potential loss of the Dream. Second, this feeling is transmitted through cultural or community affiliation. The "American Dream" taps into the historic emotional investment of the United States in upward mobility and democratic governance. Third, these feelings overcome argumentative tension by superceding the rational account of the term. Obama's use of the "American Dream" unites competing perspectives on

justice and virtue. The *patheme* thus identifies a rhetorical figure that works primarily through *pathos*. In Obama's case the historic development and emotional associations layered onto the "American Dream" can be tracked through time, an endeavor this project undertakes before developing the theory of the *patheme*.

This chapter proceeds through three sections. The first section develops short outlines of each chapter. The first five chapters examine historical eras ranging from the Gilded Age of the late 1800s through today's post-War on Terror period. These chapters focus on the intersection of collectivizing or individuating feelings, rhetoric on income taxes, and the development of the American Dream. The final chapter is devoted to developing the theory of the *patheme*. The second section notes the objects of study for this project and the method of analysis used. The project analyzes examples of deliberative rhetoric¹² using a *pathos* oriented understanding of persuasion. The third section discusses the relationship between income taxes and the modern understanding of the American Dream.¹³ This section argues that income taxes crystallize feelings regarding the individual, democracy, and self-governance by finding their expression in rhetoric defending or attacking particular tax programs.

¹² *Rhetoric* "is an art, a human enterprise engaging individual choice and common activity," and *deliberative rhetoric* "is a form of argumentation through which citizens test and create social knowledge in order to uncover, assess, and resolve shared problems" (Goodnight, G. Thomas. "The Personal, Technical, and Public Spheres of Argument: A Speculative Inquiry into the Art of Public Deliberation." *Argumentation & Advocacy* 48, no. 4, Spring 2012, p. 198).

¹³ The modern conception of the American Dream emerged in the Gilded Age and can be contrasted with the classical conception. The classical conception is rooted in Jeffersonian agrarian democracy where every person has an equal opportunity to acquire and work land, thus advancing their own prosperity. During the late 1800s rapid industrialization combined with urbanization and the acquisition of large fortunes to create the possibility of upward mobility and class movement, combining the belief in rugged individualism and democracy with the acquisition of capital. (Kaplan, Lewis E. *The Making of the American Dream: The Making of a Republic*. Algora Publishing, Ebook, 2009; Shrock, Joel. *The Gilded Age*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004; Slotkin, Richard. *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1998.)

Chapter Outlines

This project proceeds through seven chapters arranged chronologically. The chapters range from the income tax debates of the late 1890s through President Obama's recent push for "A Better Bargain for the Middle Class." Each chapter includes commentary on the emotional trends in the United States at the time and the impact this has on the development of the formative discourses about the income tax and their application to the "American Dream." The chapters are divided into discrete time periods generally characterized by a series of policy changes and their accompanying rhetorical shifts.¹⁴ Many of the key moments in the development of the dream are represented through presidential discourse. The focus on the presidency as a crucial site of investigation allows the project to map both how individual presidents seek to shape shared emotions and also how they were affected by historical events at the time.¹⁵ The final chapter offers the theoretical contribution of the project by proposing Obama's use of the "American Dream" is a *patheme*.

¹⁴ Chapter 2 engages with the proposal and eventual passage of the first peacetime income tax, which was accompanied by the emergence and influence of the belief in upward mobility. This belief eventually becomes part of the modern American Dream. There is a logical break between Chapter 2 and 3 as the initiation of hostilities and the entry of the U.S. into World War I crafted new feelings of nationalism and provided different justifications for income taxes. Grouping World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II together is justified because of the intensification of nationalist sentiments alongside income tax increases. The end of World War II provides another clear end point as taxes were no longer associated with wartime sacrifices, but a more general belief in national defense during the 1950s. Chapter 4 thus begins with a description of the stability that preserved WWII tax levels until JFK's income tax reforms became law under President Johnson. Ronald Reagan's policies and rhetoric represent an acceleration of the trends initiated by JFK and ends an era of tax cuts and a consistent individualist *pathos*. Another useful break occurs at the end of the Cold War as the free market model appears triumphant. Chapter 5 thus assess the influence of Reagan and JFK on shaping feelings of individualism in the post-Cold War era, through the War on Terror and the 2008 recession and its aftereffects. Chapter 6 begins with the decline of the War on Terror and President Obama's focus on economic equality and crafting a new emotional climate around a unified vision of the "American Dream."

¹⁵ This project is indebted to the vast literature on presidential rhetoric. Writing in *The Prospect of Presidential Rhetoric*, Martin Medhurst argues that presidential rhetoric has been "a distinct subfield within the discipline" (p. 3) since 1984, but that criticism of presidential rhetoric has been a part of rhetorical studies for far longer. Medhurst concludes that the study of presidential rhetoric is "a vital force in the academy of the twenty-first century" (p. 21). (Medhurst, Martin J., "From Retrospect to Prospect," *The Prospect of Presidential Rhetoric*, edited by James Arnt Aune and Martin J. Medhurst, Texas A&M University Press: College Station, 2008.)

This chapter discusses the general themes of discourses regarding the income tax and the “American Dream” that are examined in subsequent chapters as well as introducing the method of studying *pathos* this project uses. This chapter identifies the objects of analysis as significant moments of deliberative rhetoric on income taxes, and the method of analyzing these moments as viewing them through a *pathos* oriented lens This chapter also traces the roots of the modern concept of the “American Dream,” which arose during the period of history in the United States popularly known as the Gilded Age comprising roughly the years from 1873-1900.¹⁶ The formative debates about the imposition of the income tax occurred at the height of this time period and were directly connected to feelings about the future of the country and the possibility for individuals to achieve the “American Dream.”

The second chapter examines the introduction and passage of the first peacetime income tax in 1894 by the federal government, its nullification by the Supreme Court in 1895, and its eventual reinstatement through constitutional amendment in 1913. Chapter 2 argues that the emotional investment in the values of justice and virtue prevalent in income tax rhetoric¹⁷ provided material for the later emergence of the “American Dream” as it coalesced to fuse strong feelings about the individual and the collective. Tension between the individual and the collective were at play in the late 1880s with the rise of the populist movement.¹⁸ The introduction of the income tax in 1894 by William Jennings Bryan in the House of Representatives as an amendment to the Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act followed this rising trend of populist sentiment in the United States,¹⁹ which magnified feelings of anxiety over increasing

¹⁶ Shrock, Joel. *The Gilded Age*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004.

¹⁷ Weisman, Steven R. *The Great Tax Wars*. Simon & Schuster: New York, 2002.

¹⁸ Hicks, John Donald. *The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1931.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

economic inequality and focused on reforms that provided justice.²⁰ The Supreme Court struck down the law in the 1895 case *Pollock v. Farmers' Loan and Trust Co.* and relied largely on the emotionally stirring opposition to the tax as representing class warfare.²¹ The Supreme Court's decision had a lasting legal effect until the passage of the 16th Amendment in 1913. Though not President in 1913 Theodore Roosevelt retained great influence and was instrumental in the passage of the amendment and its eventual adoption by the states.²² His significant 1910 address "The New Nationalism" captured feelings of progressive use of government and the role of individualism in the economy and related them to the necessity of economic equality of opportunity.²³ The passage of the income tax, its nullification by the Supreme Court, and its reinstatement through constitutional amendment were all a central part of the negotiation over the American identity and the role government should play in securing that identity.

The third chapter examines the income tax reforms during World War I, the Great Depression and World War II, which all saw massive increases in income tax levels.²⁴ Chapter 3 argues that war and economic depression moved the U.S. national mood toward positive feelings about the collective and the necessity of equality and justice. The role nationalism played in intensifying these feelings was significant and shaped by the events at the time. World War I marked the first time that the United States formed a national response to a global crisis, with the call for intervention buttressed by nationalist sentiments in the country.²⁵ This nationalism created a feeling of collective responsibility for prosecuting the war and promulgated the defense

²⁰ Shrock, Joel. *The Gilded Age*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004.

²¹ Hohenstein, Kurt. "William Jennings Bryan and the Income Tax: Economic Statism and Judicial Usurpation in the Election of 1896." *Journal of Law & Politics* 16 J. L. & Politics 163 (Winter, 2000).

²² Goodwin, Doris Kearns. *The Bully Pulpit: Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and the Golden Age of Journalism*. Simon and Schuster, 2013.

²³ Roosevelt, Theodore. "The New Nationalism, August 31, 1910." Osawatomie, Kansas, 1910.

²⁴ Bank, Steven A, Kirk J Stark, and Joseph J Thorndike. *War and Taxes*. The Urban Institute, 2008

²⁵ May, Henry Farnham. *The End of American Innocence: A Study of the First Years of Our Own Time, 1912-1917*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1959

of sacrifice for nation, both of life and money.²⁶ Woodrow Wilson's requests for additional war financing were crucial in reconfiguring feelings regarding the income tax and the necessity of collective sacrifice for the ideals of American democracy.²⁷ After the war ended the 1920s saw a return to feelings of isolationism and the primacy of individualism with an emphasis on the distinctiveness of the American character,²⁸ accompanied by large reductions in the rate and scope of the wartime income taxes.²⁹ The Great Depression crystallized the feelings regarding the specialness of Americanism into the "American Dream" for the first time as people confronted what seemed lost.³⁰ Franklin Delano Roosevelt directed those feelings towards creating equality through income taxation.³¹ FDR's successes as a president were not simply the policies he passed but also his ability to craft a hopeful feeling in the country about the prospects of upward mobility and equality.³² The entry of the United States into World War II in 1941 created the impetus for the defense of these and other core American values.³³ For example, issues of income inequality became a part of American freedom for FDR during WWII, which was achieved through sacrificing individual goods for the collective.³⁴

²⁶ Capozzola, Christopher. *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen*. Oxford University Press, 2008

²⁷ Wilson, Woodrow. "Address on War Financing - May 27." 1918.

²⁸ Goldberg, David Joseph. *Discontented America: The United States in the 1920s*. JHU Press, 1999.

²⁹ Schlesinger, Arthur Meier. *The Crisis of the Old Order, 1919-1933*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2003

³⁰ Adams, James Truslow. *The Epic of America*. Transaction Publishers, 2012

³¹ Thorndike, Joseph J. *Their Fair Share: Taxing the Rich in the Age of FDR*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press

³² Roosevelt, Franklin D. "Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933." In *The Public Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Volume Two: The Year of Crisis, 1933*, edited by Samuel Rosenman, 11-16. New York: Random House, 1938; Farrell, Thomas B. *Norms of Rhetorical Culture*. Yale University Press: New Haven; 1993, p. 86.

³³ MacDougall, Robert. "Red, Brown and Yellow Perils: Images of the American Enemy in the 1940s and 1950s." In *The United States Transformed: The Lessons and Legacies of the Second World War: The American Experience in World War II* edited by Walter L. Hixon. New York, NY: Routledge, 2003.

³⁴ Bank, Steven A, Kirk J Stark, and Joseph J Thorndike. *War and Taxes*. The Urban Institute, 2008; Roosevelt, Franklin D. "A Call for Sacrifice, April 28, 1942." In *FDR's Fireside Chats*, edited by Russell D. Buhite and David W. Levy. University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, 1992

The fourth chapter examines the Kennedy and Reagan administration's income tax reform proposals, which provided large income tax reductions across the board.³⁵ Chapter 4 argues that by the end of the Reagan Presidency feelings about the "American Dream" were directed towards the pursuit of virtuous individualism and away from the collectivism of the World War II era. Kennedy began the process of moving the emotional trajectory in the United States through the commencement address at Yale University in June 1962 and the 1963 State of the Union Address. In the commencement address Kennedy argued for a new direction in economic policy and cautioned against holding "fast to the clichés of our forebears."³⁶ In the 1963 State of the Union Kennedy argued tax reductions were necessary to "encourage the initiative and risk-taking on which our free system depends... and reinforce the American principle of additional reward for additional effort."³⁷ President Kennedy began to shift national feelings on the income tax by using the virtuous individual as his example of who would benefit from tax reductions.³⁸ Reagan accelerates the trend towards feelings of individualism by emphasizing not only the individual's central role in economic growth, but also through vilifying the role of income taxes in deterring the virtuous entrepreneur. Ronald Reagan successfully pushed through the largest tax decrease in U.S. history in 1981³⁹ and did so in part by embodying the "American Dream" of a person who is born with nothing but achieves prosperity through hard work.⁴⁰ Reagan's attack on income taxes as a tyrannical imposition of government⁴¹ influenced discourse for the next thirty years.⁴²

³⁵ Farris, Scott. *Kennedy and Reagan: Why Their Legacies Endure*. Globe Pequot, 2013, Ebook.

³⁶ Kennedy, John F. "Commencement Address at Yale University, June 11, 1962." New Haven, CT, 1962.

³⁷ Kennedy, John F. "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union," January 14 1963.

³⁸ Ibid., Kennedy, John F. "Commencement Address at Yale University, June 11, 1962." New Haven, CT, 1962.

³⁹ Bartlett, Bruce. "The Roots of the Tax Reform Act of 1986, Part II." *The New York Times*, January 28, 2014.

⁴⁰ Dallek, Robert. *Ronald Reagan: The Politics of Symbolism*. Harvard University Press, 1999.

⁴¹ Reagan, Ronald. "Address to the Nation on Tax Reform." 1985.

⁴² Lorenzo, David J. *Tradition and the Rhetoric of Right: Popular Political Argument in the Aurobindo Movement*. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999

The fifth chapter examines the post-Cold War period through 2012 by first discussing the tax reform efforts of George H.W. Bush, William Jefferson Clinton and George W. Bush, then analyzing Barack Obama's contribution to shifting from the individualism of Reagan to a feeling of collective responsibility. The chapter provides an account of Barack Obama's rhetorical development in relationship to his belief in and advocacy of a specific vision of the American Dream. Chapter 5 argues that this period demonstrates the potent influence feelings about the "American Dream" have on income tax rhetoric and the presidents who argue for reforms, as the transition from feelings of virtuous individualism to collective justice is evident. George H.W. Bush's "No New Taxes" pledge⁴³ during the 1988 Presidential campaign was born out of a belief that Reagan had successfully configured the American public's feelings regarding the tyranny of taxes. Bill Clinton attempted to re-contextualize taxes as part of the responsibility of the "middle class,"⁴⁴ and instill a sense of collective responsibility for equality of opportunity. He did so primarily through an address entitled "The New Covenant" delivered in 1991 at Georgetown University. In the address Clinton argued the country needed "a new covenant, a solemn agreement between the people and their government to provide opportunity for everybody."⁴⁵ This principle was demonstrated in the income tax increase Clinton pursued and passed while in office. George W. Bush recalled Reagan's vilification of income taxes and early in his term sought to associate the feeling regarding the tyranny of taxes with those regarding the special distinctiveness of the middle class.⁴⁶ The exceptional nature of the middle class is expanded

⁴³ Bush, George H.W. "Acceptance Address." *1988 Republican National Convention*. New Orleans, LA, 1988.

⁴⁴ Clinton, William Jefferson. "The New Covenant: Responsibility and Rebuilding the American Community." Georgetown University, October 23, 1991.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Bush, George W. "Remarks on Signing the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act," June 7, 2001.

after 9/11 as Bush recognized and expanded feelings of American exceptionalism, seeking to build into the “American Dream” a feeling of nationalistic pride.⁴⁷

Chapter 5 describes President Obama’s efforts to reconfigure the emotional climate in the U.S. towards a feeling of collective responsibility as the War on Terror is brought to a close and the economy recovers from the 2008 recession. These efforts are particularly clear in his 2012 State of the Union Address, his first State of the Union Address after the last troops arrived home from Iraq in December 2011 and the death of Osama Bin Laden in May 2011. This speech, known as “The America within Our Reach,” directs its *pathos* towards forging a connection between the returning troops, the World War II generation, and the American people.⁴⁸ The goal of this reorientation towards collective responsibility is to create a feeling that the United States should promote justice through its policies, including reforming the income tax to apply more heavily to top earners. This *pathos* lays the ground work for Obama to outline his vision for “A Better Bargain for the Middle Class” and rearticulate the American Dream in an address on July 24, 2013 delivered at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois.

The sixth chapter constructs the theoretical contribution this project makes to rhetorical studies. Chapter 6 argues that President Obama’s use of the phrase “American Dream” in the 2013 Knox College address evokes an emotional connection to both the individualizing and collectivizing potential of the phrase. This emotionally full signifier is given the name *patheme*. Analyzing a feature of language that creates meaning through emotional force requires synthesizing perspectives on linguistics as well as studies of affect, and so this chapter uses theories of emotion and theories of metaphor. Emotion describes the process of physiological

⁴⁷ Lieven, Anatol. *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism*. Wiley Online Library, 2004.

⁴⁸ Barack H. Obama, “Remarks by the President in the State of the Union Address,” January 24, 2012.

change as a response to stimuli, while affect is the expression of emotion.⁴⁹ Social transmission of affect occurs through affiliation between individuals who respond to stimuli in a similar way.⁵⁰ The *patheme* is linguistically most similar to metaphor and creates meaning through an analogous process. Rather than creating a laborious cognitive process metaphor directly engages the imagination. Likewise, the *patheme* operates non-cognitively directly engaging the emotions.

The seventh chapter provides some concluding thoughts on the theory of the *patheme*. Applying an assessment criteria with five interrelated benchmarks the theory is evaluated for its: ability to explain and predict, theoretical contribution to the field, applications for practitioners, approach towards data, and research directions. This chapter argues that the *patheme* provides good explanatory power with lots of possible future research directions, but is limited in the scope of its inquiry. While the *patheme* is a useful addition to *pathos* studies, this project demonstrates that it should not serve as a one-shot approach to evaluating the construction of shared emotion. Despite these limitations, the *patheme* could serve to enrich the understanding of public argument as it broadens the scope of deliberative rhetoric. The concept of the *patheme* could also be useful in engaging with visual rhetorical studies as well as narrative analysis. It might be the case there are many *pathemes* for rhetorical scholars to unearth, perhaps from pictures of Iwo Jima to the story of Galileo Galilei. Interdisciplinary engagements are also possible as there are many fields grappling with the power emotion has on configuring human action. For example, political science has begun to incorporate emotion into describing the process of international relations and diplomacy, but has done so largely from an Aristotelian

⁴⁹ Scherer, Klaus R. "What Are Emotions? And How Can They Be Measured?". *Social science information* 44, no. 4 (2005): 695-729.

⁵⁰ Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004

perspective.⁵¹ Configuring the emotive process as largely bypassing cognition and rationality is a key insight this project highlights, which could be useful for challenging and progressing engagement with *pathos* in political science. For example, this engagement could create a more nuanced understanding of diplomacy and post-conflict negotiations⁵² or craft better analyses of political decision-making.⁵³

Objects of Study and Method of Analysis

This project engages rhetoric across a wide array of historical, political, and economic contexts. In each case the rhetor is grappling with questions regarding the future course of the country, engaging in deliberation. The method used to study these moments of deliberative rhetoric is an evaluation of the *pathos* of the address. The creation of shared emotion the rhetor and the rhetoric participates in is highlighted in specific, historical case studies. Tracing the rhetorical history of income tax discourse and the intersection with the construction and modification of the “American Dream” illuminates the central role *pathos* has and continues to play in the dynamic development of these moments of deliberative rhetoric. This section of the chapter discusses the benefits of the rhetorical history method and outlines the importance of a *pathos* centered approach to deliberative rhetoric.

The objects of study for this project are all examples of deliberative rhetoric, where rhetoric “is an art, a human enterprise engaging individual choice and common activity”⁵⁴ and deliberative rhetoric “is a form of argumentation through which citizens test and create social

⁵¹ Bickford, Susan. "Emotion Talk and Political Judgment." *Journal of Politics* 73, no. 4 (October 2011): 1025-37; Garsten, Bryan. "The Rhetoric Revival in Political Theory." *Annual Review of Political Science* 14, no. 1 (2011): 159-80.

⁵² Petersen, Roger Dale. *Western Intervention in the Balkans: The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*, Cambridge University Press: New York, 2011.

⁵³ Bickford 2011

⁵⁴ Goodnight, G. Thomas. "The Personal, Technical, and Public Spheres of Argument: A Speculative Inquiry into the Art of Public Deliberation." *Argumentation & Advocacy* 48, no. 4, Spring 2012, p. 198.

knowledge in order to uncover, assess, and resolve shared problems.”⁵⁵ Deliberative rhetoric has traditionally been focused on the argumentation of the rhetor with a special examination of *logos* based appeals. This follows the Aristotelian tradition where deliberative speaking is tied to the use of *logos*⁵⁶ through the exercise of the enthymeme, “which are the substance of rhetorical persuasion,”⁵⁷ while “[t]he arousing of prejudice, pity, anger, and similar emotions has nothing to do with the essential facts.”⁵⁸ For Aristotle, the use of emotion serves a purely utilitarian function as “persuasion may come through the hearers, when the speech stirs their emotions. Our judgements when we are pleased and friendly are not the same as when we are pained and hostile.”⁵⁹ *Pathos* in deliberation is a necessary evil for Aristotle, but only in so far as it is used to put the hearers in “the right frame of mind”⁶⁰ so that they may more effectively judge the arguments of the rhetor.

The mode of analysis this project uses is rhetorical history defined as “the historical study of rhetorical events and the study from a rhetorical perspective of historical forces, trends, processes and events.”⁶¹ There are two benefits of a rhetorical history approach for this project. First, the case study analysis builds on previous rhetorical approaches as they inform subsequent attempts to persuade. The ability of individuals to *shape* the history they are a part of, rather than simply being a product of their times, requires an understanding of the rhetorical processes involved in persuasion. Second, historical events oftentimes create significant exigencies, which

⁵⁵ Goodnight, G. Thomas. "The Personal, Technical, and Public Spheres of Argument: A Speculative Inquiry into the Art of Public Deliberation." *Argumentation & Advocacy* 48, no. 4, Spring 2012, p. 198.

⁵⁶ George A. Kennedy defines *logos*: “Greek *logos* means ‘what is said,’ speech, a word, but often also the reason or argument inherent in speech” (George A. Kennedy, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse* (Oxford University Press, 2007)., p. 38).

⁵⁷ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book 1, Part 1, 1354a15

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 1354a16-17

⁵⁹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book 1, Part 2, 1356a

⁶⁰ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book 2, Part 1, 1377b25

⁶¹ Zarefsky, David. "Reflections on Making the Case." In *Making the Case: Advocacy and Judgment in Public Argument*, edited by Kathryn M. Olson. Michigan State University Press: East Lansing, 2012, p. 11.

must be addressed by prominent rhetors. Incorporating a rhetorical history approach into understanding discourse on income taxes recognizes how historical events create rhetorical exigencies to address problems and how the rhetorical approach taken imposes constraints as well as opening up inventional resources for future rhetors. For example, in the post-World War II United States, income tax proposals have largely been about how to justify *decreasing* the rates of taxes imposed on the upper and upper middle classes. Prior to World War II, the Great Depression created an opportunity (and necessity) for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to defend large tax increases across the board, but also particularly large increases aimed at upper-income tax brackets. Material conditions, prior rhetorical events, and the emotional climate at the time all effect the examples of deliberative rhetoric analyzed in this project.

The production, delivery, and circulation of texts also contribute to the movement of history. Rhetorical history is the investigation of this process. David Zarefsky in “Four Senses of Rhetorical History” writes that “[w]hat distinguishes the rhetorical historian is not subject matter but perspective.”⁶² He suggests that the rhetorician is uniquely suited to appreciate the complex issues involved in studying human conduct and change. For Zarefsky, “[t]he economic historian might view human conduct from the perspective of the market...and the rhetorical historian from the perspective of how messages are created and used by people to influence and relate to one another.”⁶³ By developing an historical review of rhetorical dynamism in income tax deliberation, situating key public address on the issue, and discussing the impact to relevant rhetorical theory this project is hopefully both timely and timeless.

Despite the traditional focus on *logos* in deliberative rhetoric there is a need for engagement with *pathos*. Neglecting to study *pathos* leaves out much of the substance of

⁶² Zarefsky, David. “Four Senses of Rhetorical History.” *Doing rhetorical history: Concepts and cases* (1998), p. 30.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

rhetorical persuasion in deliberation. Charles Taylor in “Politics and Passions” argues that emotions are necessary for the exercise of deliberation in a democracy. For Taylor a completely cold logical agent “would fail to pick up the nuances, the ambivalences, the resentments, or the hidden sympathies of others. Persons without emotional sensitivities would be terrible negotiators and bad political leaders, incapable of bringing people together in an important common enterprise.”⁶⁴ *Pathos* is necessary to motivate action when one is confronted with human suffering, caused by a tsunami, earthquake, or other disaster where the outpouring of emotion and charity are not the result of *logos*, but the affiliations an individual has with a group.⁶⁵

Pathos studies are at the cutting edge of contemporary rhetorical analysis. In “Pathos in Criticism: Edwin Black's Communism-As-Cancer Metaphor” Celeste Condit argues “sustained engagements with the categories of ‘emotion’ and ‘affect’ across multiple disciplines, including some by rhetorical theorists, have been encouraging a further broadening of conceptualizations of human action.”⁶⁶ Condit defines *pathos* as “the deliberate art for the construction of shared emotion.”⁶⁷ This project engages in a study of the deliberate attempts to construct a shared emotion and does so through a series of case studies as they develop through time. Although this type of case study approach could lend itself to simply analyzing the ideological currents across time, a narrowly confined analysis could miss valuable moments in the development of

⁶⁴ Taylor, Charles. "Politics and Passion." In *Bringing the Passions Back In: The Emotions in Political Philosophy*, edited by R. Kingston and L. Ferry. Vancouver, British Columbia: The University of British Columbia Press, 2008. p. viii

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Condit, Celeste M. "Pathos in Criticism: Edwin Black's Communism-as-Cancer Metaphor." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 1 (2013), p. 3.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

persuasion over time. As Condit notes “the forces that Aristotle described under the heading of pathos are also influential in public discourse and its effects.”⁶⁸

Pathos is investigated in this project through an examination of the creation of collective identity through the selective and repeated application of rhetoric as a tool of affiliation. The method of affiliation is the use of touchstones deeply embedded in the American psyche, notions of justice and virtue. Collective identity formation is not simply a matter of creating logical commitments as “...a certain degree of *emotional investment* is required in the definition of a collective identity, which enables individuals to feel themselves part of a common unity.”⁶⁹ Collective action and decision-making necessarily involve emotions as “[p]assions and feelings, love and hate, faith and fear are all part of a body acting collectively.”⁷⁰ The organization and attachment of collectively salient feelings works to construct the *pathos* of rhetoric on income taxes as it invokes crucial elements of the “American Dream” throughout time.

This is particularly true for public discourse and discourses emanating from the office of the President. Public address specifically engages crucial questions of context and message in the construction and deployment of feelings of nationalism and affiliative discourse across groups. Vanessa Beasley in *You, The People* argues public addresses “are more than merely a forum for the pronouncement of allegedly transcendent national values. They also provide an opportunity for the ritual reenactment of peoplehood.”⁷¹ Genres such as the Presidential Inaugural and the State of the Union Address constitute the American public as a nation. Ideals of collective and individual success coalesce around significant public addresses providing rhetorical touchstones,

⁶⁸ Condit, Celeste M. "Pathos in Criticism: Edwin Black's Communism-as-Cancer Metaphor." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 1 (2013), p. 3.

⁶⁹ Melucci, Alberto. *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*. Cambridge Cultural Social Studies. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; 1996, p. 71.

⁷⁰ Melucci, Alberto. *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*. Cambridge Cultural Social Studies. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; 1996, p. 71.

⁷¹ Beasley 2004, p. 9

which attentive critics can unearth in their analyses. The focus on the presidency is a particularly ripe area to engage with publically shared emotion. “The presidency is the focus for the most intense and persistent emotions in the American polity. The president is a symbolic leader, the one figure who draws together the people’s hopes and fears for the political future.”⁷²

Examples of public address engaging deliberately with the income tax comprise the objects of analysis for this project. These range from the 1894 Congressional debates over the first peacetime income tax to the 2013 Knox College Address by President Obama calling for income tax reform to promote a new vision of the “American Dream.” The rhetoric is assessed for its role in the creation of shared public emotion as it interacts with: the emotional climate of the times, the material conditions contributing to the climate, and the historically important rhetorical touchstones invoked. Assessment of the *pathos* of these addresses is crucial to the development of the theoretical argument in chapter 6 regarding a specific rhetorical figure, which Obama uses when invoking the “American Dream.” Synthesizing the development of the phrase’s tension between justice and virtue, alongside the rhetorical history of the income tax, is part of the emotional power at play in the “American Dream” *patheme* he deploys.

Taxes and the American Dream

Taxes have been connected to the vision of America at least since Patrick Henry exclaimed “no taxation without representation”⁷³ in 1765. The free exercise of self-governance has been enshrined into the American national identity since the founding of the country. This principle has been tempered by a strong feeling that the country should aspire towards equality of opportunity where the measure of a person should be based not on the circumstances of their

⁷² Barber, James D. *The Presidential Character*. Prentice-Hall Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1992, p. 279.

⁷³ Kaplan, Lewis E. *The Making of the American Dream: The Making of a Republic*. Algora Publishing, Ebook, 2009, p. 36

birth but on what they make of themselves. This comprises the classical understanding of the “American Dream”⁷⁴ and can be traced to Thomas Jefferson’s belief in agrarian democracy where every person should be allotted an amount of land and left to freely work it.⁷⁵ The classical notion of the American Dream has evolved into a modern understanding connecting the belief in rugged individualism with a pursuit of capital, embedded within a democracy securing freedom. Income taxes have been viewed alternatively as a device to create justice in society by equalizing opportunity or as imposition on the virtue of the individual, making rhetoric on income taxes an excellent window for assessing feelings about the American Dream.

This section of the chapter has three parts. In the first part the relationship between feelings of government tyranny and unjust taxation in the American Revolution is explored. The sentiment at the time was that Britain had unduly imposed on the rightful self-governance of the colonies. The second part outlines the classical understanding of the American Dream. Rooted in Jefferson’s idealistic vision of autonomous farmsteads, the classical vision of the American Dream is noted by Alexis de Tocqueville in 1831. The third part describes the emergence of the modern American Dream. The industrialization of the United States in the late 1880s, increasing urbanization, and the closure of the western frontier provided an impetus for supplanting the focus on land with a focus on upward mobility and the acquisition of capital.

The role taxation has played in the construction and understanding of the American Dream is historically important. The American Revolution could be described as a dispute about the proper role of government in imposing taxes. In 1765 the British Parliament sought to raise

⁷⁴ The phrase “American Dream” was popularized in the early 1930s with the publication of John Truslow Adams’ *The Epic of America*. Despite the phrase not emerging until this time period there are a set of feelings in the United States corresponding to certain aspects of the dream in the founding and development of the country (Schneiderman, Howard. "Introduction to the Transaction Edition," In *The Epic of America* by James Truslow Adams: Transaction Publishers, 2012).

⁷⁵ Jefferson, Thomas. "Notes on the State of Virginia." In *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, edited by H. A. Washington, 249-476. New York, NY: H.W. Derby 1861

revenue to sustain troops stationed in the American colonies and did so with the Stamp Act, which imposed a series of taxes on “legal documents, newspapers, dice and playing cards, as well as the shipment of merchandise from the ports, along with an annual tax on those who sold spirits.”⁷⁶ Virginia colony’s governing body, the House of Burgess, formulated a petition to King George III requesting the taxes not be imposed. Newly elected 29-year-old Patrick Henry’s response was to add 7 amendments to the petition, with the 6th including a doctrine known as “no taxation without representation”⁷⁷ and in the 7th an explicit challenge to the people of the colonies to disregard the taxes. The newspapers of the time disseminated Henry’s slogan and it became a clarion call to oppose the taxes and British rule.⁷⁸ Though the Stamp Act was ultimately repealed, the British did not give up in attempting to tax the American colonies. In 1767 British Parliament approved the Townshend Act and imposed duties on imported goods such as lead, paper, glass, paints and tea. A boycott on British goods initiated by John Hancock of Boston led the British to reduce their troop commitments in the uncharted territories and garrison them in the capitals of the colonies. The stationing of troops in Boston led to clashes between the citizenry and the soldiers, resulting in the Boston Massacre in March 1770.⁷⁹ In response to the massacre of five people and the evidently increasing tensions between Britain and the colonies Parliament removed the import duties from all commodities except tea.

Despite the relatively small duty imposed on tea it would become the spark igniting the American Revolution. The Sons of Liberty, an organization formed to oppose British rule in the colonies and defend American self-determination, remained watchful for taxes imposed without

⁷⁶ Kaplan, Lewis E. *The Making of the American Dream: The Making of a Republic*. Algora Publishing, Ebook, 2009, p. 36

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 37

⁷⁸ Kaplan, Lewis E. *The Making of the American Dream: The Making of a Republic*. Algora Publishing, Ebook, 2009. Kaplan credits the efficient postal system that was reformed by Benjamin Franklin as crucial to the slogan’s dissemination. He argues that without the fast and efficient newspaper reporting that the revolution might not have come about, or that it would have been greatly delayed.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

representation and took the earliest and best opportunity presented to them. In 1773 the East India Company faced bankruptcy and suffered from declining sales in England and in the American colonies. Due to the high import duty increasing the cost of English tea from the East India Company most colonists imbibed smuggled tea from the Dutch East India Company. Lord Frederick North proposed the stockpiles of tea held in warehouses in England be shipped to the American colonies and the import duty be reduced to undercut the price of Dutch tea consumed there.⁸⁰ The announcement of English tea being sent to the colonies even with a reduced import duty inflamed opponents of British rule. The Sons of Liberty protested at each port as the ships bearing the tea attempted to unload and were successful in blocking the import of tea everywhere except Boston. Thomas Hutchinson, Governor of Massachusetts, ordered the harbor blockaded so tea laden ships would be forced to wait until the colonists cooled down and the cargo could be off loaded. The Sons of Liberty took the opportunity to escalate the dispute, and dressed as “Indians” dumped the tea into the harbor. England’s response to the loss of the tea enflamed the dispute through the passage of the Massachusetts Government Act, which stripped the colony of all rights of self-governance.⁸¹ The crackdown by the British was widely published in newspapers throughout the colonies and led directly to organized resistance against the British and the Declaration of Independence.

The American Revolution was primarily concerned with the feelings of the colonists that the taxes imposed by the British Parliament were profoundly unjust. To individuals who had chosen to set out into the unknown and tame a wild land the idea that decisions about their property could be decided by rulers an ocean away was anathema. Justice and the role of government promoting justice is a feature of discourse about income taxes throughout time, and

⁸⁰ Kaplan, Lewis E. *The Making of the American Dream: The Making of a Republic*. Algora Publishing, Ebook, 2009.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

it is contoured by public feelings about the status of the American Dream.⁸² Embedded within the American Dream are also the feelings that individuals should be virtuous and governmental policies should promote virtue amongst the citizenry. Income taxes have been described as “a tax upon thrift”⁸³ and a “penalty upon success”⁸⁴ since the first peacetime taxes were proposed. Feelings about the American Dream influence how people feel about taxes and vice versa, making this a rich area for comparison.

The two specific values historically associated with income tax debates are justice and virtue. Steven Weisman in *The Great Tax Wars* argues these values “form the foundation of our economic system. They are what make the system legitimate in the eyes of Americans, in a way no less powerful than the legitimacy commanded by our political system.”⁸⁵ Weisman enumerates these values: “Justice first. Proponents of the income tax historically favor taxing the rich according to their ability to pay—the higher the income, the higher the tax rate... Virtue second. Opponents of the income tax, by contrast, see wealth as a product of hard work, thrift, ingenuity and risk-taking.”⁸⁶ Justice and virtue work at odds in income tax debates, but as the examination of their rhetorical dynamism over time suggests, they can become combined in various ways to create powerful new rhetorical tools such as the “American Dream.”

The classical understanding of the American Dream can be linked to the founding of the country and consists of an idealistic belief in the power of individuals to create for themselves the conditions of success in a free and democratic country. Thomas Jefferson outlined his belief in this type of agrarian democracy in “Notes on the State of Virginia” originally published in

⁸² Weiss, Richard. *The American Myth of Success: From Horatio Alger to Norman Vincent Peale*. University of Illinois Press: Urbana, 1988.

⁸³ Adams Jr., Robert. "Income Tax Speech - January 30, 1894." In *Congressional Record Containing the Proceedings and Debates of the 53rd Congress, 3rd Session, Appendix*. . Washington, D.C., 1894, p. 207.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Weisman, Steven R. *The Great Tax Wars*. Simon & Schuster: New York, 2002, p. 6

⁸⁶ Ibid.

1781.⁸⁷ Jefferson contrasted the United States with Europe, as he noted that in America land is plentiful, while in Europe urbanization is the norm. For Jefferson the condition of Europe represented a tragic necessity, but the United States could aspire to higher ideals as the cultivation of one's own land provides the best path to virtue. He argued those "who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God"⁸⁸ and the process of growing one's own food "provides substantial and genuine virtue."⁸⁹ Jefferson also levied a scathing indictment towards urbanization and its focus on manufacturing labor as he said "[d]ependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition."⁹⁰ This view expressed a feeling of the rugged individualist character undergirding the American Dream.

One of the first theorists to remark on the essential characteristics that would later develop into the American Dream was Alexis de Tocqueville. He spent two years travelling throughout the United States in 1831 and penned *Democracy in America* upon his return to France. Alexis de Tocqueville identified two central features to life in America, equality and individualism. These correlate to the values that are in conflict in debates over the income tax, justice and virtue.⁹¹ Seeking justice requires moving towards equality of opportunity, while privileging individualism means rewarding virtuous endeavors. Justice achieved through equality of opportunity could stifle the ambition and energy of the individual to strive for success, while an utter lack of equality of opportunity could be as destructive for social and individual progress.

⁸⁷ Jefferson's ideals have had currency throughout time, appearing in American political discourse when they represent the feelings of the moment. In "The Agrarian Democracy of Thomas Jefferson" A. Whitney Griswold noted that "the Jefferson legend has blossomed and put forth new shoots" (p. 657). Griswold commented that the "agrarian tradition has thrived on the legend and *vice versa*" (p. 658) and upon celebrating the "two hundredth anniversary of Jefferson's birth, in 1943...the whole American agricultural community paid tribute to him" (p. 658). Griswold, A. Whitney. "The Agrarian Democracy of Thomas Jefferson." *The American Political Science Review* 40, no. 4 (1946): 657-81.

⁸⁸ Jefferson, Thomas. "Notes on the State of Virginia." In *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, edited by H. A. Washington, 249-476. New York, NY: H.W. Derby 1861, p. 405.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Weiss, Richard. *The American Myth of Success: From Horatio Alger to Norman Vincent Peale*. University of Illinois Press: Urbana, 1988.

The United States' founding as a democratic country endowed it with two essential features according to de Tocqueville, equality and individualism. The first and most important was a feeling the citizenry should be equal and there be no traces of aristocratic rule. For de Tocqueville this feeling was even more potent than the belief in freedom. He argued "for equality their passion is ardent, insatiable, incessant, invincible; they call for equality in freedom; and if they cannot obtain that, they still call for equality in slavery."⁹² The everyday life of a person demonstrated the necessity of equality as the "free institutions which the inhabitants of the United States possess, and the political rights of which they make so much use, remind every citizen"⁹³ they lived in society and were beholden to their fellow citizens.

The second feature of life in the United States for de Tocqueville was the strong current of individualism. The essential quality of individualism in democracy was the widespread acquisition of "the habit of always considering themselves as standing alone"⁹⁴ with the consequence that people were "apt to imagine that their whole destiny is in their own hands."⁹⁵ The recognition of individualism in America can be traced de Tocqueville. In *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation* Jim Cullen argues "Alexis de Tocqueville invented the word 'individualism' to describe a new sort of secular striving he observed in the United States and used the term 'self-interest rightly understood'—a Franklinesque construction that emphasized the practical value of moral precepts like reciprocity and (temporary) self-denial—as the credo of American life."⁹⁶ The classical concept of the American Dream was forged through the anti-aristocratic American Revolution, emphasizing the

⁹² de Tocqueville, Alexis. *Democracy in America*. Translated by Henry Reeve. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945, p. 97.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Cullen, Jim. *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation*. Oxford University Press: Oxford; 2003, p. 69.

necessity for democratic governance as a pathway to secure an individualist agrarian existence. This belief undergoes a transformation during the late 1800s as citizens moved into large cities populated by increasingly unequal social classes.

The modern concept of the American Dream developed during the Gilded Age, an era characterized by rapid industrialization, the closure of the Western Frontier, and sharpened economic inequality.⁹⁷ Fusing feelings of individualism and upward mobility with a belief in the historic exceptionalism of American democracy, this evolution of the American Dream arose in response to the changing economic and social conditions. From the time of the founding of the republic Protestant values of hard-work undergirded the respect for “self-made” individuals who actualized their potential in a democratic and free society.⁹⁸ The agrarian democracy of Jefferson and Jackson emphasized the rugged individualist and relied on democracy to secure the conditions of life making this existence possible. As these conditions changed so too did the feeling that the quintessentially “American” mode of being was that of the self-made agrarian pioneer. The industrialization of the United States in the 1880s created new modes of economic life and consumption patterns throughout the country.⁹⁹ As Joel Schrock notes in *The Gilded Age* the “very composition of American society was changing...Industrialization made manufacturing the dominant part of the economy and also revolutionized agriculture through mechanization.”¹⁰⁰

The transformation of the American Dream was accelerated as the United States’ frontier closed in 1890. The plentiful land of the western frontier had constructed self-reliant individualism around this reality. In the groundbreaking work “The Significance of the Frontier

⁹⁷ Shrock, Joel. *The Gilded Age*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004.

⁹⁸ Weiss, Richard. *The American Myth of Success: From Horatio Alger to Norman Vincent Peale*. Illini Books, University of Illinois Press: Urbana, 1988

⁹⁹ Shrock 2004.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

in American History,”¹⁰¹ originally published in 1893 by Frederick Jackson Turner, the impact of the official closure of the frontier on the creation and sustainment of a particular American identity is recognized. For Turner, the closure of the frontier marked the end of an era in American history because the prospect of settling freely obtained land provided equality and emphasized the development of peculiarly American traits, such as the rugged individualist.¹⁰² The closure of the frontier thus represented a break in the first era of American history. Up to that point “American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development.”¹⁰³ The impact on the development of American identity was salient both for people and the country as he argued the “frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization”¹⁰⁴ for individuals and “the frontier promoted the formation of a composite nationality for the American people.”¹⁰⁵

The impact of the closure of the frontier was significant in challenging the widespread belief in the “American Dream” as the rugged individualist who worked their own land. As Richard Slotkin notes, in *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890*, “[t]he doctrines of agrarian democracy, as developed by Jefferson and elaborated by Jackson, held that the social cement of the republic must be the self-interest of its citizens. In economic terms, this meant that each citizen must be possessed of sufficient

¹⁰¹ Turner, Frederick Jackson. "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." In *The Frontier in American History*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1920.

¹⁰² Turner concludes that it is “to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom—these are traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier” (Turner 1920, p. 37).

¹⁰³ Turner 1920, p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3-4.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

property to guarantee the subsistence of himself and his family...¹⁰⁶ This self-interested citizen could not function effectively in the presence of large corporations emerging at the turn of the century. Slotkin argues that the “scale and complexity of both political and economic enterprise now required the rationalization of different functions and powers for the elite of managers and proprietors and the mass of workers.”¹⁰⁷ As the economy created diverse roles for individuals American feelings about upward mobility and property were reconfigured around capital rather than land.

This project’s analysis of income tax proposals begins with the Gilded Age because that era produced a transformation of the classical understanding of the American Dream, persisting nearly unchanged to that point for over 100 years. When the American colonists and the later Western settlers envisioned the self-reliant individual building their future, they had in mind persons establishing themselves on an uninhabited and untamed plot of land.¹⁰⁸ The industrialization of the late 1800s and the closure of the western frontier changed what achievement meant as society was transformed from a largely agrarian economy towards a more urban and industrial one. Instead of acquiring and working land the individual could now acquire and “work” capital. This change is evident in the differences between agrarian democracy and industrial democracy with its attendant focus on capital instead of land. Capital accumulation reached new levels challenging the belief that everyone had access to the same equal opportunity to succeed. Feelings that the new economic structure was leaving the poor behind created

¹⁰⁶ Slotkin, Richard. *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1998, p. 110.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 333.

¹⁰⁸ Kaplan, Lewis E. *The Making of the American Dream: The Making of a Republic*. Algora Publishing, Ebook, 2009.

populist movements to use the power of government to reign in wealth including the first peacetime income tax proposals.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Caldwell, Wilber W. *Cynicism and the Evolution of the American Dream*. Potomac Books, Inc., 2006.

CHAPTER 2

JUSTICE, VIRTUE, AND THE AMERICAN WAY: TEDDY ROOSEVELT'S DEMOCRATIC INDIVIDUALISM

Income taxes in the United States have varied over time beginning simply in the original colonies and eventually expanding into the complicated system of progressive, graduated taxes we are familiar with today. Income taxes in the United States offer an interesting point of departure for investigating *pathos* in discourse because of the intimate relationship income tax rhetoric has to two forces in public life, the needs of the collective and the needs of the individual. In negotiating the tension between these forces income tax rhetoric revolves around justice and virtue. Advocates of any tax proposal must grapple with whether the system of taxation is just in its application or promotes virtue in the citizenry. This chapter argues that an emotional investment in justice and virtue present in the earliest income tax debates in the United States provides the foundational material for later engagements with the issue. In particular the development of “American Dream” ultimately served to fuse collective and individual affective involvement, which was more clearly separate in 1894. Theodore Roosevelt crafted a public emotional commitment to the exercise of virtuous individualism, secured through democratic institutions, influencing the later development of the “American Dream” as well as future rhetoric on income taxes.

This chapter begins with the debates in Congress over the 1894 Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act, which contained the first peacetime income tax enacted by the federal government.¹¹⁰ The

¹¹⁰ There were other income taxes in the United States prior to 1894, including a federal tax enacted at the outbreak of the Civil War and state taxes dating from 1840. The state taxes were smaller in scope and not as thoroughly

second set of arguments over the income tax occurred in the Supreme Court case *Pollock v. Farmers' Loan and Trust Co.*, which challenged the constitutionality of the Wilson-Gorman income tax. This chapter then remarks on President Theodore Roosevelt's involvement in pushing for a constitutional amendment allowing income taxes and President Taft's successful completion of that push. The emotionally powerful threads of justice and virtue were woven together by Teddy Roosevelt as he crafted feelings for a specific vision of the future of America in the early 20th century. These examples of rhetoric on income taxes provide a view of how advocates negotiate the tension between the individual and collective, which is brought into focus through a defense of equality of law and the promotion of a virtuous citizenry.

Examination of these issues in this chapter provides the background for describing a more specific instantiation of the collection of feelings being negotiated in the early tax debates. As the introductory chapter notes, individualism and equality are hallmarks of early feelings about America. The 1894 income tax debates clarified how these feelings were applied to a particular case and illuminates their transformation during the Gilded Age. Tethering the current investigation of emotional investments to income tax debates provides a concrete set of rhetorical objects, anchoring what otherwise could be a free-floating enterprise. Justice and virtue are hallmarks of debates over the income tax and are present in the phrase "American Dream" that emerges in the 1930s at the start of the Great Depression.¹¹¹ The "American Dream" serves to organize the affective relationship an audience has towards a proposal designed to protect the dream and facilitate its achievement. This chapter demonstrates that feelings

debated as the federal proposal. The Civil War tax occurred during a context of national survival, making its necessity apparent. It thus provides less useful rhetorical ground for analyzing the tension between the collective and individual necessity that serves as the basis for analyzing the *pathos* present in the discourses surrounding the 1894 debate.

¹¹¹ Cullen, Jim. *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2003.

regarding virtue and justice shaped the evaluation of policy even before the advent of the specific phrase “American Dream.”

Historical Context

Debates over taxes in the United States go back at least as far as 1634 when the Massachusetts Bay colony enacted a tax on property and profits.¹¹² In 1692 the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies unified and altered the law slightly using the term “income” for the first time,¹¹³ though these taxes were largely directed at income derived from property and not an individual’s income. Colonial tax structures in the 18th and early 19th centuries followed this model.¹¹⁴ In 1840 the federal government withdrew financial support for state projects, which led Pennsylvania and other states to enact a true income tax.¹¹⁵ Though they had a much smaller scope than the modern income tax, these state taxes had a similar structure of graduated tax levels.

Federal income taxes were not enacted until the start of the American Civil War, though they had been proposed during the War of 1812. As the war against the British dragged on into 1815 there was a need for additional revenue, leading to the first federal proposal of a national income tax by Treasury Secretary Alexander J. Dallas.¹¹⁶ Though the war ended before the proposal was seriously discussed, the idea of an income tax alleviating wartime expenses endured. The outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 created enormous pressure to secure new sources

¹¹² Seligman, Edwin Robert Anderson. *The Income Tax: A Study of the History, Theory and Practice of Income Taxation at Home and Abroad*. Macmillan Co., 1911, p. 368.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, Though as Seligman (p. 387) notes this was not a true income tax in that it assessed the income of a property and not the income of the individual. Seligman (1911) points out it “was not an income tax in the modern sense” (p. 383).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 400

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 430

of funds and led a number of states to create or expand income tax programs.¹¹⁷ The federal government enacted a comprehensive tax act in 1862 that included an income tax for the first time.¹¹⁸ The sentiment in Congress was that the tax was a “war-time” tax and so it was allowed to lapse in 1872 as there was no clear need for the revenue.¹¹⁹ The re-introduction of the income tax 20 years later rode on a rising tide of populism in the United States, with its attendant call for more governmentally promoted economic equality.

The rise of populism in the 1890’s in the United States was the result of two trends. First, western settlers who experienced falling land values and overextended credit contributed to an anti-corporate sentiment. Second, rising inequality in the eastern United States agitated poverty stricken workers who viewed government as a tool of business. Supported by the passage of the Homestead Act of 1862, the United States experienced a massive movement westward extending well into the post-Civil War period.¹²⁰ Large numbers of individuals seeking a better life struck out into the relative unknown of the frontier. These settlements began to fail in the late 1880’s as periods of drought made farming more difficult and sharp increases in land prices caused by speculators drove up costs.¹²¹ This forced some individuals to return from whence they came, while those who stayed in the West grew increasingly skeptical of the connections between Washington politics and eastern industrialists.¹²² This situation in the Western agrarian states was accompanied by a corollary movement in the eastern industrial areas. Industrial workers in the late 19th century United States found themselves surrounded by wealth while experiencing deep poverty. The “richest 1 percent of Americans owned 47 percent of the nation’s

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 406

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 437

¹¹⁹ Weisman, Steven R. *The Great Tax Wars*. Simon & Schuster: New York, 2002, p. 137.

¹²⁰ Hicks, John Donald. *The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1931.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 34.

¹²² Ibid.

property...half of those in the industrial sector—including many children in the workforce—lived in poverty.”¹²³ Riding these two trends, failing Frontier settlements and rising wealth inequality in the East, widespread Populist movements coalesced. These movements ultimately supported two propositions, “one, that the government must restrain the selfish tendencies of those who profited at the expense of the poor and needy; the other, that the people, not the plutocrats, must control the government.”¹²⁴

In the midst of the simmering populist movement William Jennings Bryan entered national politics. Bryan met many influential Democratic Party leaders after moving to Nebraska in 1887 and establishing a law practice in Lincoln. He found himself engaged in advocating for Democratic proposals at local political rallies¹²⁵ and was elected to the House of Representatives in 1890. That same election the Populist Party took a majority of seats in the Nebraska State Legislature.¹²⁶ After his election to the House in 1890 Bryan educated himself about the system of tariffs the federal government used to generate revenue, and he formulated the best method to assault the practice as anti-farmer and pro-big business.¹²⁷ Representative Bryan was afforded with a position of influence over fiscal policy, after his support of William Springer for Speaker secured him an appointment on the House Ways and Means Committee. Bryan experienced the Panic of 1893 as a member of this committee, and he responded to it in part by advocating for an income tax.¹²⁸

¹²³ Weisman, Steven R. *The Great Tax Wars*. Simon & Schuster: New York, 2002, p. 179.

¹²⁴ Hicks, John Donald. *The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1931, p. 406.

¹²⁵ Cherny, Robert W. *A Righteous Cause: The Life of William Jennings Bryan*. Library of American Biography. Edited by Oscar Handlin Little, Brown: Boston, 1985.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

The Panic of 1893 resulted primarily from a crisis of confidence in the ability of the United States to maintain a gold standard for payments.¹²⁹ The Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890 required the Federal Reserve to purchase large amounts of silver and create a silver reserve. The resulting over-issue of silver notes and their redemption by note holders for gold brought the US gold reserve to dangerously low levels, which led to a run on gold reserves and created the perception gold was generally unavailable. Foreign investors withdrew large amounts of gold while large banks withheld gold payments and restricted investments, which further exacerbated the perception of gold's scarcity.¹³⁰ This created a credit liquidation cycle with banks and individuals hoarding gold and currency and large financial institutions denying new infusions of capital into the economy. The fiscal policies of the outgoing Benjamin Harrison administration extended the crisis by limiting government revenue and increasing expenditures.¹³¹

Grover Cleveland's administration stepped into a burgeoning economic crisis in 1893 and needed to provide some response. Calling a special session of Congress in the summer of 1893, President Cleveland urged Congress to repeal the Sherman Silver Act of 1890.¹³² The House of Representatives responded promptly by voting for repeal within a span of three weeks, whereas the Senate waited until October to pass the repeal. The President's next effort at fiscal reform was to push tariff reductions, a centerpiece of the Democrat Party platform in the 1892 election. Legislation sponsored by Representative William L. Wilson was written to broadly

¹²⁹ Lauck, William J. *The Causes of the Panic of 1893*. New York, NY: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1907.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, Lauck (1907, p. 122) explains that "[t]he fiscal policy of the Harrison administration,— the increase of Government expenditures and the cutting down of Government receipts from customs,— by weakening the resources of the Treasury, provided favorable conditions for the play of the fundamental cause of the crisis, and thus hastened the precipitation of the disaster." The prevailing wisdom at the time was that deficit spending at the governmental level was detrimental to the economy. Though some elements of central planning were incorporated into national economic policies, the view of deficit spending as anathema would persist until Kennedy explicitly adopted a Keynesian view of economics, which posited that deficit spending could be a useful antidote for sluggish growth. (Adelstein, Richard. "'The Nation as an Economic Unit:' Keynes, Roosevelt, and the Managerial Ideal." *Journal of American History* 78, 1991: 160-87.)

¹³² Rhodes, James Ford. *History of the United States from Hayes to McKinley: 1877-1896*. New York, NY: The MacMillan Company, 1919, p. 403.

reduce a variety of tariffs and, at the behest of William Jennings Bryan, an income tax was added to offset the loss of revenue.¹³³

Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act

The 1894 Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act began life as the Wilson Tariff Act in the House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee. Proposed by Representative William L. Wilson (D-WV) and supported by other Democrats on the committee, including William Jennings Bryan (D-NE), the legislation made it to the floor of the House. The income tax provision was advocated by Bryan as an amendment to the tariff reductions in the act. In the Senate, the bill would undergo massive changes with six hundred and thirty-four amendments¹³⁴ under the direction of Senator Arthur P. Gorman. The final bill included much of the Senatorial changes as well as the income tax provision, which was challenged in the Supreme Court not long afterward and ultimately ruled unconstitutional. The debates about the income tax provision in Congress and at the court demonstrate a clear emotional investment in the principles of justice and virtue as they relate to the issue.

Though the 1894 Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act began without an income tax, William Jennings Bryan insisted an amendment be proposed to add it to the legislation. The amendment was a controversial addition to the act, sparking vociferous opposition and equally vigorous defense.¹³⁵ The major players in the debate on the floor of the House were Bourke Cockran (D-NY) and William Jennings Bryan. Bryan led the spirited defense of the proposition, as he had

¹³³ Painter, Nell Irvin. *Standing at Armageddon: The United States, 1877-1919*. 1st ed. W.W. Norton: New York, 1987, p. 126.

¹³⁴ Rhodes, James Ford. *History of the United States from Hayes to McKinley: 1877-1896*. New York, NY: The MacMillan Company, 1919, p. 420.

¹³⁵ Cherny, Robert W. *A Righteous Cause: The Life of William Jennings Bryan*. Library of American Biography. Edited by Oscar Handlin Little Brown: Boston, 1985, p. 43.

drafted it. He argued that other countries had similar programs of taxation and the United States should spread the burden of government equally. Representative W. Bourke Cockran crafted a number of arguments against the imposition of the income tax, including the idea that wealthy individuals would choose to leave the country, but his pivotal claim was that the tax violated the principles of equality the United States was founded on. This debate over the desirability of the income tax provides a view of the feelings of the participants. The issues at stake fell under individual or collective headings. Depending on one's orientation towards individual character and its relationship to poverty or wealth, the income tax was desirable or heinous. Similarly, how one feels about equality of opportunity versus equal application of the law shapes arguments for or against the tax, as they did in this case.

Bourke Cockran's opposition to the income tax focused on the effect it would have on American democracy. He charged that the tax would create a system where the poor would no longer have a voice in government because they would not be responsible for paying for its operation.¹³⁶ Cockran also wove in the history of America's founding as he invoked the "patron saints of Democracy, the apostles who have laid down the law of the party for 100 years. We stand here with Thomas Jefferson, who was opposed to internal revenue taxation."¹³⁷ Cockran began his conclusion by associating God and country with the founding principles of the United States, and exclaimed "I protest against this betrayal of our ancient principles. I protest against this treason to our faith, our platform, to our traditions, our heroes...I demand for all men the same equality before the law which they enjoy in the sight of God."¹³⁸ He further clarified his call for equality by demanding "one citizenship, one country, one law, one Democratic faith, one

¹³⁶ Weisman, Steven R. *The Great Tax Wars*. Simon & Schuster: New York, 2002, p. 139.

¹³⁷ Cockran, W. Bourke. "Income Tax Speech - January 30, 1894." In *Congressional Record Containing the Proceedings and Debates of the 53rd Congress, 3rd Session*. Washington, D.C., 1894, p. 1654.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

common plane of equality for all the people, without the distinction of wealth, of birth, or race, or of creed!”¹³⁹ Cockran’s linkage of the income tax to the collective identity of the United States was designed to create affiliations across groups and through time by invoking the powerful sentiment attached to the equal application of the law.

Representative Robert Adams Jr. (R-PA) denounced the tax equally as vigorously as Cockran, only he focused on the impact that the tax would have on the individual rather than the collective. He argued that the income tax “is unutterably distasteful both in its moral and material aspects. It does not belong to a free country. It is class legislation. Do you wish to put a tax upon thrift and impose a penalty upon success? ...it is contrary to the traditions and principles of republican government.”¹⁴⁰ Adams presented the tax as violating fundamental principles of equality, in particular the equal application of the law. His remarks went beyond simply outlining the problems with the tax, but also expressed distaste for the program. He exclaimed: “[a]n income tax! A tax so odious that no administration ever dared to impose it except in time of war; and you will find that the people will not tolerate it in time of peace.”¹⁴¹ Adams and Cockran established the foundational arguments against income taxes by relating the tax to a violation of equality and arguing for the preservation of individual virtue. Though not yet stated in terms of the “American Dream,” the positive affective relationship between virtue and success forged in the debates in 1894 remains potent in disputes over the income tax today.

William Jennings Bryan’s defense of the income tax amendment was impassioned and he met Cockran and Adam’s arguments head on. He began by remarking on Cockran’s eloquence as he said “if this were a mere contest in oratory, no one would be presumptuous enough to dispute

¹³⁹ Cockran, W. Bourke. "Income Tax Speech - January 30, 1894." In *Congressional Record Containing the Proceedings and Debates of the 53rd Congress, 3rd Session*. Washington, D.C., 1894, p. 1654.

¹⁴⁰ Adams Jr., Robert. "Income Tax Speech - January 30, 1894." In *Congressional Record Containing the Proceedings and Debates of the 53rd Congress, 3rd Session, Appendix*. . Washington, D.C., 1894, p. 207.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

the prize with the distinguished gentlemen from New York [Mr. Cockran].”¹⁴² Bryan was not deterred though as he argued “clad in the armor of a righteous cause I dare oppose myself to the shafts of his genius, believing that ‘pebbles of truth’ will be more effective than the ‘javelin of error,’ even when hurled by the giant of the Philistines.”¹⁴³ Bryan countered Cockran’s main claim that wealthy individuals would leave the U.S. rather than pay the income tax. In doing so, Bryan attached the notion of taxation to patriotism. He argued “[o]f all the mean men I have ever known, I have never known one so mean that I would be willing to say of him that his patriotism was less than 2 per cent deep. [Laughter and applause.]”¹⁴⁴ The collective affiliation crafted here is the patriotic duty to pay taxes. When speaking about the opponents of the income tax Bryan carefully created distance between himself and their unfeeling advocacy. He argued “[t]hey tell us that those who...insist that each citizen should contribute to government in proportion as God has prospered him are blinded by prejudice against the rich. They...denounce as demagogue anyone who dares to listen to the heart-beat of humanity.”¹⁴⁵ Bryan continued by aligning himself with the poverty stricken population who would benefit most from the income tax. He stated “[t]hese people, sir, whom you call anarchists because they ask that the burdens of government shall be equally borne, these people have ever borne the cross on Cavalry and saved their country with their blood.”¹⁴⁶ William Jennings Bryan used religious association and a

¹⁴² Bryan, William Jennings. "Income Tax Speech - January 30, 1894." In *Congressional Record Containing the Proceedings and Debates of the 53rd Congress, 3rd Session*. Washington, D.C., 1894, p. 1655.

¹⁴³ Ibid. The line “clad in the armor of a righteous cause” is shared with the more famous “Cross of Gold” speech of Bryan’s delivered at the 1896 Democratic National Convention. In that speech, Bryan remarked “[t]he humblest citizen in all the land when clad in the armor of a righteous cause is stronger than all the whole hosts of error that they can bring. I come to speak to you in defense of a cause as holy as the cause of liberty—the cause of humanity” (Bryan, William Jennings. "Cross of Gold." In *Official Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention Held in Chicago, Illinois, July 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11, 1896*. Logansport, Indiana: Wilson, Humphreys & Co., 1896, p. 228).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 1657.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 1658.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 1657.

reminder of the role the poor played in fighting the civil war to buttress the *pathos* he wields defending the income tax bill.

Bryan was not the only Representative to tie the income tax to the lofty ideals the United States had been founded upon. Representative David De Armond (D-MO) advocated the income tax bill by appealing to God, character, and the values upholding the republic. De Armond argued: "...God prosper the Wilson bill, the first leaf in the glorious book of reform in taxation, the promise of a brightening future for those whose genius and labor create the wealth of the land, and whose courage and patriotism are the only sure bulwark in the defense of the Republic."¹⁴⁷ De Armond continued "[t]he passage of the bill will mark the dawn of a brighter day... Can we doubt that in the brighter, happier days to come, good, even-handed, wholesome Democracy shall be triumphant? God hasten the era of equality in taxation and in opportunity."¹⁴⁸ Explicitly defining the issue as one of equality and presenting the possibility of a brighter, hopeful future was central to the creation of positive feelings towards the groups who would be aided by the tax. These advocates were ultimately successful in convincing Congress to enact the legislation and thus the first federal peacetime income tax became law in 1894, though its implementation would be blocked in the courts.

Not long after the Wilson-Gorman Act became law¹⁴⁹ it was challenged in the court case of *Pollock v. Farmers' Loan and Trust Co.* Ultimately the court ruled the entire law unconstitutional in the rehearing of the case.¹⁵⁰ New York Attorney Richard Guthrie orchestrated

¹⁴⁷ De Armond, David A., "Income Tax Speech - January 30, 1894." In *Congressional Record Containing the Proceedings and Debates of the 53rd Congress, 3rd Session, Appendix*. Washington, D.C., 1894, p. 406.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ President Grover Cleveland never signed the completed act, as the Senate had attached a number of amendments watering down its provisions. He did feel it was superior to the McKinley Tariff Act it replaced however (Weisman 2002) and so allowed it to become law.

¹⁵⁰ In their initial ruling the court struck down taxes derived from property, as "direct taxes." This ruling was unclear about whether the entire law was unconstitutional; however, and so the plaintiffs requested a rehearing. Due to

the legal challenge to the Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act. He first persuaded two of his clients, Farmers' Loan and Trust Company and Continental Trust Company, to create resolutions stating it was their intention to follow the law.¹⁵¹ He then found stockholders in the companies and supported their lawsuit against the banks challenging the constitutionality of the law by alleging it was a direct tax and not uniformly administered.¹⁵² Finally, he hired an eminent attorney, James C. Carter, to defend the banks.¹⁵³ The case was expedited before the Supreme Court and heard on March 7, 1895 where the Attorney General Richard Olney joined with Carter to defend the constitutionality of the law. Olney and Carter took a straightforward approach to its defense arguing that the law did not constitute a direct tax on property, but only an indirect tax on income and that uniformity governed geographic restrictions, not the exempted income level (\$4,000) in the law.¹⁵⁴ Following Olney's strict legal arguments defending the income tax, Guthrie's legal team presented a series of counter-arguments. They contended that the tax was a direct tax and thus must be apportioned evenly according to population. They also contended uniformity required no exemptions, and that the tax must apply equally to all citizens, not just those with an annual income greater than \$4,000. It was not the legal arguments that would win the day; however, as the arguments for the plaintiffs ultimately rested on a vision of success and democracy that appealed to the justices.

illness Justice Howell Jackson was not well enough to attend the initial case in March, but was well enough to attend the rehearing in May. In a 5-4 ruling the court threw out the entire act as unconstitutional (Weisman 2002).

¹⁵¹ Hohenstein, Kurt. "William Jennings Bryan and the Income Tax: Economic Statism and Judicial Usurpation in the Election of 1896." *Journal of Law & Politics* 16 J. L. & Politics 163 (Winter 2000).

¹⁵² Article I, Sec. 2, Clause 3 of the U.S. Constitution stated (since amended): "Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all other persons" meaning that direct taxes must be apportioned equally according to population. This would render the income tax infeasible as the least populous eastern states were also the wealthiest at the time (Seligman 1911).

¹⁵³ Hohenstein 2000

¹⁵⁴ Weisman 2002

The outcome of the case was not resolved on legal technicalities, but instead the feelings of the justices weighed heavily in the decision. The lawyers for the plaintiffs relied on arguments “that evoked great emotion: appeals to morality, justice, fairness, the future of democracy, the stability of the country and the question of basic rights to privacy and property in an evolving economy.”¹⁵⁵ Kurt Hohenstein, a constitutional law scholar, remarked in an analysis of the case that “it was not the rationality of Olney, but instead the class rhetoric of Joseph Choate opposing the tax, that swayed the justices.”¹⁵⁶ Specifically, the “closing argument of Choate sought to arouse the fears and prejudices of the judges. He wasted no time in asserting that it was property, not precedent, that needed protection.”¹⁵⁷ Justice John Harlan provided a vigorous dissent in opposition to Chief Justice Melville Fuller’s majority decision, demonstrating the emotional power of the issues at stake, even for a Supreme Court Justice. Harlan delivered his dissent orally with “...his face reddening, Harlan banged at the bench, glowered at his colleagues and even shook his finger at both Fuller and Field...”¹⁵⁸ Despite having the support of Congress, the Supreme Court’s decision on May 20, 1895 was a death knell for the income tax.¹⁵⁹ It would be over a decade before President Theodore Roosevelt advocated for a restructured tax and not until

¹⁵⁵ Weisman 2002, p. 150.

¹⁵⁶ Hohenstein, Kurt. "William Jennings Bryan and the Income Tax: Economic Statism and Judicial Usurpation in the Election of 1896." *Journal of Law & Politics* 16 J. L. & Politics 163 (Winter, 2000).

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Weisman 2002, p. 157.

¹⁵⁹ The Supreme Court decision nullified the legislative work of William Jennings Bryan, but that didn’t prevent him from campaigning for an income tax as part of the populist platform. In an address to the Democratic National Convention in 1896 entitled “Cross of Gold” Bryan attacked income inequality. Though the focus of the speech was the necessity of coining silver to combat the pernicious effects of a solely gold-backed currency for the poor and working classes, Bryan continued his advocacy for an income tax. He argued that the “income tax is a just law. It simply intends to put the burdens of government justly upon the backs of the people (Bryan, William Jennings. "Cross of Gold." In *Official Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention Held in Chicago, Illinois, July 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11, 1896*. Logansport, Indiana: Wilson, Humphreys & Co., 1896 p. 231). Bryan won the Democratic nomination that year but was ultimately defeated by William McKinley in the Presidential race (Cherny, Robert W. *A Righteous Cause: The Life of William Jennings Bryan*. Library of American Biography. Edited by Oscar Handlin Little Brown: Boston, 1985). As a pro-business Republican McKinley’s economic policies were directed at changing the tariff rather than reopening the controversy surrounding the income tax. His 1900 defeat of Bryan’s second bid at the Presidency was decisive in consolidating this trajectory in U.S. economic policy (Olcott, Charles Sumner. *The Life of William McKinley*. Vol. 2, New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916).

President Howard Taft's administration would another legislative attempt be made, this time with a constitutional amendment clearing up the legal problems the court found in *Pollock*.

Teddy Roosevelt and the 16th Amendment

The lively debates surrounding the Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act's income tax provision demonstrate that the issues involved in crafting and implementing an income tax were not solely based on legal or economic concerns. The relationship an income tax has to principles of justice and virtue, the vision of individual success, and the collective good were all relevant considerations for the disputants. Because the Supreme Court struck down the first peacetime income tax enacted by Congress, President Theodore Roosevelt pushed for a constitutional amendment. Though ultimately unsuccessful, Roosevelt's efforts in campaigning for the amendment had a lasting effect. President William Howard Taft succeeded in getting the 16th Amendment passed, which specifically granted Congress the power to tax incomes. While the income tax debates of the 1890's were emotionally charged and brought up fundamental questions of the American character, rhetoric on the income tax in the early 1900s broadened the scope of these inquiries and deepened the investigation into the heart of the matter. Teddy Roosevelt contextualized the virtue of the citizenry within the framework of equality of opportunity by supporting a vision of American democratic governance intervening in the market to preserve justice.

The discussion of American national identity can be found in the work of Theodore Roosevelt, both in addresses directly relating to the income tax and speeches contextualizing that advocacy. This includes "The Strenuous Life" a public address delivered in 1899 in Chicago outlining his commitment to a particular brand of the American character, as well as a 1907

address to Congress expounding the necessity of an income tax and an estate tax, and most significantly a 1910 address delivered in Osawatimie, KS known as “The New Nationalism.” In these three addresses Roosevelt defined what he understood as essential to the American identity. He then uses this conception of American to inform his proposals for specific policies in the address to Congress. His culminating speech in Kansas combined the vision for the proper character of America with the specific policy proposals as he argued for a role of government in allowing Americans to flourish.

Theodore Roosevelt has captured the imagination of the United States as he instantiated a vision of the ideal American he advocated for. Though he was wealthy from the day he was born in New York on October 27th, 1858, his life was not always easy and it was through his struggles and triumphs that he came to represent the strain of individualism and frontier spirit associated with the American Dream.¹⁶⁰ As a young boy he was afflicted with severe asthma and experienced a struggle to breathe and stay alive, experiences that shaped his view of survival and human existence.¹⁶¹ Taking up boxing and other physical sports such as hunting and fencing proved a way for him to develop and overcome his childhood affliction. After the death of his first wife Alice in 1884 Roosevelt took up ranching in the Dakotas, further reinforcing his frontier spirit. Returning to New York after his cattle were destroyed by blizzards he engaged once more in politics, becoming the Assistant Secretary of the Navy in 1897, just in time to help prepare the country for the Spanish-American War. After the declaration of war in 1898 he formed a volunteer cavalry regiment known as the “Rough Riders.” It was as the commander of

¹⁶⁰ Dalton, Kathleen. *Theodore Roosevelt: A Strenuous Life*. Random House LLC, 2007.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

the Rough Riders that Roosevelt consolidated his fame and ultimately campaigned as a war hero, securing the Governorship of New York in 1898.¹⁶²

Teddy Roosevelt publically argued for his philosophy of a strenuous life as the best pathway to virtue and applied this viewpoint as he defended income tax increases. In a speech before the Hamilton Club in 1899, Theodore Roosevelt describes what he sees as the essential American Character. Roosevelt identifies his audience as individuals who “embody all that is most American in the American character”¹⁶³ and his message as preaching “the doctrine of the strenuous life, the life of toil and effort, of labor and strife.”¹⁶⁴ The doctrine of the “strenuous life” undergirded his policy proposals and arguments throughout his presidency and provided the rhetorical foundation for the 1907 Annual Address to Congress. In that address Roosevelt argued in favor of an estate tax and an income tax. He justified these proposals by arguing that “[t]he fortunes amassed through corporate organization are now so large ... as to make it a matter of necessity to give to ... the Government, which represents the people as a whole--some effective power of supervision over their corporate use.”¹⁶⁵ Discussing the necessity of checking corporate greed and power, Roosevelt argued that unrestrained corporate power would destroy self-reliant individuals such as the American farmer. Appealing to their special character Roosevelt argued that “[n]o growth of cities, no growth of wealth, can make up for any loss in either the number or the character of the farming population...We cannot afford to lose that preeminently typical American...[t]he farmer must not lose his independence, his initiative, his rugged self-reliance...”¹⁶⁶ For Teddy Roosevelt the income tax served as a vehicle for preserving the rugged self-reliant farmer against the encroachment of corporate greed. Though he defended the passage

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses*, (New York: The Century Co., 1903) p. 1

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Theodore Roosevelt, "Seventh Annual Message to Congress (December 3, 1907)."

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

of an income tax as part of his overall progressive reforms, Congress never saw fit to pass an income tax proposal during his presidency. It wasn't until 1909 that an amendment to the constitution authorizing Congress to impose income taxes would be presented to the states for ratification.

The 1908 Presidential election featured Republican William Howard Taft running against the populist Democrat William Jennings Bryan. Though Bryan was a vociferous advocate of the income tax, it was not a large feature of the campaign on either side as the focus was primarily on corporations and the need to continue Roosevelt's trust-busting efforts.¹⁶⁷ The 1908 Democratic Party Platform included an income tax and defended a constitutional amendment as the method to create its legal basis.¹⁶⁸ The Republican Party platform included no specific mention of the income tax, but did advocate for an immediate reduction of tariff rates. Winning the election in 1908, President William Howard Taft oversaw an expansion of corporate taxes and the passage of the 16th Amendment to the constitution, which specifically granted Congress the authority to levy direct taxes without regard to uniformity or apportionment according to population.¹⁶⁹ While corporate taxes invited some controversy, the 16th Amendment cruised through Congress. Opponents of the income tax believed the ratification of the amendment was unlikely and supporters of an income tax would be forced to wait on the outcome of ratification before pursuing further tax measures.¹⁷⁰ The period after 1909 proved formative in shaping the debate about the 16th Amendment and the relationship between the tax, justice, and virtue. One

¹⁶⁷ Cherny, Robert W. *A Righteous Cause : The Life of William Jennings Bryan*. Library of American Biography. edited by Oscar Handlin Little Brown: Boston, 1985.

¹⁶⁸ The Party Platform argued for the income tax as a necessary step for the just application of taxation. The platform stated: "We favor an income tax as part of our revenue system, and we urge the submission of a constitutional amendment specifically authorizing Congress to levy and collect a tax upon individual and corporate incomes, to the end that wealth may bear its proportionate share of the burdens of the Federal Government" (Democratic National Committee, "Democratic Party Platform of 1908." In *The American Presidency Project*, edited by Gerrhard Peters and John T. Woolley. Online at: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29589>, 1908).

¹⁶⁹ Weisman 2002

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

significant event in the formation of opinion on this matter was a speech delivered in 1910 by Teddy Roosevelt.

In 1910 Teddy Roosevelt returned to the United States after a yearlong journey through Europe and Africa. Roosevelt engaged on a speaking tour of the United States¹⁷¹ propagating his philosophy of a “New Nationalism,” which borrowed heavily from a book published in 1909 by Herbert Croly entitled *The Promise of American Life*. The book was a significant and influential work at the time it was published.¹⁷² In the historical treatment of the United States Croly attempts to reconcile the necessity of the government to intervene on behalf of self-reliant individuals while at the same time preserving the individualist spirit that made America great. He does so by arguing “traditional American individualism, the core of Jeffersonian democracy, was inadequate”¹⁷³ as the natural harmony that Jefferson believed could be achieved through minimal government involvement was ill equipped to deal with corporations. Though Roosevelt and Croly differed on the scope of government intervention in individual’s lives, they agreed that the purpose of intervention should be the promotion of progress. Croly notes that there is a strong strain of nationalism present in the United States in the early 20th century. He argued the “average American is nothing if not patriotic”¹⁷⁴ and this patriotism “combines loyalty to historical tradition and precedent with the imaginative projection of an ideal national Promise.”¹⁷⁵ For Croly, what defines the “American Promise” is the feeling the future will be made brighter through the exercise of democracy where the individual and the collective work

¹⁷¹ Upon returning to the U.S. from abroad Roosevelt felt his successor, and former Vice President, William Howard Taft had mishandled a number of issues. He observed that the Republican Party appeared fractured and sought to provide a unifying influence. Endeavoring to reunite the party and provide crucial momentum to his party for the upcoming elections, Roosevelt decided to tour the country and speak about his ideas for the future of the nation. (Weisman 2002)

¹⁷² McGerr, Michael "Foreword to the 1989 Edition." In *The Promise of American Life*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1989.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

¹⁷⁴ Croly, Herbert. *The Promise of American Life*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1989, p. 1.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

towards a common ideal.¹⁷⁶ Roosevelt's proposals that derived from some of the ideals discussed in the book would form the foundation of a run at the presidency in 1912 as part of the Progressive Party.¹⁷⁷

Teddy Roosevelt was a fervent believer in the unique identity of America and its special place in history. In his 1910 address entitled "The New Nationalism" he outlined the inexorably progressive movement of history, with the United States at the forefront. He began the address by proclaiming that "[w]e come here to-day to commemorate one of the epoch-making events of the long struggle...for the uplift of humanity. Our country — this great republic — means nothing unless it means the triumph of a real democracy..."¹⁷⁸ The role of the government he enumerated was to create "an economic system under which each man shall be guaranteed the opportunity to show the best that there is in him."¹⁷⁹ Roosevelt focused on the virtue of the individual as it was secured through government and argued that the most important elements in anyone's "career must be the sum of those qualities which, in the aggregate, we speak of as character."¹⁸⁰ Roosevelt positioned government in a supplementary role as he argued "[t]he prime problem of our nation is to get the right type of good citizenship, and, to get it, we must have progress, and our public ... must be genuinely progressive."¹⁸¹ The type of progressivism Roosevelt argued for also included the ratification of the 16th Amendment. He argued that large fortunes were qualitatively different than the simple pay acquired through hard work, and therefore he advocated for "a graduated income tax on big fortunes"¹⁸² as well as a steep estate tax.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Weisman 2002, p. 239

¹⁷⁸ Roosevelt, Theodore. "The New Nationalism, August 31, 1910." Osawatomie, Kansas, 1910.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

The progressive message of Roosevelt's "New Nationalism" speech reflected changing political attitudes in the United States as well, paving the way for ratification of the 16th Amendment.¹⁸³ This ratification ultimately came about as a result of a democratic swing in the 1910 elections and the moderation of even intensely anti-tax strongholds such as New York.¹⁸⁴ Many states had adopted similar tax measures, with Wisconsin adopting a permanent income tax in 1911.¹⁸⁵ In the years before its ratification in 1913 the United States would see a Presidential election that featured a three party battle between Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson. Roosevelt would secure the nomination of the Progressive Party, while Taft remained a Republican and Wilson ran as a Democrat. Wilson's victory in 1912 would be the first time a Democrat had been in the White House in 16 years.

Woodrow Wilson took office in March of 1913 and immediately began work to dismantle the high tariffs he had campaigned against, a proposal that would also include a graduated income tax. The day after his inauguration Wilson called Congress into a special session to consider reducing tariffs across the board. Congress came together on April 8, 1913 where Wilson addressed them personally, the first time a President had done so since Jefferson.¹⁸⁶ Working to pass an existing bill crafted by Representative Oscar W. Underwood (D-AL), Wilson argued that the current tariff levels created artificial privilege. He stated: "[w]e must abolish everything that bears even the semblance of privilege or of any kind of artificial advantage, and put our business men and producers under the stimulation of a constant necessity to be efficient, economical, and enterprising."¹⁸⁷ The tariff bill reduced revenues and so a new tax had to be put into place to offset that loss. Representative Cordell Hull (D-TN) proposed a

¹⁸³ Weisman 2002

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Wilson, Woodrow. "Address to a Joint Session of Congress on Tariff Reform." April 8, 1913.

graduated income tax be imposed on individuals earning more than \$4,000. The amendment passed the House easily and was incorporated into the tariff bill. The House approved the tariff bill 281-139 on May 8, 1913 sending it to the Senate for review.¹⁸⁸ The Senate Finance Committee's senior Democrat, Furnifold McLendel Simmons (D-NC) was opposed to tariff reform, but Wilson backed his efforts to become chairman of the finance committee winning his and the Senate's support of the bill. The Underwood-Simmons Tariff bill, which included the first income tax enacted after the ratification of the 16th amendment, was signed into law on October 3, 1913.¹⁸⁹ Though the tax itself only affected a small percentage of citizens it was symbolically important for proponents of a more just economic system.

Conclusion

The road to the first peacetime income tax was circuitous and occupied the space of almost 20 years. The populism of the late 1880s fired William Jennings Bryan's impassioned defense of the proposal as it supported the historic commitment of the United States to equality of opportunity. Equally vociferous opponents such as Bourke Cockran warned that the tax would undermine the virtue of the citizenry. Each aspect of these income tax debates, justice and virtue, became fused together in the vision Theodore Roosevelt had for the nation. In expressing his support for the 16th Amendment, and the need for equality of opportunity through democratic politics, Roosevelt transformed feelings about the country and the individual. The rhetorical transformation Roosevelt achieved in focusing efforts on the development of the individual, rather than on structural reforms remains a powerful influence on debates over taxation and economic reforms. Roosevelt "promoted a philosophy of life that he believed fundamental to the

¹⁸⁸ Weisman 2002

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

development of the American race”¹⁹⁰ relying on the strenuous conditions of the frontier to bring communities together through their common work. Roosevelt’s vision of the American spirit provides “the underpinnings for a metaphor of American culture that became popular in the early twentieth century and continues to resonate today.”¹⁹¹ In the next chapter the encounter of the “rugged individualist” with World War I is discussed as it relates to national sacrifice and the common commitment to democratic institutions.

¹⁹⁰ Dorsey, Leroy G. and Harlow, Rachel M. “ ‘We Want Americans Pure and Simple’: Theodore Roosevelt and the Myth of Americanism,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6(1), 2003, p. 58

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 3

NATIONALISM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAN DREAM: THE IMPACT OF TWO WORLD WARS AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION

War changes people and countries. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities in Europe in 1914 the United States had an inward focus, and concerns for political ideals were passionately debated for their effect in America. Involvement of the U.S. in World War I clarified a simmering nationalist sentiment, shaping the contours of Woodrow Wilson's defense of income taxes. His arguments were directly relevant to the public sharing of an emotional commitment to the country and its democratic core. The Great Depression initially caused widespread despair and panic, but ultimately directed nationalist feelings toward equality and justice. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's election and support of a just tax policy moved the country to hope an American Dream was possible. A Dream where the individual had the ability to strive on equal terms with all others. The outbreak of hostilities in World War II heightened and redirected nationalism in the U.S., unifying the country and creating a sense of a need for sacrifice. FDR harnessed these collectivizing feelings with a call for historic increases in income taxes, which was part of the nobility of sacrificing oneself for one's country.

This chapter argues that the periods of World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II were transformative in the development of rhetoric on income taxes. The benefits of the tax became tied to nationalism and the necessity of individual sacrifice in service to national ideals. Through these eras the "American Dream" was given form and substance in the 1930s, built on the hope of a better tomorrow through the progress of the United States. World War I

crafted feelings of nationalism and presented a global crisis of values, testing the commitment to pursuing freedom abroad. The Great Depression facilitated the creation of a more just income tax system with its steeply progressive rates, and it demanded a collective commitment to fairness. World War II attached feelings of sacrifice for country to the Dream and its invocation in the rhetoric on income taxes of that time period, creating the idea of belonging to a nation through the payment of income taxes.

This chapter is divided into three sections, World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II. In the first section the impact of the First World War on the national psyche is analyzed as it pertains to the development of nationalism and defense of democratic ideals. Woodrow Wilson's April 2, 1917 "Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War against Germany" demonstrates the commitment to spend blood and treasure defending these ideals, while his May 27, 1918 "Address on War Financing" encourages nationalistic feelings accompanying war. The second section outlines the changes the Great Depression wrought upon the feelings of the country and the pathway that led the United States forward. Focusing on FDR's 1933 inaugural address provides a view of the collectivizing effect of his rhetoric, which his 1935 "Message to the Congress on Tax Revision" used as it laid out a vision of an income tax system that promoted justice as a method to achieve equality and economic recovery. The third section assesses the effect World War II had in igniting a special form of nationalism, which emphasized individual sacrifice in the defense of country. An April 28, 1942 fireside chat of FDR's known as "A Call for Sacrifice" is crucial in constructing this feeling, especially as it regards giving up income for the sake of collective good. The passage of the Revenue Act of 1942 ratified these feelings as it implemented a steeply progressive rate in defense of the national good.

World War I

The United States prior to World War I was undergoing a cultural transformation the war hastened. Americans moved from a belief in the inexorable march of history, with a clear and universal moral purpose exemplified by the as yet undefined “American Dream,” to a feeling the future was uncertain. The entrance of the U.S. into the war in 1917 clarified the national purpose and linked income taxation to the feelings of nationalism propagated in support of the war. The debate over how to pay for the war became a litmus test for the American values that were being fought for abroad. Whether the U.S. involvement in the war represented an expansionist business venture or support for the embattled free republics of Europe mattered for how people felt about income taxes. The years leading up to World War I and the U.S.’s entry into the war reconfigured feelings about the income tax and the American Dream by attaching a nationalist sentiment to the efforts to win the war. The wartime defenses of the income tax contributed to the collective feeling that America was worthy of individual sacrifice.

The United States was in a state of cultural and emotional flux before the war broke out. Henry May, in *The End of American Innocence*, argues the United States experienced a transformation in culture, morals, and thinking in the years between 1914 and 1917 before the U.S. entry into World War I. This transformation changed the fundamentally stable feelings regarding the place of the United States in the world and the status of American values prior to this period. Before 1914 the feeling that the inexorable progress of history was secure remained strong despite the upheaval of the 1800s with the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the industrialization of the Gilded Age. Global revolutionary developments challenged this feeling while at the same time sharpening a belief in the exceptional nature of the American system.

The stability of the core American belief in progress endured despite the historic changes throughout the Civil War and the industrialization of the late 1800s. Politically connected and powerful individuals “had come to consciousness in the midst of a devastating and revolutionary civil war”¹⁹² then lived through rapid industrialization, and “since the announcement of the Darwinian hypothesis, the moral cosmos had been subject to a succession of earthquake shocks.”¹⁹³ Despite these vast and rapid changes, May argues that “the main tenets of traditional American faith had managed to adapt and survive.”¹⁹⁴ The animating feature of the American emotional universe in the early 20th century was “practical idealism,” a feeling that there were certain universal moral principles and those principles were tied to the inevitable progress exemplified by the American experience. As May argues “[t]he main guarantee of universal morality was neither in the mind of God nor in argument nor in tradition but in the unfolding American future.”¹⁹⁵ The feeling that the United States was part of the inevitable progress of the human race would be tested by a series upheavals starting in 1914.

A period of unrest that had been building in the world and the United States was percolating in 1914. “American labor struggles, the Mexican Revolution, the Balkan wars...and the great strikes”¹⁹⁶ all served to complicate the core feeling that America was the moral leader of an essentially peaceful world. Women’s rights movements including Margaret Sanger’s defense of birth control and the nationwide suffrage campaign contributed to a growing sense of change.¹⁹⁷ Combined with the introduction of new technologies that substantially altered the experience of freedom and the world, the United States before the war was already in a state of

¹⁹² May, Henry Farnham. *The End of American Innocence: A Study of the First Years of Our Own Time, 1912-1917*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1959, p. 9.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 334.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

emotional uncertainty regarding the future and America's place in that future. The popularization of the automobile and the widespread availability of movie theaters accentuated this feeling, providing people with a freedom of movement and thought previously unavailable. Massive infusions of new immigrants brought a variety of differing cultural attitudes into the U.S. as well.¹⁹⁸

The eruption of war in Europe in 1914 occurred in the midst of this cultural change in the U.S. and crystallized the feelings of uncertainty that characterized the era. The American belief in progress and moral certainty "received a shattering blow."¹⁹⁹ The course forward was unclear and "in the years of argument over American action, they had to draw on whatever emotions and ideas were uppermost in their minds."²⁰⁰ For the keepers of American traditions and conservative defenders of the democratic culture the "war provided outlets for angry emotions, already running high against scoffers and cynics, against moral, sexual and racial insurrection."²⁰¹ On the other side of the issue were religious fundamentalists who opposed war on biblical grounds as well as socialists who believed the war demonstrated "the inadequacy of a philosophy based on sordid materialism."²⁰² In the middle resided most Americans whose "[p]rogressive emotions pulled both ways, against Kaiserism and yet for peace."²⁰³ As the war dragged on and the U.S. continued to debate the issue the most common feeling was nationalism, with citizens determined to simply beat the Germans who had sunk a number of American ships including the *Lusitania* with 128 people aboard.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁸ May, Henry Farnham. *The End of American Innocence: A Study of the First Years of Our Own Time, 1912-1917*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1959.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 361.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 367.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 368

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 370

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

The declaration of war against Germany in 1917 was accompanied by a debate about the best course to pay for the war. The options were either increased taxes or the issuance of war bonds. In Woodrow Wilson's "Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War against Germany" delivered on April 2, 1917 he recommended taxes be increased rather than loans secured. Wilson argued that the war should involve "the granting of adequate credits to the Government, sustained...by well conceived taxation."²⁰⁵ When describing the commitment of the United States in the war Wilson stated "America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured."²⁰⁶ His defense of U.S. involvement in the war went counter to his earlier hope for non-intervention, but he aligned with a growing sense of national and patriotic feelings in the country. In *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* Christopher Capozzola argues the war clarified collectivist feelings, which had to that point been indistinct, crystallizing a sense of national identity and political involvement. He argues "[p]eople sacrificed, fought, and even died because of commitments to a common political life...They created those obligations in their everyday institutions, places where they expressed their understandings of citizenship and fairness, of membership and belonging, where they came to consensus about their obligations in face-to-face meetings."²⁰⁷ Citizens affiliated themselves more strongly with each other in relationship to their commitment to the ideals of the nation.

Nationalism and patriotism are strong motivating forces in the social and political life of an individual and a community. In "Beyond Reason: The Nature of the Ethnonational Bond"

²⁰⁵ Wilson, Woodrow. "Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War against Germany," April 2, 1917.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Capozzola, Christopher. *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen*. Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 213-214.

Connor Walker argues that nationalism constitutes “an emotional attachment to one’s people”²⁰⁸ and is more powerful than rationally bound argument. For Walker the conviction that one is part of a nation goes beyond simple identification as it is the intuition that “one’s nation is unique in its origin”²⁰⁹ a uniqueness directing feelings about one’s nation as well as others. These feelings transcend rational disputation as “convictions concerning the singular origin and evolution of one’s nation belong to the realm of the sub-conscious and the non-rational.”²¹⁰ Creating nationalistic feelings can be done through a carefully constructed rhetoric where the “core of the nation has been reached and triggered through the use of familial metaphors which can magically transform the mundanely tangible into emotion-laden phantasma.”²¹¹ Though a variety of factors were responsible for rising nationalist sentiments in the United States before and during World War I, the defenses of the income tax contributed to those sentiments.

Income tax rhetoric during World War I occurred against the backdrop of necessity and choice. Funding for the war was a necessity, which could not be avoided, but the U.S. could choose to try and fund the war solely through the issuance of war bonds, or taxes could be imposed on other goods and services rather than income. In 1917 Woodrow Wilson’s Secretary of the Treasury William McAdoo worked with House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Claude Kitchin on a compromise package, which included a substantial income tax. The presence of the war was essential to the creation of a broad-based income tax. In *War and Taxes* Steven A. Bank, Kirk J. Stark, and Joseph Thorndike argue that the war “brought the income tax to the forefront in modern public finance. The transition...could not have occurred without the

²⁰⁸ Connor, Walker. "Beyond Reason: The Nature of the Ethnonational Bond." *Ethnic and racial studies* 16, no. 3 (1993), p. 374.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 382.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 385.

demand for fiscal sacrifice that accompanied wartime politics.”²¹² It was the demand for sacrifice that made the wartime income taxes so inextricably linked to the propagation of American nationalism in the early years of the war. Bank et al. argue “...for the first time, the notion of wartime fiscal sacrifice was cultivated, marketed, and sold to the American public.”²¹³ For the most part this campaign didn’t represent modern public relations efforts, but despite being “focused primarily on speeches and public appearances because of the nature of media at the time, it was still a major advance in public finance.”²¹⁴ Persuading citizens to choose to sacrifice for their nation required they feel strongly affiliated with the country and its democratic ideals, as further efforts to increase taxes would demonstrate.

The initial round of income taxes had been broadly supported in Congress and by the public, but further legislation facilitated impressive displays of unifying and emotional rhetoric from President Woodrow Wilson. Though the War Revenue Act of 1917 was pivotal in financing the war, more was needed. In the spring of 1918 the U.S. government was running significant deficits and a new round of tax increases was necessary.²¹⁵ Congress was facing a tough wartime electoral cycle and so was hesitant to pass a new round of imposing levies on their constituents.²¹⁶ On May 27 President Woodrow Wilson gave an impassioned defense of the need for additional revenue, tying the call to the collective sacrifice and love of country that had sustained the United States up to that point. Relating the duty of the Congress to the troops in the field he stated “I know that you will begrudge the work to be done here by us no more than the men begrudge us theirs who lie in the trenches and sally forth to their death. There is a

²¹² Bank, Steven A, Kirk J Stark, and Joseph J Thorndike. *War and Taxes*. The Urban Institute, 2008, p. 49.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Weisman, Steven R. *The Great Tax Wars*. Simon & Schuster: New York, 2002.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

stimulating comradeship knitting us all together.”²¹⁷ Wilson carefully created affiliation between the soldiers who have been drafted and sent to fight the war and the business and political leaders at home who could sacrifice as well.

Woodrow Wilson related the sacrifice of the citizenry to the value of justice the United States was founded on. Regarding the willingness of the population to pay additional taxes Wilson opined “the people of this country are not only united in the resolute purpose to win this war but are ready and willing to bear any burden and undergo any sacrifice that it may be necessary for them to bear in order to win it.”²¹⁸ Wilson remarked “...if the burden is justly distributed and the sacrifice made a common sacrifice from which none escapes who can bear it at all, they will carry it cheerfully and with a sort of solemn pride.”²¹⁹ Valuing justice is prevalent in arguments from proponents of income taxes across eras from William Jennings Bryan to President Obama. Wilson concluded his address expressing his pride in the country. He stated “I have always been proud to be an American, and was never more proud than now, when all that we have said and all that we have foreseen about our people is coming true.”²²⁰ Wilson’s efforts to persuade Congress and the people to accept further sacrifice was ultimately successful, though not until February of 1919 when the bill was signed into law.²²¹ Nevertheless his efforts would have a lasting effect on defenses of income taxes and feelings about country and sacrifice.

²¹⁷ Wilson, Woodrow. "Address on War Financing - May 27." 1918.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Bank, Steven A, Kirk J Stark, and Joseph J Thorndike. *War and Taxes*. The Urban Institute, Washington, D.C., 2008.

The Great Depression

The national mood in the United States after World War I and before the onset of the Great Depression is difficult to gauge, though the economic collapse had predictable effects. The best scholarly descriptions of the 1920s point to a sense of discontent felt by much of the populace.²²² Political trends indicate a populace disillusioned with the promises of the progressive movement and supportive of policies that were increasingly isolationist, channeling the nationalism of the war era into nativist impulses. At the end of the 1920s the stock market began to fluctuate and on October 29, 1929 prices collapsed sending ripples throughout the banking sector.²²³ The collapse set off a wave of despair throughout the United States and the ensuing months led to widespread unemployment, food shortages, and stalled progress for the country.

The specific figure of the “American Dream” emerged at this time providing a sense of what was lost and what could be hoped for, despite the bleak conditions. The election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932 provided a new hope for the populace, crystallizing feelings of collective commitment and inculcating them with a sense of the government’s responsibility for creating equality. His 1933 inaugural address was directed at reorienting the American people towards a hopeful collective mission and offered a pathway forward. FDR’s 1935 “Message to the Congress on Tax Revision” reflected his feeling that the tax system should provide some measure of justice through its creation of a greater level of equality of opportunity. These two addresses emphasized the commitment to economic justice as an essential feature of American democracy and a necessary component of the recovery from the Great Depression.

²²² Goldberg, David Joseph. *Discontented America: The United States in the 1920s*. JHU Press, 1999.

²²³ White, Eugene N. "Banking and Finance in the Twentieth Century." In *The Cambridge Economic History of the United States*, edited by Robert E. Gallman and Stanley L. Engerman: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

The feelings of nationalism enflamed during World War I were dampened in the aftermath of the war, before becoming attached to strong collectivist sentiments during the Great Depression. In the wake of World War I the United States was a player on the world stage.²²⁴ Woodrow Wilson was a chief negotiator of the Treaty of Versailles and aggressively pushed the creation of a League of Nations. Despite his central involvement in the process of negotiating for the League, domestic politics were against him and Congress ultimately failed to approve the United States' participation.²²⁵ Involvement in the war had sparked an intense nationalism, which found a new outlet in the 1920s with the 1924 passage of the National Origins Act and Asian Exclusion Act heavily restricting foreign immigration into the United States.²²⁶

The 1920s saw a broad array of income tax cuts largely at the behest of the Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon. Advocating for an income tax system that preserved the possibility of success, Mellon attacked the high rates necessitated by wartime expenditures. As the longest serving Secretary of the Treasury Mellon exerted considerable influence on fiscal policy. In the book expounding his views, *Taxation: The People's Business*, Mellon outlined the role he believed taxes should have in promoting virtue. Mellon argued that excessive taxes destroy a person's initiative and people will no longer exert themselves, "and the country will be deprived of the energy on which its continued greatness depends."²²⁷ Furthermore, Mellon argued that equality demands income taxes be levied without "arraying one class of taxpayers against another."²²⁸

Mellon's attacks on the income tax were successful. During his time as the Secretary of the Treasury (1921-1932) the top income brackets experienced rate cuts from a high of 77

²²⁴ Goldberg, David Joseph. *Discontented America: The United States in the 1920s*. JHU Press, 1999.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Mellon, Andrew W. *Taxation: The People's Business*. New York, NY: The MacMillan Company, 1924, p. 12.

²²⁸ Ibid.

percent down to 24 percent.²²⁹ Historians have noted that “Mellon’s case for tax reduction was consistent, passionate, and politically compelling”²³⁰ contributing directly to the sustained reductions of the period. Andrew Mellon’s influence on tax policy remained salient throughout the roaring twenties and his established wisdom of low tax rates stayed in place until 1932, when soaring government deficits demanded action. The result was the Revenue Act of 1932, a compromise package that heavily reduced exemptions, increased rates on top earners, and created larger burdens on lower income brackets. The overall effect was to make the income tax system more regressive at a time when incomes were falling.²³¹

The national mood in the United States after the economic collapse of 1929 can easily be described as despairing. Arthur M. Schlesinger in *The Crisis of the Old Order, 1919-1933* argues that “[p]eople were sullen rather than bitter, despairing rather than violent. Instead of fuming with resentment and rushing to barricades, they sat at home, rocked dispiritedly in their chairs and blamed ‘conditions.’”²³² This despair would not last forever as even the downtrodden would begin to search for other options. Schlesinger argues that as the crisis deepened and conditions persisted “1932 was bringing signs of a new resentment. For the first time, a bitterness was beginning to rise against the rich and respectable. As yet, the bitterness was scattered and fragmentary. But it might foreshadow a deeper change in the popular mood.”²³³ It was at the height of this bitterness that the specific usage of the “American Dream” was popularized in a book published in 1931.

²²⁹ Thorndike, Joseph J. *Their Fair Share: Taxing the Rich in the Age of FDR*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 2013

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² Schlesinger, Arthur Meier. *The Crisis of the Old Order, 1919-1933*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2003, p. 252.

²³³ *Ibid.*

Though the feelings that are a part of the American Dream have been percolating in the United States since the founding of the country, it wasn't until 1931 that the phrase "American Dream" emerged as a specific literary figure. The phrase was popularized by James Truslow Adams in *The Epic of America*, which was the best-selling non-fiction work through 1932.²³⁴ The book was "filled with hope, national pride"²³⁵ and reminders that "the American dream was still alive and worth aspiring to, despite the nightmare Americans were living through."²³⁶ For Adams though America had been hit hard in the depression that should not dampen its prospects. He argued that "[a]s we compare America in 1931 with the America of 1912 it seems as though we had slipped a long way backwards. But that period is short, after all, and the whole world has been going through the fires of Hell."²³⁷ Adams connected the realization of the American Dream to the increasing skepticism of consumerism as people were "beginning to realize that because a man is born with a particular knack for gathering in vast aggregates of money and power for himself, he may not on that account be the wisest leader to follow nor the best fitted to propound a sane philosophy of life."²³⁸ When speaking directly about the American Dream, he argued it was intricately connected the realization of the ideals the United States is founded on. For example, he said "[w]e have a long and arduous road to travel if we are to realize our American dream in the life of our nation, but if we fail, there is nothing left but the old eternal round. The alternative is the failure of self-government, the failure of the common man to rise to full stature, the failure of all that the American dream has held of hope and promise..."²³⁹ The American Dream of historic progress through the achievements of great individuals was just

²³⁴ Schneiderman, Howard. "Introduction to the Transaction Edition." In *The Epic of America*, by James Truslow Adams: Transaction Publishers, Ebook, 2012.

²³⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Adams, James Truslow. *The Epic of America*. Transaction Publishers, 2012, p. 416.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

beginning to take hold of the American people as it was on the edge of slipping away. It was in the midst of this possibility that Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected. He presided over the initiation of a new administration of government as well as the inspiring hopes and dreams of the people.

In 1932 the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt to the Presidency came in the downward spiral of the Great Depression, an economic trend lasting until late in 1933.²⁴⁰ Despite this dismal prospect, the President represented a hopeful change from the Hoover administration. Analyzing letters written to the president over the course of the Great Depression, Robert S. McElvaine argues “President Roosevelt gave many people a feeling that he was their personal friend and protector, that they could tell him things in confidence.”²⁴¹ McElvaine notes that in “the week following FDR’s inauguration, 450,000 letters poured into the White House.”²⁴² These letters were addressed to the President or to the First Lady and expressed everything from relief at his election to specific recommendations for policy.²⁴³ The President came to represent the hopes and fears of the people regarding the prospects for the recovery of the country and the state of their own lives.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s first inaugural address provided a strong argument for the collective power of the American people and the need to respond to the crisis through a reorientation of policy and psychology. Roosevelt had long been an advocate of a collectivist understanding of liberty. Writing in February of 1912 he noted that “if we use the word liberty in conjunction with the word community we necessarily give to that word liberty a higher and

²⁴⁰ Temin, Peter. "The Great Depression." *The Cambridge economic history of the United States* 3 (2000): 301-28.

²⁴¹ McElvaine, Robert S. *Down & out in the Great Depression: Letters from the Forgotten Man*. University of North Carolina Press, 2008, p. 6.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

nobler meaning than where the same word was applied to the individual.”²⁴⁴ His inaugural address in 1933 was rightly concerned with the state of the country and how its future could be secured. Roosevelt argued that “[t]his great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper... the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.”²⁴⁵ Though Roosevelt did not mention the American Dream by name, he associated the path forward with feelings about the collective commitment to the principles of the Dream. He argued that the “means of national recovery”²⁴⁶ was an insistence “upon the interdependence of the various elements in all parts of the United States—a recognition of the old and permanently important manifestation of the American spirit of the pioneer. It is the way to recovery. It is the immediate way. It is the strongest assurance that the recovery will endure.”²⁴⁷ Roosevelt’s mention of the pioneer spirit and the interdependence of people in society was central to the reconfiguration of the American Dream during this time period.

Roosevelt’s insistence upon the interdependence of the United States and his emphasis on the “spirit of the pioneer” was directed at creating a collective identity that *works* together. In *Norms of Rhetorical Culture* Thomas B. Farrell argues that Roosevelt’s rhetorical genius was in his ability to create a sense of public identity that facilitated a sense of collective identity and response to the crisis. For Farrell, “[h]e did this first by creating a discourse wherein people could respond reasonably to the depression instead of treating the prevailing appearances as signs of doom and secondly by projecting the capacity of people to act constructively as a collectivity, rather than as separate interests pulling in fractionated directions, trying to save

²⁴⁴ Roosevelt, Franklin D., *My Own Story: From Private and Public Papers*. Transaction Publishers, 2011.

²⁴⁵ Roosevelt, Franklin D. "Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933." In *The Public Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Volume Two: The Year of Crisis, 1933*, edited by Samuel Rosenman, 11-16. New York: Random House, 1938.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

themselves.”²⁴⁸ Roosevelt successfully used the hope placed in him by the public to create a *hopeful* vision of collective action. This vision was also evident in his defense of tax reform as it included a traditional defense of equality at the center of the American identity. Farrell argues that Roosevelt “was able to redefine in practical terms the constitutive vocabulary detailing the duties and obligations of government. A politics of praxis replaced the rhetoric of restraint, principle, and legalistic imperative embodied by Hoover.”²⁴⁹

Roosevelt’s push for tax reforms, in particular the increase in the income tax at the upper income levels, also required a redefinition of who was responsible for governing and who government was responsible to. He advocated for tax reform in 1935 and oversaw a large tax increase on the top income tax bracket. In his 1935 “Message to Congress on Tax Revision” Roosevelt used the principle of justice to guide his arguments for an increase in income taxes. For Roosevelt, “taxation according to income is the most effective instrument yet devised to obtain just contribution from those best able to bear it and to avoid placing onerous burdens upon the mass of our people.”²⁵⁰ Roosevelt created a connection between the duty of the government to protect the people and the income tax, for he argued that “[s]ocial unrest and a deepening sense of unfairness are dangers to our national life which we must minimize by rigorous methods.”²⁵¹ He also articulated his belief in how wealth was created through the efforts of a community, blunting the feelings that income taxes hinder the virtuous. For Roosevelt, “[p]eople know that vast personal incomes come not only through the effort or ability or luck of those who receive them, but also because of the opportunities for advantage which Government itself contributes. Therefore, the duty rests upon the Government to restrict such incomes by very high

²⁴⁸ Farrell, Thomas B. *Norms of Rhetorical Culture*. Yale University Press: New Haven; 1993, p. 86.

²⁴⁹ Farrell 1993, p. 86

²⁵⁰ Roosevelt, Franklin D. "Message to Congress on Tax Revision." June 19, 1935.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

taxes.”²⁵² Congress approved the tax increase in 1935 increasing top income tax rates to 75 percent on incomes more than \$500,000.²⁵³ The strongly graduated income tax levels were in line with Roosevelt’s emphasis on the necessity to promote justice through taxation.

Roosevelt’s insistence on the principle of fairness in income taxes would change rhetoric on the issue during World War II as well. In *Their Fair Share* J. Thorndike argues that Roosevelt reconfigured the terms of the debate by primarily defending the idea that the wealthy needed to pay what was “fair” and this should be determined based on the needs of the community.²⁵⁴ Thorndike argues that “Roosevelt developed a moralistic approach to tax policy that emphasized the fiscal responsibilities of wealthy Americans...he championed narrow tax hikes on the very rich.”²⁵⁵ Though the effect of wealth redistribution was small in the short term, these efforts “ensured the wartime reforms—and the durable postwar tax regime they spawned—would feature high marginal rates.”²⁵⁶ The passage of the Revenue Act of 1935, popularly known as the Wealth Tax, brought important structural changes to the income tax regime as it built an element of equality of opportunity into the system.²⁵⁷ The focus on the equalizing potential of income taxes would be a feature of World War II income tax dialogue as well, only it was the sacrifice of blood or treasure being equally applied not simply the levelling of wealth.

World War II

The entry of the United States into World War II was transformational in many regards. Economically the country’s involvement in the war erased the last vestiges of the Great

²⁵² Roosevelt, Franklin D. "Message to Congress on Tax Revision." June 19, 1935.

²⁵³ Weisman, Steven R. *The Great Tax Wars*. Simon & Schuster: New York, 2002.

²⁵⁴ Thorndike, Joseph J. *Their Fair Share: Taxing the Rich in the Age of FDR*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 2013

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Depression, while psychologically the war provided a new enemy to focus on and a new national challenge.²⁵⁸ The revival of the United States economy and the beginnings of World War II were essentially simultaneous²⁵⁹ with the full recovery on September 3, 1939 as the market “anticipating lucrative arms sales and eventually U.S. participation in the war, at last returned to 1929 prices.”²⁶⁰ Not only did the country recover economically, but psychologically as well. The shock of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 motivated the country to unify behind President Roosevelt, and provided a new national goal, defeating fascism.²⁶¹ While the nationalism of the First World War was about demonstrating the distinctiveness of the American democratic model and protecting the democracy of others, World War II provoked an aggressive unifying sentiment. The issue of how to pay for the war would invite a further reevaluation of the income tax. President Roosevelt’s support for income tax increases emphasized the national mission and reconnected with President Wilson’s call for a noble sacrifice of blood and treasure. This is seen most clearly in a radio address delivered on April 28, 1942 entitled “A Call for Sacrifice.” The subsequent Revenue Act of 1942 was an historic increase in taxes both on top earners and also in the number of individuals responsible for paying income taxes, taking it from a “class tax” to a “mass tax.”²⁶²

The nationalism of World War II transformed the “American Dream” from a belief in the individual’s ability to create their own destiny to a feeling of belonging within the national identity. In *On Social Organization and Social Control* Morris Janowitz traces the rise and fall of

²⁵⁸ Hixson, Walter L., *The United States Transformed: The Lessons and Legacies of the Second World War: The American Experience in World War II*, New York, NY: Routledge, 2003.

²⁵⁹ Rothbard, Murray Newton. *America's Great Depression*. Ludwig von Mises Institute: Auburn, AL, 1972.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

²⁶¹ MacDougall, Robert. "Red, Brown and Yellow Perils: Images of the American Enemy in the 1940s and 1950s." In *The United States Transformed: The Lessons and Legacies of the Second World War: The American Experience in World War II* edited by Walter L. Hixson. New York, NY: Routledge, 2003.

²⁶² Bank, Steven A, Kirk J Stark, and Joseph J Thorndike. *War and Taxes*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 2008.

nationalist sentiments in the United States. He argues that World War II was a pivotal time in the dynamics of nationalist sentiment as "...for most of the population, World War II transformed or extended the meaning of nationalism."²⁶³ For Janowitz, this reversed "a long-term countertrend in the growth of nationalism since 1920"²⁶⁴ and resulted in a "shift from 'old-fashioned' patriotism into a more elaborate sense of national 'spirit.'"²⁶⁵ While defusing the object of the nation somewhat, broadening the scope of nationalist feelings in the United States meant that "a larger proportion of the population feel that they are 'Americans.'"²⁶⁶ This expanded scope of national identity and feelings for "America" changed the way most people felt about the "American Dream" as it became something everyone was willing to fight for.

The entry of the United States into World War II in 1941 changed the stakes of tax policy and provided President Franklin Delano Roosevelt with distinct rhetorical resources in arguing for a nation-centric approach to economic policy. There were also challenges that had to be met, such as inflationary pressure increasing prices of critical goods and services. Coupled with the large profits being generated from the government's wartime expenditures, inflation could spark unrest among labor without attendant wage increases.²⁶⁷ Such was the situation that FDR found himself in as 1941 came to a close. In October, the U.S. entry into the war was viewed as an inevitability and the country had for some time been supplying material to the allied powers. One crucial area of production for the war came from iron and coal mines, as they are necessary for making steel. A strike by more than fifty-thousand United Mine Workers in October of 1941 threatened to shut down this vital area of war productivity.²⁶⁸ FDR's mediation boards failed to

²⁶³ Janowitz, Morris. *On Social Organization and Social Control*. University of Chicago Press, 1991, p. 159.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Kersten, Andrew Edmund. *Labor's Home Front: The American Federation of Labor during World War II*. NYU Press, 2006

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

resolve the two issues, wage increases and the creation of a union shop. On December 7, 1941²⁶⁹ “a special mediation committee that Roosevelt set up to deal with captive mines granted a union shop for the United Mine Workers. The miners immediately and patriotically went back to work...”²⁷⁰ Though this compromise addressed the issue of a union shop, it did not deal with the wage increase requested by the union. The honeymoon period was thus short-lived as strikes began to increase in early 1942 at the urging of John Lewis, former head of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).²⁷¹ President Roosevelt’s response to the unravelling labor situation was to create a new economic approach that included a “seven-point plan to stop the spiraling inflation and economic unrest.”²⁷² Roosevelt had his Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau work with Congress to craft a bill, and FDR outlined the particulars of the proposal to the nation in a fireside chat on April 28, 1942.²⁷³

The promotion of equality in Roosevelt’s 1942 economic plan, which included steep progressive income taxes, was designed to promote a feeling that the country as a whole was engaged in a similar level of sacrifice. In the fireside chat outlining the proposal, Roosevelt emphasized this feeling. The chat, known as “A Call for Sacrifice,” argued for the necessity of individuals making a commitment to the collective’s interest. His economic focus in the speech outlined a seven-point proposal he submitted to Congress with the goal of “keeping the cost of living down.”²⁷⁴ FDR argued that “[f]irst, we must, through heavier taxes, keep personal and

²⁶⁹ The day the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and war was declared.

²⁷⁰ Kersten, Andrew Edmund. *Labor's Home Front: The American Federation of Labor during World War II*. NYU Press, 2006, p. 34.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Bank, Steven A, Kirk J Stark, and Joseph J Thorndike. *War and Taxes*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 2008, p. 96.

²⁷⁴ Roosevelt, Franklin D. "A Call for Sacrifice, April 28, 1942." In *FDR's Fireside Chats*, edited by Russell D. Buhite and David W. Levy. University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, 1992, p. 224.

corporate profits at a low reasonable rate.”²⁷⁵ He argued it would be no great sacrifice for the American people, especially those at higher income brackets, to give up some of their desires as “[t]he price for civilization must be paid in hard work and sorrow and blood.”²⁷⁶ He highlighted the stakes in refusing to put the good of the country over individual gain. For Roosevelt the collective will was of supreme importance as “[t]his great war effort must be carried through to its victorious conclusion by the indomitable will and determination of the people as one great whole.”²⁷⁷ Roosevelt’s support of tax reform ultimately led Congress to pass the Revenue Act of 1942 in October of that year. The act contained historic increases in income taxes on the highest brackets and also lowered exemptions, meaning millions of people would be paying income taxes for the first time.²⁷⁸

Historians assessing the role of radio address and its attendant policies note the importance of the collectivizing *pathos* of the message. Andrew Kersten, in “*Labor's Home Front: The American Federation of Labor during World War II*,” argues that the proposed “rationing and price controls were more than tools to control inflation. They were a means to maintain patriotism.”²⁷⁹ Kersten also points to the positive reception of the message at the time by labor unions. He notes that “the AFL strongly supported Roosevelt’s equality-of-sacrifice plan”²⁸⁰ with the AFL’s president William Green promising that all of the workers in the federation “would accept the sacrifices”²⁸¹ that Roosevelt asked for. Though the equality of

²⁷⁵ Roosevelt, Franklin D. "A Call for Sacrifice, April 28, 1942." In *FDR's Fireside Chats*, edited by Russell D. Buhite and David W. Levy. University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, 1992, p. 224.

²⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 225

²⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 226

²⁷⁸ Bank, Steven A, Kirk J Stark, and Joseph J Thorndike. *War and Taxes*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 2008.

²⁷⁹ Kersten, Andrew Edmund. *Labor's Home Front: The American Federation of Labor during World War II*. NYU Press, 2006, p. 35.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

sacrifice that the President emphasized worked as a collectivizing *pathos*, the scope of the Revenue Act of 1942 also led the government to engage in a more widespread media campaign.

The Revenue Act of 1942 created a huge new base of first-time payers and so needed to well-publicized by the government. Officials were worried that widespread non-compliance could undermine both the needed revenues and also the income tax system itself.²⁸² Emphasizing the sense of belonging from paying income taxes and the role it played in victory, the Treasury Department rolled out a well-organized and focused media campaign. The campaign featured “posters, radio announcements, popular songs and even a Disney cartoon.”²⁸³ One example of a radio song that was commissioned comes from Irving Berlin. The jingle goes:

*I paid my income tax today
I never felt so proud before
To be right there with the millions more
Who paid their income tax today.
I'm squared up with the U.S.A.
You see those bombers in the sky,
Rockefeller helped to build them,
So did I
I paid my income tax today.*²⁸⁴

Using imagery from the war to emphasize the importance of the citizen’s participation in the war effort, the media blitz “made explicit the connection between mortal sacrifice on the battlefield and fiscal sacrifice at home.”²⁸⁵

People require a strong motivation to sacrifice themselves for a community. Affiliation with a national identity can be one pathway for convincing individuals to prioritize a community above themselves. In “Why do People Sacrifice for Their Nations?” Paul C. Stern examines the emotions that can create a strong enough motivation to override self-interest. Stern proposes that

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid., p. 98.

²⁸⁴ Berlin, Irving. "I Paid My Income Tax Today." In *General Records of the Department of the Treasury*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives of the United States, 1942.

²⁸⁵ Bank, Steven A, Kirk J Stark, and Joseph J Thorndike. *War and Taxes*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 2008, p. 98.

nationalism can overcome self-interest because it is based on a “primordial sociality”²⁸⁶ or “a tendency to identify with, learn from and favor groups to which one has strong emotional ties.”²⁸⁷ These strong emotional ties precede the rational calculation that would normally come with assessments of how best to help the self. By appealing to the “hard work” and “sorrow” and “blood” that must be paid for civilization Roosevelt was rearticulating what the ideal American is, and in doing so creating a new sense of America. For Roosevelt the ideal American engages in self-sacrifice when appropriate to preserve a community of equals. The media campaign reinforced the feeling of belonging to country that came from the act of paying income taxes and contributing to the Allied victory over the Axis powers. The sacrifice of the self or one’s property to the greater good is acceptable if one feels like they belong to that group.

Conclusion

World War I significantly contributed to the development of the American Dream through the income tax dialogue it necessitated. The feeling the United States was on an inexorable path of moral and political progress gave way to a feeling the country was responsible for spreading democratic values abroad. The role of the individual in this global project was to engage in a willing sacrifice of blood and treasure for the good of the nation. Woodrow Wilson appealed to feelings of justice and equality in pushing income taxes, suffusing them into the vision of the United States values being fought for abroad. These feelings surrounding the income taxes of World War I laid the foundation for the rhetoric during World War II, though it would be greatly affected by the Great Depression as well. The Great Depression crystallized feelings of individualism and patriotism into a distinct phrase the “American Dream.”

²⁸⁶ Stern, Paul C. "Why Do People Sacrifice for Their Nations?". *Political Psychology* 16, no. 2 (1995), p. 226.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

The Great Depression nearly moved the country to despair as widespread unemployment, food shortages and lost economic activity gripped the country. In the midst of this national disaster the “American Dream” emerged in 1931 with *The Epic of America* by James Truslow Adams. He argued that the American Dream was built on the idea of self-governance and the feeling the individual could achieve success even if they started out with nothing. Roosevelt transformed the American Dream of the Great Depression by taking the nationalist impulses from World War I rhetoric on the income tax and infusing them with traditional notions of equality embedded in American identity. For Roosevelt the country could emerge stronger through the collective commitment to liberty, specifically the freedom to live a life undetermined by structural inequality. It was this “American Dream” that captured the imagination of the United States when the world was once again transformed in 1939 with the outbreak of World War II.

World War II was transformative for feelings regarding income taxes and the American Dream. The heightened nationalism felt in the United States at the time contributed to unifying sentiments and facilitated a new approach to income tax argument. President Roosevelt connected battlefield sacrifices to the fiscal sacrifices made by citizens at home, and in doing so he deepened affiliative tendencies between the individual and the collective. The passage of the Revenue Act of 1942 created large tax increases in the percentage levied on top brackets and also the number of payees, and thus necessitated a media campaign. This campaign was aimed at creating identification with “America” because strong identification with a group tends to increase the likelihood individuals will sacrifice their interests for the needs of the collective, as in the case of income taxes. The tax increases of World War II had a lasting impact on U.S. fiscal

policy as the steeply progressive income taxes they instituted would remain in place until 1964.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁸ Weisman, Steven R. *The Great Tax Wars*. Simon & Schuster: New York, 2002.

CHAPTER 4

THE TRANSITION FROM JUSTICE TO VIRTUE: KENNEDY'S OPTIMISM AND REAGAN'S INDIVIDUALISM

World War II was transformational for the American economy and the American psyche. Wartime economic productivity improved the industrial base in the United States and dramatically increased salaries and wages.²⁸⁹ It also served to unify the country around a common enemy and reinforced the necessity of spreading American values around the globe. The program of rationing combined with increased economic growth contributed to the only period in American history where income inequality decreased and savings increased.²⁹⁰ People after the war were able to invest in homes, travel, and automobiles. Most importantly “the war brought something else—a sense of possibility and optimism for the first time in a generation.”²⁹¹ In the post-war period the feeling that the American Dream was the promise of the *nation* began to give way to a feeling that the American Dream was the capacity of the *individual* to forge their own destiny. This emotional transformation of the United States did not take place overnight; however, the start of the Cold War and the Red Scare dampened enthusiasm for pursuing new opportunities. This chapter argues that as the climate of fear in the post-war 1950s gave way to a rising tide of optimism in the early 1960s with the election of John F. Kennedy, the dominant mode of rhetoric on income taxes shifted toward privileging the virtuous individual. This shift was accelerated by Ronald Reagan through the 1980s and secured a lasting period of lowered income taxes.

²⁸⁹ Chafe, William Henry. *The Unfinished Journey: America since World War II*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Just as the United States economy and feelings about the American Dream were transformed, rhetoric surrounding tax policy undergoes a similar transformation. John F. Kennedy focused on the virtue of the individual and the impact that income taxes had on dampening success, thus creating inertia for feelings about government as an obstacle and transforming the affective relationship between people and government that was forged in World War II. This transformation reached its height with the rhetoric of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s where feelings of individualism were strongly associated with the American Dream, and collectivist sentiments were channeled through an individualist lens. Reagan sought to recall the American Revolution, and the fight for “No Taxation without Representation,” as the basis for feelings about government tyranny through income taxes.

This chapter is organized according to the evolution of feelings regarding the country and the individual during the post-World War II period in the United States and the impact that this evolution has on rhetoric surrounding income taxes in the 1950s-1980s. This transformation began slowly as defenses of post-war reductions in rates focused on the preservation of national defense and the primacy of the collective. The fear of communism pervaded the 1950s and tax messages of that era are tinged with it. President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s 1953 “Special Message to the Congress Recommending Tax Legislation” made explicit the priority of the nation and the subservience of the individual. President Kennedy began to reconfigure national feelings regarding the income tax with his commencement speech at Yale University in 1962, which called for tax policy to open up new opportunities for business and entrepreneurs. Ronald Reagan’s election in 1980 and subsequent reductions in income tax rates followed a rising tide of patriotic feelings and belief in free enterprise. President Reagan’s 1985 “Address to the Nation on Tax Reform” is a template that set the tone for future engagements with tax policy, and the

Tax Reform Act of 1986 represents the last significant overhaul of the tax system in the United States. Ronald Reagan spearheaded the rhetorical efforts to change America's perception of taxes and the role of the people and government in creating a collective commitment to that system.

Fear of Communism, Hope in Kennedy

The United States after World War II had little time to celebrate the defeat of fascism. With the division of Europe into spheres of influence, dominated either by the communist Soviet Union or the democratic powers, and the stark differences in political ideology there was a new enemy.²⁹² The Soviet Union presented a threat not only to the economy and people of the United States, but also to its ideology, leading to a climate of fear in the United States after the war. The United States had an abrupt change of leadership in the waning days of the war after the death of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1945. Vice President Harry S. Truman was sworn into office and remained president for nearly two full terms. President Truman vetoed two attempts to reduce taxes and stated that "necessary expenditures for essential Government operations are still high. We are still meeting heavy obligations growing out of the war."²⁹³ The wartime debts dictated that Truman leave income taxes intact.

Dwight D. Eisenhower became President of the United State in 1953 amidst a rising tide of fear regarding communism both within the country and outside of it. In "Why I Wrote the Crucible: An Artist's answer to Politics" Arthur Miller described the emotional state of the country where "in the late 1940s and early 1950s, hysteria over the perceived threat posed by

²⁹² Gaddis, John Lewis. *The Cold War: A New History*. Penguin, 2005.

²⁹³ Truman, Harry S., "Veto of Bill to Reduce Income Taxes." 1947.

Communists in the U.S. became known as the Red Scare.”²⁹⁴ The fear in the country was both widespread and intense. He argued that the “Red Scare led to a range of actions that had a profound and enduring effect on U.S. government and society”²⁹⁵ as Senator Joseph R. McCarthy conducted broad investigations of “subversive elements in the government and the Hollywood film industry.”²⁹⁶ As a former four star General, Dwight Eisenhower was attuned to the needs of national security and made that a top priority of his throughout his presidency, which influenced income tax reforms.

Eisenhower’s stance towards income taxes was constrained by overriding concerns for national security and the need to generate sufficient revenue to maintain a strong national defense. Eisenhower’s “Special Message to the Congress Recommending Tax Legislation” delivered on May 20, 1953 demonstrates the effect that having a persistent foreign enemy has on the rhetoric surrounding tax policy. Eisenhower argues for trimming taxes on the highest levels of income earners, but is willing to leave corporate taxes at 52 percent in order to preserve the national security budget. Eisenhower’s position on tax policy was that national security trumped other considerations and that the revenue generated through the collection of taxes shouldn’t impact that security. As Eisenhower suggested in 1953 “[t]he Administration has begun the heavy task of putting the federal government’s fiscal house in order. It is moving vigorously to reduce expenditures with due regard for the needs of national security.”²⁹⁷ Though Eisenhower made it a priority to get the government’s “fiscal house” in order, he did not push broad tax cuts because of the possible detrimental effects on defense spending. Moving from Roosevelt’s 1942 fireside chat to Eisenhower’s 1953 speech demonstrates the different meanings that “national

²⁹⁴ Miller, Arthur. "Why I Wrote the Crucible: An Artist's Answer to Politics." *New Yorker* 21 (1996), p. 9.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Eisenhower, Dwight D. "Special Message to the Congress Recommending Tax Legislation," May 20, 1953.

security” takes on in the context of income tax rhetoric. Roosevelt’s speech defended collective sacrifices in the name of national security, while Eisenhower retained only some of the meaning of sacrifice. Eisenhower’s speech began to connect national security to economic openness, sowing the seeds for further rhetorical transformations.

John F. Kennedy’s election in 1961 rode a feeling of hopeful optimism about the future of the country and the place of individual citizens within that country. When Kennedy took office in 1961 the United States was the wealthiest country the world had ever known.²⁹⁸ The fifteen years after the end of World War II had seen massive economic growth and migration throughout the U.S. Despite the presence of material wealth, the country was racially segregated and many opportunities remained closed to women. Social movements to protest racial, gender, and economic inequalities were coalescing as more people recognized a basic tension between the upward mobility of white men and the repression of everyone else.²⁹⁹ Kennedy was seen by many as a youthful liberal that would engage the social problems of the day. Arthur Schlesinger argues for this view in *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. As Schlesinger points out, Kennedy’s “irreverence toward conventional ideas and institutions provoked a discharge of critical energy throughout American society... bright, idealistic and capable young men and women, asking not what their country could do for them but what they could for their country, entered politics and public service.”³⁰⁰ Kennedy represented hope for millions of Americans that felt as if the American Dream had passed them by. John Davis argues in *The Kennedys: Dynasty and Disaster* that “the personality of John F. Kennedy...had struck some deep emotional chord in people, had fulfilled some widespread, and apparently fundamental,

²⁹⁸ Farber, David. *The Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s*. Macmillan, 1994.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Schlesinger, Arthur M. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2002, Ebook.

human need.”³⁰¹ Elected on a wave of hopeful optimism Kennedy’s policy proposals and rhetoric would embody the image of the youthful crusader.

When Kennedy took office in 1961 the rate on the top income tax bracket was still 91 percent, a holdover from World War II taxation levels.³⁰² Kennedy proposed vastly decreasing those rates based on the ideas of John Maynard Keynes. As a student of Keynesian economics John F. Kennedy argued for increased government spending but decreased tax rates to help jumpstart a slowing economy. His advocacy appeared primarily in two speeches, the commencement address at Yale University in 1962 and the 1963 State of the Union Address. Though he ultimately did not achieve Congressional success for his proposals before being assassinated in 1963, President Lyndon B. Johnson pushed them through the legislative body.

Kennedy’s commencement address at Yale University in June 1962 kicked off an examination of the role of government in regulating economic activity, including the appropriate levels of taxation. This was the first significant attempt to address tax policy in a comprehensive manner since Franklin Roosevelt’s wartime tax reforms. In the commencement address Kennedy argued strongly for the idea that technocratic expertise should guide our taxation policy, not ideological principles, but recognized the power that cultural myths had in shaping feelings about the economy. Kennedy’s address provided a vision of income taxes which promoted the virtue of citizens and industry and created a feeling that the American Dream is achieved through individualism.

Kennedy recognized the potency that values and emotions have in economic policymaking and hoped to correct for the power that passion has played in those circles. Kennedy argued “[f]or the great enemy of truth is very often not the lie--deliberate, contrived and

³⁰¹ Davis, John H. *The Kennedys: Dynasty and Disaster*. S.P.I. Books, 1992, p. 609.

³⁰² Farris, Scott. *Kennedy and Reagan: Why Their Legacies Endure*. Globe Pequot, 2013.

dishonest--but the myth--persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic. Too often we hold fast to the clichés of our forebears. We subject all facts to a prefabricated set of interpretations.”³⁰³

Kennedy’s speech was designed to fact check the many myths that he saw propagating the role of government in the economy. Ultimately his message was a hopeful, policy oriented one, as he argued that “[w]hat is at stake in our economic decisions today is not some grand warfare of rival ideologies which will sweep the country with passion but the practical management of a modern economy.”³⁰⁴ Despite his call for leaving out passion and myth his arguments weren’t entirely devoid of those qualities. In describing the importance of government involvement in successful endeavors he argued that “in support of all university research in science and medicine, three dollars out of every four came from the Federal Government...American scientists remain second to none in their independence and in their individualism.”³⁰⁵ Kennedy carefully acknowledged the role that taxes should have in preserving the virtuous and individual character of the American people. Kennedy ended the commencement address by quoting Thomas Jefferson as he said “[t]he new circumstances under which we are placed call for new words, new phrases, and for the transfer of old words to new objects.”³⁰⁶

Kennedy’s 1963 State of the Union Address invoked new words and new phrases, but also transferred old words to new objects as he remarked on the need for tax reform. In the address Kennedy made a vigorous case that taxes should promote entrepreneurial virtue, and not cut it off at its source. At the beginning of the speech Kennedy struck a hopeful tone in describing the special nature of the time period. He said “I congratulate you all--not merely on your electoral victory but on your selected role in history. For you and I are privileged to serve

³⁰³ Kennedy, John F. "Commencement Address at Yale University, June 11, 1962." New Haven, CT, 1962.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

the great Republic in what could be the most decisive decade in its long history. The choices we make, for good or ill, may well shape the state of the Union for generations yet to come.”³⁰⁷ Kennedy presented the historic nature of the income tax issue as a reason why the Congress should feel affinity for other great Americans. The value that he identified in supporting tax reductions is virtuous innovation on the part of individuals and businesses. Kennedy argued that the reduction would “encourage the initiative and risk-taking on which our free system depends--induce more investment, production, and capacity use--help provide the 2 million new jobs we need every year--and reinforce the American principle of additional reward for additional effort.”³⁰⁸ Remarking on the ultimate purpose of tax reform, Kennedy argued that “[t]he quality of American life must keep pace with the quantity of American goods. This country cannot afford to be materially rich and spiritually poor.”³⁰⁹ Though Kennedy persuasively argued for tax reform, his efforts did not see legislative success in his lifetime. President Lyndon B. Johnson oversaw the passage of the Revenue Act of 1964 modeled on Kennedy’s proposals. In his remarks on the passage of the act Johnson reinforced the strong message of individualism that Kennedy crafted in pushing tax reform. LBJ remarked that “[b]y placing maximum reliance on the initiative and the creative energies of individual businessmen and workers, we have created here in our land the most prosperous nation in the history of the world.”³¹⁰

John F. Kennedy’s advocacy for income tax reductions is a salient rhetorical touchstone for contemporary adherents to a belief in individualism. This is in part because of the rhetorical challenge he faced as a Democrat advocating tax reductions and also deficit spending. John M. Murphy argues, in “The Language of the Liberal Consensus,” that Kennedy’s rhetorical

³⁰⁷ Kennedy, John F. "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union." (January 14 1963).

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Johnson, Lyndon B. "Radio and Television Remarks Upon Signing the Tax Bill." 1964.

challenge was the need to justify government deficits as an economic stimulus measure. The difficulty for a Democrat to defend spending other people's money was a key rhetorical hurdle.³¹¹ For Murphy "[t]he rhetorical force of this text rests in its deployment of linguistic strategies—ethos, dissociation, and time—that transformed ideology into action, that recast the terms of the liberal consensus into a powerful public language."³¹² Oppositional discourse was neither insignificant nor confined to a small minority. Opponents of his proposal "portrayed Kennedy as a spendthrift president carving out a legacy of increased expenditures, astronomical deficits, and emerging inflation. A tax cut, they argued, must accompany a promise to reduce expenditures."³¹³ John F. Kennedy's defense of tax reductions remains a critical rhetorical resource for configuring rhetoric on the proper role of the government in intervening in the economy, indeed the policy enacted based on his proposal lasted until the Reagan era tax cuts.³¹⁴ The contemporary salience of Kennedy's defense of tax reduction and the effectiveness of his rate decreases was evident in the 2012 Presidential election as a warrant for endorsing Mitt Romney, as he also defended tax cuts.³¹⁵

Reagan's Defense of Individualism

Ronald Reagan is a pivotal figure in the coevolution of income tax policy and the American Dream, accelerating the trend of infusing both with a strong feeling that virtuous individualism should have primacy over other values. For many, his life represents the quintessential "American" story of someone who started with very little and managed to craft

³¹¹ Murphy, J. M. (2004). The language of the liberal consensus: John F. Kennedy, technical reason, and the "new economics" at Yale University. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 90(2), p. 133-162.

³¹² Murphy, J. M. (2004), p. 135.

³¹³ Giglio, James N. *Debating the Kennedy Presidency. Debating Twentieth-Century America*. Edited by Stephen G. Rabe, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers: Lanham, Md., 2003, p. 125.

³¹⁴ Farris, Scott. *Kennedy and Reagan: Why Their Legacies Endure*. Globe Pequot, 2013, Ebook.

³¹⁵ Wright, Randy. "Kennedy Talks Like Romney." *Daily Herald*, October 13, 2012.

themselves into a great success. Reagan's presidency oversaw significant milestones in income tax policy accompanied by transformative rhetoric surrounding those policy changes. He signed the largest income tax cut in United States history in 1981, and then the largest tax increase since FDR in 1982.³¹⁶ His 1986 Tax Reform Act remains the most substantial tax reform package that has been enacted in the United States since that time. Despite these impressive achievements, they were not the result of a hard-fought economic argument with attendant theories and statistics. On the contrary, Reagan himself remarked "[o]urs are not problems of abstract economic theory. Those are problems of flesh and blood"³¹⁷ and his response to those problems was thoroughly grounded in that belief. President Reagan's success in cutting income tax rates was due to his ability to create an emotional investment in the American Dream as the pursuit of individualism, an investment that remained dominant until at least 2008.

President Ronald Reagan represents for many the successful realization of a particular version of the American Dream, the story of a person who is born with little and manages to fulfill their greatest hopes. This focus on the individual as the engine for success pervaded Reagan's rhetoric as well. Robert Dallek in *Ronald Reagan: The Politics of Symbolism* notes that "[f]ew Americans in this century have enjoyed greater popularity than Ronald Reagan... a blend of Catholic and Protestant, small-town boy and famous entertainer, Horatio Alger and P.T. Barnum, traditional moralist and modern media celebrity."³¹⁸ Reagan not only espoused policies that supported American values, he embodied them. In particular, the modern understanding of the American Dream with its attendant focus on materialism was instantiated by Reagan. Dallek notes that Reagan "[l]ike the nation, of which he is such a representative figure... is a

³¹⁶ Ehrman, John. *The Eighties: America in the Age of Reagan*. Yale University Press, 2006.

³¹⁷ Reagan, Ronald. "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Detroit." Detroit, MI, July 17 1980.

³¹⁸ Dallek, Robert. *Ronald Reagan: The Politics of Symbolism*. Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 3.

contradiction in terms—a hero of the consumer culture preaching the Protestant ethic.”³¹⁹

Reagan’s life aligned with his rhetoric in defending the “American Dream” as the product of hard work and the enjoyment of material wealth.

Reagan’s speaking and the priorities that he assigned to success stories, such as his own, demonstrated his commitment to the individualist form of the American Dream. In “Populism, American Style” Henry Olsen describes the success of Reagan’s rhetoric as based on his prioritization of the individual above the collective. Olsen argues that Reagan frequently praised individual accomplishment and “constantly drove home the idea that the individual could better himself with only minimal government support (‘the safety net’).”³²⁰ Reagan not only included individual Americans in his rhetoric, but also in his presence for certain speeches. Olsen explains that “[a]s president, Reagan began the tradition of placing ‘average Americans’ in the gallery at State of the Union addresses; he held up these ordinary people – most of whom had performed extraordinary actions – as living examples of the idea that the ‘forgotten American’ was capable of great things.”³²¹ Reagan carefully configured his arguments and the people around him to reinforce the feeling that his lived version of the American Dream was real and possible for everyone.

Ronald Reagan’s 1980 campaign for President included his vision for a rearticulation of the American Dream.³²² In his July 17 acceptance address at the 1980 Republican National Convention, Governor Ronald Reagan set out to forge his presidential campaign message out of

³¹⁹ Dallek, Robert. *Ronald Reagan: The Politics of Symbolism*. Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 3

³²⁰ Olsen, Henry. "Populism, American Style." *National Affairs* 4 (2010), p. 17.

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² The roots of this rhetoric go back to Reagan’s public appearances during the 1950s and 60s. Typified by his 1964 speech endorsing Barry Goldwater entitled “A Time for Choosing” Reagan’s strenuous advocacy for the entrepreneur against the imposition of government is foundational for his rhetoric regarding individualism and the American Dream. In that speech he argued that there was a simple choice, up or down, either up with the age-old “dream, the ultimate in individual freedom consistent with law and order, or down to the ant heap of totalitarianism” (Reagan, Ronald. “A Time for Choosing.” October 27, 1964).

fundamental American values. In the address he sought to connect himself to working Americans by creating a vision of the United States as built through their labor. He stated his purpose as “[m]ore than anything else, I want my candidacy to unify our country; to renew the American spirit and sense of purpose.”³²³ Far from simply winning an election, Reagan had much loftier ambitions. He argued that we “need rebirth of the American tradition of leadership at every level of government and in private life as well.”³²⁴ Reagan connected this vision of private leadership to his opposition to an undue tax burden. He said that “[h]igh taxes, we are told, are somehow good for us, as if, when government spends our money it isn't inflationary, but when we spend it, it is.”³²⁵ Reagan affiliated himself with working Americans by carefully aligning their interests. He stated “government programs exist at the sufferance of the American taxpayer and are paid for with money earned by working men and women.”³²⁶ Further developing the idea of a virtuous working life, he connected family to this value as he stated “[w]ork and family are at the center of our lives; the foundation of our dignity as a free people. When we deprive people of what they have earned, or take away their jobs, we destroy their dignity and undermine their families.”³²⁷ These descriptions of American working people and the specialness of American freedom were meant to evoke pride in the people that he addressed.

President Reagan specifically focused on evoking strong emotions in the audience when his first historic tax reform effort passed. Upon signing the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 Reagan remarked “...the real credit goes to the people of the United States who finally made it plain that they wanted a change and made it clear in Congress and spoke with a more

³²³ Reagan, Ronald. "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Detroit." Detroit, MI, July 17 1980.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Ibid.

authoritative voice than some of the special interest groups that they wanted these changes in government.”³²⁸ “Pride in country” was a recurring feature of Reagan’s rhetoric and “emotional patriotism has been a stock ingredient of Reagan’s speeches for years.”³²⁹ Reagan didn’t take credit for the tax cut but allowed the American public the opportunity to feel pride in their system of government which facilitated the proposal’s success. This understanding of the people as pushing for the reforms he enacted was part of Reagan’s rhetorical strategy of crafting a particular vision of America and change in the country.

President Reagan succeeded in swinging the rhetorical pendulum towards a focus on the American Dream as primarily about allowing the virtuous the freedom to exercise their autonomy. He did so by creating a strong affiliation with a particular mythic understanding of the United States. In “Telling America’s Story: Narrative Form and the Reagan Presidency” William F. Lewis argues that critics of Reagan’s rhetoric pointed to the flawed rationality and inconsistent arguments that undermined Reagan’s persuasive attempts, but that these critics missed Reagan’s capacity to use narrative form successfully.³³⁰ Asking the question how “can he be so popular when he is uninformed, irrational and inconsistent?”³³¹ Lewis argues that “Reagan’s message is a story”³³² and that he successfully persuaded not through the use of impressive facts and consistent evidence but instead through the persistent use of a particular version of the American myth. For Lewis, “Reagan portrays American history as a continuing struggle for progress against great obstacles imposed by economic adversity, barbaric enemies or

³²⁸ Reagan, Ronald. "Remarks on Signing the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 and the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981." Rancho del Cielo, 1981.

³²⁹ Dallek, Robert. *Ronald Reagan: The Politics of Symbolism*. Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 133.

³³⁰ Lewis, William F. "Telling America's Story: Narrative Form and the Reagan Presidency." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 3 (1987): 280.

³³¹ *Ibid.*

³³² *Ibid.*

Big Government.”³³³ The myth of America that Reagan told so well also served to create affiliations between diverse groups. As Lewis points out, “it provides a focus for identification by his audience. Reagan repeatedly tells his audiences that if they choose to participate in the story, they will become part of America’s greatness.”³³⁴ The story of America’s greatness found its way into Reagan’s vision of income tax policy and his remarks on the income tax reforms he passed.

In 1982 the US economic recovery stalled and so President Reagan and Congress were forced to take action to address interest rates and falling government revenue.³³⁵ In response to the sluggish rate of growth and high unemployment, Congress and the President worked together to craft the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982, which remains the largest peacetime increase of taxes.³³⁶ Defending a large tax increase so shortly after passing a reduction forced Reagan to innovate his arguments. Basing his arguments primarily on the notion that some element of *fairness* is necessary in taxation, Reagan deftly incorporated the principle of justice into his overall tax reduction program. Integrating this new program of increased revenue was presented as a method of levelling out the tax burden and still providing a pathway for a reduction of taxes.

Reagan was involved in pushing for the 1982 tax increase and defended the increase as necessary to create justice in income taxes, and preserve the essential fairness that is necessary for the virtuous to thrive. In his remarks on why he defended income tax increases so shortly after an income tax cut Reagan began by meeting the charges of the opposition head on. He

³³³ Lewis, William F. "Telling America's Story: Narrative Form and the Reagan Presidency." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 3 (1987), p. 282.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Martin, Cathie J. *Shifting the Burden: The Struggle over Growth and Corporate Taxation*. University of Chicago Press, 1991, p. 135.

³³⁶ Bartlett, Bruce. "The Roots of the Tax Reform Act of 1986, Part II." *The New York Times*, January 28, 2014.

explained “I’m sure you’ve heard that ‘we’re proposing the largest single tax increase in history.’ The truth is, we’re proposing nothing of the kind.”³³⁷ For Reagan, it was most important that he clarify that his administration’s vision of tax policy remained intact. He remarked that “it absolutely does not represent any reversal of policy or philosophy on the part of this administration or this President.”³³⁸ Reagan highlighted that the tax reform proposal fit into the *philosophy* of his administration. Reagan explained that the tax reform package derives its revenue largely from the closure of loopholes and imposition of miscellaneous taxes on cigarettes and telephone usage. Reagan used the increases to defend equality in taxation and explained that “[m]uch of this bill will make our tax system more fair for every American, especially those in lower income brackets.”³³⁹ In defending higher taxes, Reagan asked “do we accept bigger budget deficits, higher interest rates, and higher unemployment simply because we disagree on certain features of a legislative package which offers hope for millions of Americans at home, on the farm, and in the workplace?”³⁴⁰ He strategically created a sense of justice in taxation, even as his general program relied on the power of creating virtue by decreasing taxes on those that work hard. In this address Reagan inserts the virtuous farmer, homemaker, and working stiff as the people the increase is designed to help, creating clear affiliation between this type of fairness and the American Dream which prizes individualism above all else.

President Reagan justified his final attempt to decrease income taxes by appealing to the American Revolution and the assertion of freedom in opposing government tyranny that was manifest in that moment. He began his 1985 “Address to the Nation on Tax Reform” by saying “I’d like to speak to you tonight about our future, about a great historic effort to give the words

³³⁷ Reagan, Ronald. "Address on Tax and Budget Legislation." 1982.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

‘freedom,’ ‘fairness,’ and ‘hope’ new meaning and power for every man and woman in America.”³⁴¹ Reagan argued that the problem was that the “tax system has come to be un-American”³⁴² and proposed the United States needed to return to traditional American values regarding income taxes. Reagan argued that the United States was founded on the resistance of unjust taxation in the American Revolution. He stated that the “first American Revolution was sparked by an unshakable conviction—taxation without representation is tyranny.”³⁴³ The impetus for his reform proposal was that “a second American revolution for hope and opportunity is gathering force again—a peaceful revolution, but born of popular resentment against a tax system that is unwise, unwanted, and unfair.”³⁴⁴ Reagan gave the credit to the American public in pushing for the reform, positing that he was simply responding to that call. Reagan sought to associate the historic American Revolution with the tax reform proposal.

The use of powerful examples from American history is a potent rhetorical technique in its own right. In *Tradition and the Rhetoric of Right* David Lorenzo argues that touchstones from a common history make powerful rhetorical figures.³⁴⁵ For Lorenzo “discourse takes its textual power from the already accepted interpretation of the world.”³⁴⁶ Rhetoric, which offers an end or goal, tends to “recapitulate well-known events in the community’s history usually accompanied by some broad judgment regarding the significance of the event.”³⁴⁷ Reagan’s use of the “American Revolution” meets these criteria. He reiterated the event as fundamentally anti-tax and mentioned the transformative power of that example, as “the sons and daughters of those first brave souls who came to this land to give birth to a new life in liberty—we can change

³⁴¹ Reagan, Ronald. "Address to the Nation on Tax Reform." 1985.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Lorenzo, David J. *Tradition and the Rhetoric of Right: Popular Political Argument in the Aurobindo Movement*. Fairleigh Dickinson Univ Press, 1999.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 34.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

America.”³⁴⁸ Lorenzo uses Reagan’s articulation of the “American Revolution” as an example of how significant and sustained public invocations of a particular historical moment can alter its overall meaning for a discourse community. Lorenzo argues that Reagan “emphasizes the tragic elements of the dominant liberal American discourse by portraying the world as a place generally hostile to freedom...by characterizing the fruits of the American Revolution as fragile and inert, thereby necessitating a conscious effort to preserve its aims in literal form.”³⁴⁹ The “American Revolution” was an ongoing process for Reagan, and subject to the possibility that its gains could be reversed through tyrannical taxation. Lorenzo concludes that Reagan’s re-orientation of the American Revolution created a new rhetorical function for the historical event. For Lorenzo, “by changing the way the dominant American discourse had been interpreted, Reagan and his followers could turn the revolution into a weapon to be used against activist public policymakers...”³⁵⁰ protecting the individual from the tyrannical imposition of government.

The individual is a central figure in Reagan’s defense of income tax reductions in 1985. He focused on the virtue of the people that are being taxed and the impact that the tax has on a person’s character. In this last effort at tax reform President Reagan made a clear attempt to create positive feelings about individual virtue and negative feelings about the government’s intrusion into the free market. He argued that Americans should seek “a tax code that no longer runs roughshod over Main Street America but ensures your families and firms incentives and rewards for hard work and risk-taking in an American future of strong economic growth.”³⁵¹ Reagan hoped to promote the virtuous character of the entrepreneur rather than seek to reduce inequality through taxes. Reagan argued that “[b]y lowering everyone's tax rates all the way up

³⁴⁸ Reagan, Ronald. "Address to the Nation on Tax Reform." 1985.

³⁴⁹ Lorenzo, David J. *Tradition and the Rhetoric of Right: Popular Political Argument in the Aurobindo Movement*. Fairleigh Dickinson Univ Press, 1999, p. 35.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Reagan, Ronald. "Address to the Nation on Tax Reform." 1985.

the income scale, each of us will have a greater incentive to climb higher, to excel, to help America grow.”³⁵² For Reagan this applied to people that are virtuous and wish to escape poverty as he argued that “[w]e’re offering a ladder of opportunity for every family that feels trapped, a ladder of opportunity to grab hold of and to climb out of poverty forever.”³⁵³

Reagan’s use of the American Revolution and his description of individualism are at the heart of his efforts to associate a Jeffersonian sense of individualism with the American Dream. James E. Combs in *The Reagan Range* notes Reagan’s orientation towards business is crucial in this regard. Combs suggests that the “‘rugged individualist’ businessman becomes a popular symbol of the American Dream of freedom and opportunity and reward for heroic virtue, the entrepreneurial adventurer whose risk-taking made America great and strong.”³⁵⁴ Reagan reconfigured feelings about the American Dream with his defense of the virtuous citizen combined with the focus on the American Revolution as a process that is constantly threatened from tyrannical government taxation. Reagan’s defense of tax reform and the successful implementation of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 capped the height of his popularity while he was president.³⁵⁵ As John Ehrman notes in *The Eighties: America in the Age of Reagan*, “the press was filled with praise for tax reform and his role in achieving it.”³⁵⁶

Conclusion

The transformation of feelings about the “American Dream” in the post-World War II era began slowly, moving from strong feelings of collective responsibility in the immediate aftermath of the war to a feeling that the individual should have primacy by the end of Ronald

³⁵² Reagan, Ronald. "Address to the Nation on Tax Reform." 1985.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Combs, James E. *The Reagan Range: The Nostalgic Myth in American Politics*. Popular Press, 1993, p. 81.

³⁵⁵ Ehrman, John. *The Eighties: America in the Age of Reagan*. Yale University Press, 2006.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 138.

Reagan's presidency. The impact of Kennedy and Reagan on the American Dream persists, with Kennedy infusing feelings regarding the youthful hope and optimism into the individualism that Reagan advocated for. Both Presidents embody certain aspects of the dream and their rhetoric on income taxes represents these contributions, innovation on the one hand and rugged individualism on the other.

The United States after World War II stood on the pinnacle of geopolitics, emerging from the conflict stronger and more hopeful about the future. The war erased the last vestiges of the Great Depression, provided employment and created a booming industrial economy. The hope and optimism emerging from that victory was short-lived. The 1950s were largely shaped by a fear of the Soviet Union and the spread of communism to the U.S. and abroad. The Red Scare influenced the assessment of "America" and the need to protect the country's interests through high revenues, thus Dwight D. Eisenhower focused on "national security" in arguing for the collective good of income taxes, while making small concessions to the need for economic openness. John F. Kennedy's administration began at a time when income taxes were historically high, a relic of World War II tax reform. Kennedy sought to realign the nation's priorities towards promoting economic growth and fostering innovation through income tax reductions. Though he was assassinated before his proposals could become law, his rhetoric had a lasting effect on creating feelings that tax policy should promote innovation and economic achievement. Reagan completed the association between the American Dream and individualism in part by crafting a negative affect towards government taxation. He sought to redescribe the income tax system as a "burden" and an imposition that blocked the possibility of full autonomy for all, going so far as to call income taxes tyrannical.

Reagan and Kennedy's legacies endure. The hope created through Kennedy's description of the historic moment to defend individualism was imbued with pride by Reagan's fierce defense of the American Dream as the special destiny of the United States. In *Kennedy and Reagan: Why their Legacies Endure* Scott Farris argues that the two have become iconic in defining the political ideal for their respective parties. Farris notes that "[s]ignificant discussion is now devoted during each presidential election cycle as to whether the Democrats can find and nominate a new Kennedy, and whether and where Republicans will locate the next Reagan."³⁵⁷ Each president is honored not only for their policies, but also for the emotional appeal that they generated and continue to inspire.

John F. Kennedy represents the youthful enthusiasm of the American Dream, the faith and optimism in the human spirit. John Davis argues that "what the American people wanted in a President was not so much wisdom and competence, but glamour, charisma, and the sense of hope and optimism that Kennedy's incandescent personality projected."³⁵⁸ A close friend and confidante of Kennedy's, Arthur Schlesinger, notes that Kennedy's legacy endures because the "Kennedy generation brought new ideas, hopes, vision, generosity and vitality to the national life."³⁵⁹ Peter Collier in *The Kennedys: An American Drama* notes that the family represented the "American dream"³⁶⁰ as "the Kennedys showed how a family could seize history."³⁶¹ The Kennedy legacy endures and is important for interpreting current political identities as well. Barack Obama's endorsement by Senator Edward Kennedy seemed to signal that he was an heir to the Kennedy legacy, and could inspire audiences as Kennedy did.³⁶²

³⁵⁷ Farris, Scott. *Kennedy and Reagan: Why Their Legacies Endure*. Globe Pequot, 2013, Ebook.

³⁵⁸ Davis, John H. *The Kennedys: Dynasty and Disaster*. S.P.I. Books, 1992, p. 609.

³⁵⁹ Schlesinger, Arthur M. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2002, Ebook.

³⁶⁰ Collier, Peter. *The Kennedys: An American Drama*. San Francisco, CA: Encounter Books, 2010, p. 334.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

³⁶² Farris, Scott. *Kennedy and Reagan: Why Their Legacies Endure*. Globe Pequot, 2013, Ebook.

Ronald Reagan represents a different vision of the American Dream, namely that of the rugged self-made individualist. Reagan's policies, rhetoric, and example align in defense of this hallowed principle of the American Dream. Henry Olsen remarks that "[t]hroughout his political career, Reagan constantly drew the connection between individual action and economic growth – and between limited government and human self-improvement – through example, imagery and explanation. It was in no small part responsible for his political success."³⁶³ James Combs argues in *The Reagan Range: The Nostalgic Myth in American Politics* that Reagan passionately pursued and even embodied the type of individualism that he espoused. For Combs "Reagan not only represented business values in government, he also represented, by example, appointment, association and praise, the essential heroism of the business person as the exemplary social actor of the country."³⁶⁴ Combs further argues that Reagan was the epitome of the small town American hero who made it big despite having few material advantages. Combs contends that the "Reagan phenomenon stems from his rootedness in the classic small town of popular fantasy, his representation to the national community of the public ideology that undergirded it and the mass desire for simple reaffirmation of values—and he enchanted place they were once manifest—threatened by the impersonal tides of history."³⁶⁵ Reagan's special place in American politics and the country's feelings for the "American Dream" influence contemporary politicians as well.

Reagan's legacy affects political candidates as they campaign and appear before the public. Republicans in particular feel the pull of the Reagan legacy as they contend for the title of who most closely resembles the Great Communicator. As John Murphy notes regarding the 2000

³⁶³ Olsen, Henry. "Populism, American Style." *National Affairs* 4 (2010): 3-20.

³⁶⁴ Combs, James E. *The Reagan Range: The Nostalgic Myth in American Politics*. Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993, p. 80.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

Presidential campaign “John McCain and George W. Bush, for instance, fought ferociously over the authority offered by the legacy of Ronald Reagan. During the California primary, a Bush television advertisement positioned him as a ‘successful governor’ with a ‘tax cut proposal that's been called ‘Reaganesque,’ while John McCain's ‘Reagan Conservative’ spot took an even more direct approach: ‘I am a proud Reagan Republican.’”³⁶⁶ Murphy further notes that “the past is always present in American politics and forms a potent base for the creation of political authority.”³⁶⁷ Reagan’s influence on politics extends beyond the impact he had on income tax policy, though that was also a significant area he affected.

Ronald Reagan’s arguments regarding the income tax would persist for 30 years after the end of his administration, due in part to the power of his influence on the public’s feelings regarding the tax and the role of government in promoting a virtuous citizenry through non-involvement. His demonization of government and the description of tax policy as tyrannical had lasting potency. The rhetorical weight of these derogatory comments about taxation is powerful because the “mention of patriotism conjures up images of Boston Tea Parties and righteous revolt against a sovereign whose legitimacy withered due to the imposition of tyrannical taxes...President Ronald Reagan often described taxation as tyrannical and a deprivation of liberty.”³⁶⁸ President Reagan’s 1985 “Address to the Nation on Tax Reform” set the tone for future engagements with tax policy leading to the Tax Reform Act of 1986, the last significant overhaul of the tax system in the United States. Through his advocacy and skillful defense of individualism Ronald Reagan spearheaded rhetorical efforts to change America’s perception of taxes and the role of the people and government’s responsibility to preserve individual freedom

³⁶⁶ Murphy, John M. "Crafting the Kennedy Legacy." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 3, no. 4 (Winter 2000), p. 599.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁸ Kornhauser, Marjorie E. "Legitimacy and the Right of Revolution: The Role of Tax Protests and Anti-Tax Rhetoric in America." *50 Buffalo L. Rev.* 819 (Fall 2002).

from intrusion. The “American Dream” that was embodied and defended by President Reagan is strongly materialistic, favoring the individual’s capacity to create their own destiny while the government is obliged to stay out of their way.

CHAPTER 5

WE'RE FINALLY OVER REAGAN: OBAMA'S RECONFIGURATION OF PUBLIC EMOTIONAL TIES TO THE JUSTICE OF DEMOCRACY

Income tax deliberations from the years 1988-2008 were heavily influenced by the imprint Reagan left on how the United States felt about the American Dream and how best to achieve it. Through his “No New Taxes” pledge George H.W. Bush sought to retain the feeling of government taxation as tyrannical. Bill Clinton hoped to connect achieving middle class status with a responsibility to government in his “New Covenant” addresses delivered at Georgetown. George W. Bush adopted Clinton’s investment in the middle class, but he returned to Reagan’s arguments regarding the tyranny of income taxes. The events of 9/11 created a renewed focus on American exceptionalism in deliberations over income taxes, and in understanding the American Dream. Obama provided a psychological and mythical replacement for Reagan, impacting the development of the American Dream in two ways. First, his election to the presidency represented an historic accomplishment for African-Americans, breaking down a significant symbolic barrier to equality. Additionally, Obama self-consciously sought to create new feelings and understandings about the American Dream vis-à-vis his place in history. He then applied this vision to arguments for reducing income taxes.

This chapter argues that rhetoric on income taxes has become configured around differing feelings about the American Dream, which are themselves in flux. Reagan’s influence dominated before 2008, then Obama’s election provided new hope for the future and created inertia for a collectivizing sentiment. The oscillation between feelings of individualism and collectivism

regarding the American Dream is demonstrated in this transition. On the one hand the preservation of autonomy is related to the free market idealism at the heart of traditional attacks on the income tax. On the other hand the maximization of equality is related to the fundamental premise of democracy for defenders of the tax. These differing feelings are used by presidential advocates of tax reform to buttress their defenses of tax reductions or increases. Thus, their rhetoric regarding income taxes reflects their attempts to deliberately shape public emotions. Certain Presidents have more substantial effects on the “American Dream” and its application to income tax disputes, such as Reagan and Obama.

The chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section the post-Cold War period through 2008 is examined and significant moments in tax reform are discussed. This section focuses on the creation of the “middle class” as an affinity group for tax reformers and the development of the myth of American exceptionalism as an element of the “American Dream.” In the second section Obama’s role in creating and sustaining a particular version of the American Dream is examined. This section focuses on both his early political career as well as significant moments in his life that have shaped his rhetoric. President Obama has begun serious efforts to move public emotions towards a feeling that virtuous individualism is incomplete without equality of opportunity in a democratic society. His efforts to craft a collectivizing *pathos* are discussed with particular focus on the 2012 State of the Union Address as a significant moment in these efforts.

Post-Cold War-2008

The end of the Cold War in 1989 marked the closure of a period in American life that occupied more than 40 years of social, political, and economic pursuits. American attitudes and

feelings regarding the end of the war were of optimism and celebration of victory.³⁶⁹ Enduring beliefs in the American system of governance and the inevitability of American progress were confirmed and strengthened. In “American Political Culture at the End of the Cold War” Christopher Thorne argues that the Cold War directed citizens towards a simplistic understanding of politics and the American Dream, while its end reinforced feelings about the power of individualism for the country. For Thorne, the American Dream of individualism embedded within a fully realized democracy represented a powerful myth, so he argues there was no lessening of the figure that “has for so long figured in its predominant and proclaimed political culture.”³⁷⁰ This feeling towards the American Dream was strongly embedded in Reagan’s characterization of taxes as an infringement on freedom, and the feeling exerted substantial gravity on both Bush administrations.

George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush each encounter Reagan’s rejection of government in different ways, and each have various effects on the development of feelings regarding the American Dream. George H.W. Bush’s campaign rhetoric as well as his policy conservatism were shaped by feelings regarding the tyranny of taxes. His “No New Taxes” pledge was designed to tap into the emotional connection that Reagan forged between freedom and economic autonomy. Clinton grappled with this notion of taxation, as he sought to re-contextualize taxes as part of the responsibility of the people to government. In his “New Covenant” address he argued for a focus on the middle class as the crucial site for the realization of the American Dream. George W. Bush retained the middle class as an affiliative mechanism, but returned to the Reagan era’s understanding of taxation as an imposition on autonomy. Bush pushed for tax cuts as a method to preserve the American family and the freedom to live life as

³⁶⁹ Thorne, Christopher. "American Political Culture and the End of the Cold War." *Journal of American Studies* 26, no. 3 (1992): 303-30.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

we see fit. After 9/11 the American Dream is tinged with the feeling of American exceptionalism.

George H.W. Bush found strong appeal in the Reagan understanding of tax policy. He embraced the feeling that taxes are tyrannical, more fully perhaps even than Reagan, going so far as to pledge not to increase taxes under any circumstances. Bush's infamous "Read My Lips: No New Taxes"³⁷¹ statement during the 1988 Presidential campaign represented a rhetorical principle hallowed by the previous administration's tax policy. It came during his 1988 acceptance address at the Republican National Convention where he made the pledge to the audience and the nation. He said "[m]y opponent won't rule out raising taxes. But I will. And the Congress will push me to raise taxes ... I'll say, to them, 'Read my lips: no new taxes.'"³⁷² This was not simply a statement at the RNC to score points with the crowd; rather the "pledge not to raise taxes was so deeply entrenched in Bush's campaign rhetoric and in speeches during his first year in office that any departure from this principled rhetoric was sure to create a crisis."³⁷³

When the economy began to decline and new revenue sources were needed Bush held the line at first, but ultimately caved to the mounting evidence that new sources of funding were needed. When signing the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 Bush remarked that it was "the result of long, hard work by the Administration and the Congress. No one got everything he or she wanted, but the end product is a compromise that merits enactment."³⁷⁴ Despite the necessity of controlling deficits and the need for new revenue the market's reaction was unfavorable. Investor's over-interpreted Bush's backpedalling because many of the new

³⁷¹ Bush, George H.W. "Acceptance Address." *1988 Republican National Convention*. New Orleans, LA, 1988.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Kiewe, Amos. *The Modern Presidency and Crisis Rhetoric*. Praeger Series in Political Communication. edited by Amos Kiewe Praeger: Westport, Conn., 1994. p. xxxi

³⁷⁴ Bush, George H.W., "Statement on Signing the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990." November 5, 1990.

taxes were directed at closing deductions and loopholes. Thus, the “ensuing crisis was created by promissory discourse that left no room for needed adjustments, campaign rhetoric that did not consider the reality of presidential rhetoric, and statements that did not appreciate the role of discourse in presidential stature.”³⁷⁵ George H.W. Bush’s rhetoric concerning taxation and the economy constituted the reality for many citizens and created rhetorical expectations for future presidential treatments of taxation. Bush had come to rely too much on the feeling that Reagan had cultivated regarding the evil nature of taxes and their infringement on liberty.

President William Jefferson Clinton sought to create an investment in the middle class as a site for the realization of the American Dream and defended tax increases as paving the way for that possibility. A significant moment for Clinton in his discussion of taxation reform came during his campaign for the Democratic Presidential nomination. In a series of three lectures at Georgetown he laid out what he calls the “New Covenant” between government and the people. For Clinton the middle class in particular deserved a chance to reformulate the agreement that had been made. He argued “[w]e will say to hard-working middle class Americans and those who aspire to the middle class: we’re going to guarantee you and your children access to a college education, every one of you, but if you take the help, you have to give something back to your country.”³⁷⁶ Clinton established a reciprocal relationship between government and the people where the government can help people, but the people must contribute to the advancement of the collective as well. The public wasn’t the only group responsible as he argued “[i]n short, the new covenant must challenge all of us, especially those of us in public service, for we have a solemn responsibility to honor the values and promote the interests of the people who

³⁷⁵ Kiewe, Amos. *The Modern Presidency and Crisis Rhetoric*. Praeger Series in Political Communication. edited by Amos Kiewe Praeger: Westport, Conn., 1994. p. xxxi

³⁷⁶ Clinton, William Jefferson. "The New Covenant: Responsibility and Rebuilding the American Community." Georgetown University, October 23, 1991.

elected us, and if we don't do it, we don't belong in government anymore.”³⁷⁷ Clinton shifted the debate over taxation and government responsibility to the role that the individual played as well, and also focused on the middle class as the crucial section of society to energize.

Clinton pushed through a tax increase in 1993 and did so with the intent of reformulating and energizing his conception of the American Dream, which relied on the power of taxes to provide some measure of equality. For Clinton, the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 tax increases were central to the renewal of the lost American Dream. After signing the legislation Clinton remarked “[t]oday we come here for more than a bill signing. We come here to begin a new direction for our Nation. We are taking steps necessary and long overdue to revive our economy, to renew our American dream, to restore confidence in our own ability to take charge of our own affairs.”³⁷⁸ Clinton proceeded to explain that his hope in proposing the budget to Congress was much broader than simply funding government, but to debate the future of government. “When I presented this program to Congress, I had hoped for something quite different: I had hoped that it would spark a genuine, open, honest, bipartisan national debate about the serious choices before us...”³⁷⁹ Clinton noted that one of the questions he sought to bring forward for public debate was “...whether we could bring the power of free enterprise to bear in the poor inner cities and rural areas of this country and lift people up with the force of the American dream...”³⁸⁰ Clinton hoped to create a feeling that the American Dream could be fostered through government policy, entwining the values of justice and equality with the promotion of virtue in taxation.

³⁷⁷ Clinton, William Jefferson. "The New Covenant: Responsibility and Rebuilding the American Community." Georgetown University, October 23, 1991.

³⁷⁸ Clinton, William Jefferson, "Remarks on Signing the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993." August 10, 1993.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

Opposition to the tax increases were concerned with the effect that they would have on the character of individuals subjected to them, not unlike arguments advanced against income tax increases historically. As Marjorie Kornhauser notes “the 1993 increase in rates brought renewed cries from the pro-wealth accumulationists that the high rates encouraged the rich to take their money out of active investment and to put it in tax free securities—a common criticism of the 1920's. This results, said one commentator quoting Andrew Mellon, in ‘deadening America's entrepreneurial spirit.’”³⁸¹ The focus on the impact that income taxes has on the virtue of the citizenry is a historically popular oppositional stance to tax increases. Portraying the wealthy as affluent because of their work ethic and “entrepreneurial spirit” tracks well with the understanding of the American Dream through a materialistic lens.³⁸² This oppositional discourse would serve as the basis for George W. Bush’s successful effort to cut income taxes during his administration.

George W. Bush’s presidency was largely concerned with the issue of terrorism, but before the events of 9/11 he advocated for and passed a tax cut in June of 2001. In his Remarks on Signing the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act (June 7, 2001) Bush focused on the impact that the cut had on families and the middle class. Bush stated “[t]ax relief is a great achievement for the American people. Tax relief is the first achievement produced by the new tone in Washington, and it was produced in record time. Tax relief is an achievement for families struggling to enter the middle class.”³⁸³ Bush focused on the benefits that tax relief provided for the middle income individuals. He also connected the issue to family values, presenting a story of a family that had difficulty in saving to send their children to college. In

³⁸¹ Kornhauser, Marjorie E. "Legitimacy and the Right of Revolution: The Role of Tax Protests and Anti-Tax Rhetoric in America." 50 *Buffalo L. Rev.* 819 (Fall 2002), p. 164.

³⁸² Fisher, Walter R. "Reaffirmation and Subversion of the American Dream." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59, no. 2 (1973): 160.

³⁸³ Bush, George W. "Remarks on Signing the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act, June 7, 2001.

returning to the idea of the American family, Bush described tax relief as lifting a burden on the people who hope to work hard enough to enter the middle class. This notion of upward mobility and the importance of the middle class is relevant for Obama's rhetoric on taxes. For Obama, entry into the middle class is a demonstration of the success of the American Dream.

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 served to briefly reconfigure American's feelings about country and patriotism, but have had the longer term effect of consolidating the necessity of freedom as part of the American Dream. Accompanying this sense is a feeling that the United States is an exceptional nation, with a sacred mission to defend liberty at home and promote it abroad.³⁸⁴ In *America Right or Wrong* Anatol Lieven argues that exceptionalism "is a belief that America has been specially 'chosen' and is therefore...the 'indispensable nation'—whether chosen by God, by 'destiny,' by 'history,' or simply marked out for greatness and leadership..."³⁸⁵ For Lieven the issues of nationalism and economic freedom are interlinked and have led to policies that attempt to spread freedom and autonomy abroad as well as domestically. He argues that the "Bush administration's strategy in response to 9/11 reflected old and deep patterns of American attitudes to the outside world, and right-wing American attitudes to other Americans. The wars launched by Bush were coupled with tax cuts that reflected the swing of the Republican Party away from the New Deal...and toward radical free-market capitalism."³⁸⁶ This coupling of nationalism infused with free-market ideals is evident in Bush's speeches. Bush defended the American Dream as the goal and product of the unique free market arrangement of the United States.

George W. Bush's 2005 State of the Union Address celebrated the exceptional nature of the United States, alongside his successful tax reform, preserving the pursuit of democracy and

³⁸⁴ Lieven, Anatol. *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism*. Wiley Online Library, 2004.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

equality. Bush began the address espousing the role of America. He stated “[t]wo weeks ago, I stood on the steps of this Capitol and renewed the commitment of our nation to the guiding ideal of liberty for all. This evening I will set forth policies to advance that ideal at home and around the world.”³⁸⁷ Bush connected the benefits of tax relief to a principled stand. He stated that “America's economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation. In the past four years, we have provided tax relief to every person who pays income taxes... When action was needed, the Congress delivered, and the nation is grateful. The principle here is clear: Taxpayer dollars must be spent wisely or not at all.”³⁸⁸ Additionally, his 2006 State of the Union Address noted that tax relief was central to the United States ability to stay in the lead. He argued “the tax relief you passed has left \$880 billion in the hands of American workers, investors, small businesses and families...I urge the Congress to act responsibly and make the tax cuts permanent...Keeping America competitive requires us to be good stewards of tax dollars.”³⁸⁹ For Bush the tax cuts were central to the nation’s overall economic health by keeping America “competitive.”

Bush used “competitiveness,” an outdated but emotionally powerful figure, to argue for the economic health of the United States. In “Competitiveness: A Dangerous Obsession” Paul Krugman argues that describing a nation as “competitive” in the international community is a compelling, if inaccurate, rhetorical trope. Krugman discusses how Clinton popularized the trope to push for deficit reduction measures including tax increases and argues that the metaphor works to get audiences on board for potentially painful economic programs. For Krugman, “competitiveness” is powerful in part because “competitive images are exciting, and thrills sell

³⁸⁷ Bush, George W. "State of the Union Address." February 2, 2005.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Bush, George W. "State of the Union Address." January 31, 2006.

tickets.”³⁹⁰ Pushing to keep America competitive offers “a stirring patriotic appeal, calling on the nation to act now to make the economy competitive in the global market—with the implication that dire economic consequences would follow if the United States does not.”³⁹¹ Creating fear that other countries will overtake the United States serves to make “competitiveness” a component of a *pathos* driven strategy for arguments about income taxes.

In the post-Cold War era the people of the United States celebrated the victory of two things, American democratic ideals and free market capitalism. The feeling that these two combined constitute the “American Dream” is deeply embedded in Ronald Reagan’s rhetoric regarding the tyranny of taxation. George H.W. Bush retained this understanding of taxation and made an ill-advised pledge that his administration would offer “No New Taxes.” This pledge was based in part on the belief that the American people would feel strongly that further taxation would violate the founding fathers’ rejection of government intrusion. Bill Clinton changed the narrative of the American Dream by introducing the “middle class” as a key site of fulfillment for the seekers of the dream. He sought to create a connection between free enterprise and equality by arguing for taxes as part of the reciprocal responsibility of the citizen and government to provide for equality of opportunity. George W. Bush modified the affinity for the middle class and pushed for tax reductions to secure the possibility of upward mobility for the middle class. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 evoked an outpouring of nationalism and infused patriotism with feelings of American exceptionalism. Bush appealed to this exceptionalism in defending income tax cuts and connected the exceptional nature of the U.S. to the feeling that the country should seek to maximize its “competitiveness” in the global economy. In the next section, Barack Obama’s influence on the American Dream is discussed as his historic

³⁹⁰ Krugman, Paul. "Competitiveness: A Dangerous Obsession." *Foreign affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 2, (1994), p. 39.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Presidential campaign and significant speeches sought to reorient public feelings away from the individual and toward the collective.

Obama and the American Dream

Barack Obama's Presidency and his historic Presidential campaign reconfigured feelings about the American Dream for many people. As the first African-American president, whose primary challenger for the Democratic nomination was a woman, the campaign represented an historic development of what was possible to achieve in America. Obama campaigned on a feeling of *hope* and an argument for *change*, and he presented himself as a demonstration of the power of the American Dream. Even before Barack Obama seriously considered running for president, he envisioned himself as part of the history of the American Dream. In his keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention Obama indicated his belief that his history and persona contributed to the constitution of the dream. In the 2008 "A More Perfect Union" speech he argued for a version of the dream that explicitly recognized the power of hope in constituting that same dream for many Americans. Obama's feeling that the American Dream should include equality of opportunity is demonstrated in his arguments for income tax reform, as these arguments emphasize increased rates on wealthy individuals.

This section of the chapter moves through two processes that have impacted Obama's belief in the American Dream and in his place in that dream. The first process is the shaping of Obama's early rhetorical character through his multicultural upbringing and private school education. The second process is the transformation that Obama underwent in his early political career, including a devastating loss to Bobby Rush in the 2000 Democratic primary. After examining these periods of Obama's life and political career his discourse on the American Dream is explored. These include significant moments in the 2004 Democratic National

Convention keynote address as well as a 2008 speech delivered in Philadelphia known as “A More Perfect Union.” Understanding how the rhetor might feel about the emotional content of an address and what vision they have for creating that feeling for the audience are invaluable for a study in *pathos*.

Obama’s rhetorical character can be understood as the product of two interrelated processes. The first process is his unique upbringing that saw him travelling around the world, to Jakarta and back to Hawaii as a child. These experiences shaped his view of the world, and also gave him a sense of his place in that world. The second process is his eventual transformation from a University of Chicago Law professor to the President of the United States. That transformation contributed to the development of his political ideas, and was also crucial to the development of a rhetorical identity that allows him to lay claim to exemplifying the American Dream. James Kloppenberg argues in his book *Reading Obama: Dreams, Hope, and the American Political Tradition* that “Barack Obama's intellectual and political persuasions emerged from a particular matrix, formed not only from his personal experience but also from the dynamics of American history.”³⁹² As a student of history and a public agent of it, Obama occupies a unique rhetorical space that provides him with the platform and credibility to constitute a new American Dream.

Obama’s upbringing was crucial to the development of his belief that he exemplifies the American Dream. It is difficult to envision most young boys with mothers from Kansas having the same multicultural experiences that he had. Obama’s diverse experiences shaped his perception of the world. Kloppenberg outlines these experiences as including “Indonesia and Hawaii. Occidental and Columbia. The far south side of Chicago and the villages of rural Kenya.

³⁹² Kloppenberg, James T. *Reading Obama: Dreams, Hope, and the American Political Tradition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011, p. ix.

The law schools of Harvard and the University of Chicago. The Illinois state legislature and the practice of civil rights law.”³⁹³ These are just some of the unique experiences Obama was fortunate enough to have during his developing years that were crucial to his rhetorical character. The particular educational experiences that Obama underwent were also important to his development as a rhetor. For Kloppenberg “Obama's sensibility was shaped both by the period of his own intellectual formation—the years between his birth in Hawaii in 1961 and his ascent to national prominence with his election to the United States Senate in 2004—and by the longer history that stretches from the Puritans to the present.”³⁹⁴ While Obama’s experiences growing up were important in shaping his beliefs regarding the American Dream, his political career was also formative in this regard.

Barack Obama’s development as a political rhetor occurs in three key moments that shaped his rhetorical character. The first moment was his unsuccessful challenge of Bobby Rush in 2000 for the nomination to the U.S. House of Representatives. Rush attacked Obama as not embracing the rich tradition of African-American history, and this moderated Obama’s approach to race and politics. The second moment was the 2004 keynote address to the Democratic National Convention. In the address Obama defined himself as an exemplar of the American Dream, providing a view of his future efforts to incorporate it into his *pathos*. The third significant moment was during the 2008 presidential campaign when Obama had to address accusations that he was closely associated with the radical Reverend Jeremiah Wright. In a speech entitled “A More Perfect Union” Obama detailed his belief that the American Dream has left African Americans behind, but articulated the future of the Dream to a universal application for all Americans.

³⁹³ Kloppenberg, James T. *Reading Obama: Dreams, Hope, and the American Political Tradition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011, p. 261.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. ix.

In 2000 Barack Obama lost a pivotal election campaign for the Democratic nomination to the U.S. House of Representatives. The loss validated Obama's multicultural rhetorical perspective, steering him away from embracing the black identity that Bobby Rush so successfully embodied. This aligned with Obama's experiences growing up as well, because "Obama learned from his explorations that all cultural traditions now are always in a process of mutation. He discovered that if there is any really universal quality of human culture in our day, it is hodgepodge."³⁹⁵ The campaign against Bobby Rush would prove difficult as he was a well-established African American candidate in his home district. Rush chose to focus on Obama's lack of qualifications as an African American leader, questioning whether he was "black enough"³⁹⁶ to represent the interests of the district. David Remnick in *The Bridge: The Life and Rise of Barack Obama* argues that Rush did Obama "a favor by running the campaign the way he did—it helped define Obama."³⁹⁷ Al Kinde said that "[i]f Obama had tried to be 'more black' or be more like Rush to beat him, and if he'd been successful, he would have been forever pigeonholed. We already knew that he wasn't a traditional black politician."³⁹⁸ Obama's multiculturalism and diverse view of racial politics was also central to his defining the American Dream in the 2008 speech "A More Perfect Union." In that address Obama argued that the Dream is something that all Americans aspire to achieve and that preserving broad based equality of opportunity is necessary for those pursuits.

Obama's multicultural political identity was crucial to his future political success by providing flexibility in the rhetorical invention process. Remnick points out that the race was useful because it "gave him exposure. He was not Harold Washington. He wasn't Bobby Rush.

³⁹⁵ Kloppenberg 2011, p. 253

³⁹⁶ Remnick, David. *The Bridge: The Life and Rise of Barack Obama*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2011, p. 324.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 335.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

He was a different leader that the community, both white and black, had to grow toward. There was no model for it yet. The model was the flip side of what Harold couldn't be because the city back then was too divided racially."³⁹⁹ For Remnick "Obama became the next generation."⁴⁰⁰ This development provided the springboard for the next key moment in Obama's transformation from a professor of law to the unique rhetor that he is today. This moment came at the 2004 Democratic National Convention where Obama delivered the keynote address. In a speech that stunned the audience and put Obama into the national spotlight, he took the next major step in developing his rhetorical and political identity.

Obama's message in the 2004 Democratic National Convention keynote address was that the American Dream can be reclaimed through a "politics of hope."⁴⁰¹ Obama defined the American Dream as preserving equality of opportunity and the freedom to strive for the highest achievements no matter how humble one's beginnings. Obama saw his parents as participating in and constituting this vision of the dream. He argued that "[t]hrough hard work and perseverance my father got a scholarship to study in a magical place, America, that's shown as a beacon of freedom and opportunity to so many who had come before him."⁴⁰² Obama is part of the lineage of that pursuit of the Dream and that the distinctiveness of the United States was intrinsic to its realization. Obama said "I stand here knowing that my story is part of the larger American story, that I owe a debt to all of those who came before me, and that in no other country on Earth is my story even possible."⁴⁰³ The way forward for Obama was to reconfigure how Americans feel about the story that he presents and the possibility of the future. He asked "[d]o we participate in

³⁹⁹ Remnick, David. *The Bridge: The Life and Rise of Barack Obama*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2011

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Obama, Barack H. "Keynote Address at the Democratic National Convention - July 27." 2004.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

a politics of cynicism, or do we participate in a politics of hope?”⁴⁰⁴ Obama defined *hope* through historical examples saying that it was “the hope of slaves sitting around a fire singing freedom songs; the hope of immigrants setting out for distant shores... the hope of a skinny kid with a funny name who believes that America has a place for him, too.”⁴⁰⁵

Obama’s 2004 DNC Keynote speech represents the beginning of his efforts to transform how Americans feel about the American dream. In “Recasting the American Dream and American Politics” Robert Rowland and John M. Jones argue that Obama’s speech was singularly successful at presenting a new perspective on the American dream. For Rowland and Jones, this is because Obama “said relatively little about particular policies, but instead focused on reclaiming the romantic narrative we have identified for liberals.”⁴⁰⁶ They argue that Obama’s keynote address “forecasts the possibility of a sea change in political ideology, based not on policy but on narrative preference.”⁴⁰⁷ For historians of Obama’s life and rhetorical career, this “sea change” was possible because “Barack Obama understands the limits of certainty and the limits of compromise. He knows that democratic politics is the art of the possible, in which results are achieved through persuasion and conciliation rather than force.”⁴⁰⁸ This is certainly evident in the way that Obama attempted to shape the feelings of the audience in the conclusion of the address. Obama stated “America, tonight, if you feel the same energy that I do, if you feel the same urgency that I do, if you feel the same passion that I do, if you feel the same

⁴⁰⁴ Obama, Barack H. "Keynote Address at the Democratic National Convention - July 27." 2004.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Rowland, Robert C., and John M. Jones. “Recasting the American Dream and American Politics: Barack Obama’s Keynote Address to the 2004 Democratic National Convention.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93(4) (November 2007): p. 428.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Kloppenberg 2011, p. 249

hopefulness that I do, if we do what we must do, then I have no doubt that... out of this long political darkness a brighter day will come.”⁴⁰⁹

The 2004 Democratic National Convention provided the springboard for Obama’s rhetorical development in the 2008 Presidential election campaign. John M. Murphy describes the rhetorical challenge facing Obama in the campaign. He argues that “[b]y any historical measure, Barack Hussein Obama should not have won election to the US presidency. As a young African American senator with no military or executive experience, he offered nothing to balance his unprecedented status.”⁴¹⁰ Murphy argues that although Obama didn’t fully rely on his race to govern the rhetorical choices that he makes throughout the campaign, his race does provide him with some resources. For Murphy, “[t]he primary inventional resource available to African American candidates, their faith tradition, offered few presidential elements... So the Senator rewrote the story.”⁴¹¹ Obama’s presentation of himself as embodying hope and change provided him with a crucial edge in the primary run against Hillary Clinton. This narrative would continue and expand in the early days of his presidency as well. Obama worked with different powerful elements of the American Dream that are constituted through the rhetoric of Kennedy, Reagan, and Clinton.

Another significant moment for Obama’s development and clarification of his feelings about the American Dream comes in a speech entitled “A More Perfect Union” delivered on March 18, 2008. In this speech Obama is responding to criticism that he has been associated with a radical Black Nationalist preacher Reverend Jeremiah Wright. Obama’s method of answering this charge was to describe what the American Dream means to all citizens of the United States,

⁴⁰⁹ Obama, Barack H. "Keynote Address at the Democratic National Convention - July 27." 2004.

⁴¹⁰ Murphy, John M. "Barack Obama, the Exodus Tradition, and the Joshua Generation." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 97(4) (November 2011), p. 402.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

not just to African Americans. For Obama, infusing the American Dream with a unified theme of cooperation and national pride creates common affiliation across racial divisions. He argued that it was necessary for “all Americans to realize that your dreams do not have to come at the expense of my dreams; that investing in the health, welfare, and education of black and brown and white children will ultimately help all of America prosper.”⁴¹² Obama connected the specialness of his campaign and its meaning for African Americans everywhere to the possibility of new conversations about race, the American Dream, and the future of the country. Saying that this election was different than others, that “this time” different issues could be discussed Obama said that “[t]his time we want to talk about the men and women of every color and creed who serve together, and fight together, and bleed together under the same proud flag.”⁴¹³ In “One Dream: Barack Obama, Race, and the American Dream” Robert Rowland and John Jones argue that Obama successfully reconfigured the narrative behind the American Dream. For them Obama provided an account that “grounded the problem of race in the larger failure of the nation to make the American Dream available to all citizens, and then argued that only by working together could we achieve that dream and make progress in perfecting the union.”⁴¹⁴ Obama focused on the necessity of pursuing equality of opportunity as an intrinsic element of the American Dream.

Obama’s feelings towards the American Dream as requiring equality of opportunity influence his income tax policy proscriptions. As the President of the United States Obama has only recently made small gains in crafting an income tax policy aligning with his beliefs in

⁴¹² Obama, Barack H., "A More Perfect Union." March 18, 2008.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Rowland, Robert C, and John M Jones. "One Dream: Barack Obama, Race, and the American Dream." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 14, no. 1 (2011), p. 146.

equality and its central role in the American dream.⁴¹⁵ He outlines these beliefs most clearly in his book *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream* where he argues that “I simply believe that those of us who have benefited most from this new economy can best afford to shoulder the obligation of ensuring every American child has a chance for the same success.”⁴¹⁶ He further argues that “once your drapes cost more than the average American’s yearly salary, then you can afford to pay a bit more in taxes.”⁴¹⁷ Obama has yet to push through any significant income tax reform, but he has mentioned various proposals and the basis for defending them. In his 2011 State of the Union Address he argued that the Bush era tax cuts should not be extended. As he saw it “we simply can’t afford a permanent extension of the tax cuts for the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans. Before we take money away from our schools or scholarships away from our students, we should ask millionaires to give up their tax break. It’s not a matter of punishing their success. It’s about promoting America’s success.”⁴¹⁸ Refocusing on the promotion of justice in income tax policy rather than the Bush focus on the virtuous entrepreneur is a feature of Obama’s newest campaign to restructure the role of government in the economy. The most significant tax reform efforts he has achieved to date stem from the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, which Obama uses as a transition to a focus on the “middle class” and its relationship to the American Dream.⁴¹⁹

Obama’s proposals are not that far removed from those of Theodore Roosevelt who advocated for steep taxes on wealthy individuals to provide for equality of opportunity. For

⁴¹⁵ Through the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, which retained tax cuts for lower and middle brackets while ending them on higher earners.

⁴¹⁶ Obama, Barack. *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*. 1st ed. Crown Publishers: New York, 2006, p. 193.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Obama, Barack H., "Remarks by the President in State of Union Address." January 25, 2011.

⁴¹⁹ This transition point is discussed in Chapter 6 as it contributes to the *patheme* of the “American Dream” that Obama deploys in his developing campaign for “A Better Bargain for the Middle Class.”

Roosevelt, the ideal American was the “farmer who owns his own medium-sized farm”⁴²⁰ because of the balance between their “rugged self-reliance”⁴²¹ and the necessity to “learn to work in the heartiest cooperation.”⁴²² Roosevelt believed that the American Dream was best achieved through equality of opportunity in a democratic system. Obama works with a similar concept of Americanism, highlighting the importance of hard-work to that identity. In *The Audacity of Hope*, Barack Obama writes that he shares a philosophical connection with Theodore Roosevelt. He notes that “an active national government has also been indispensable in dealing with market failures...Teddy Roosevelt recognized that monopoly power could restrict competition, and made ‘trust busting’ a centerpiece of his administration.”⁴²³ Through eliminating monopolies Roosevelt was better able to expand the opportunity for hard working Americans, crafting the role of government as the protection of fair competition in the marketplace. Obama’s understanding of the American character as derived in part from the advocacy of Theodore Roosevelt has shaped his own articulation of that character.

Obama has recently begun a campaign for “A Better Bargain for the Middle Class” primarily using *pathos* to craft a synthesis of approaches to the “American Dream.” Though the official start of this campaign is an address delivered on July 24, 2013 at Knox College, the roots of the campaign can be traced to an earlier speech. Specifically, to an address delivered by Obama in Osawatomie, KS on December 6, 2011. This speech commemorates an address by Theodore Roosevelt delivered in the same town in Kansas in 1910. Obama connected with Roosevelt’s address by articulating a vision of a “better bargain” for the middle class, which would allow individuals to access the positive benefits of economic activity through a lifetime of

⁴²⁰ Roosevelt, Theodore. "Seventh Annual Message to Congress (December 3, 1907)." Washington, D.C., 1907.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Obama, Barack H. *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*, New York, NY: Crown Publishing, 2006. p. 153.

hard work. Obama explicitly used history and the rhetoric of past presidents to contextualize his call for change. In the Kansas address he argued that "...this is not just another political debate. This is the defining issue of our time. This is a make-or-break moment for the middle class, and for all those who are fighting to get into the middle class."⁴²⁴ Obama's official campaign for a "better bargain for the middle class"⁴²⁵ was initiated on July 24, 2013 and his feelings about wealth and equality are central to how he seeks to configure the future of the country. The next section will argue that Obama has strengthened his efforts to craft a public emotional commitment to the American collective primarily through the 2012 State of the Union Address with its renewed focus on the role of the individual in contributing to the future of American democracy.

Obama's Collectivizing *pathos* in the 2012 State of the Union

In January 2009 President Obama inherited from the outgoing Bush administration a declining economy and a narrative that emphasized the importance of the individual in that economy.⁴²⁶ As part of the rhetorical legacy of Ronald Reagan, President Bush had created tax policies that centered on the virtuous individual and defended them in that context.⁴²⁷ Since 2009 Obama has attempted to craft a public feeling of collective responsibility in a number of ways. Early in office reacting to the economic crisis and high unemployment Obama began efforts to modify feelings regarding the primacy of the individual in the economy.⁴²⁸ He continued these

⁴²⁴ Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President on the Economy in Osawatomie, Kansas - December 6, 2011." Osawatomie, Kansas, 2011.

⁴²⁵ Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013.

⁴²⁶ West, Mark, and Chris Carey. "(Re)Enacting Frontier Justice: The Bush Administration's Tactical Narration of the Old West Fantasy after September 11." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92, no. 4 (2006): 379-412.

⁴²⁷ Lieven, Anatol. *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism*. Wiley Online Library, 2004.

⁴²⁸ On signing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 Obama remarked "So much depends on what we do at this moment. This is not about the future of my Administration. This effort is about the future of our

efforts through his defense of health care reform and in reaction to its passage.⁴²⁹ Though those efforts were important to clearing the ground for Obama's re-articulation of collective responsibility and individual freedom, the sharpest and most focused attempts in this regard have come in relation to his most recent economic proposals.⁴³⁰ The clearest examples of Obama's attempt to shape the public's emotional reality vis-à-vis American economic identity have come after the start of 2012, as the economy has rebounded and he has offered a vision of the way forward for the country.

This section of the chapter argues that Obama's 2012 State of the Union Address provides the primary example of Obama's efforts to reorient American public feeling towards an affinity for the collective. The State of the Union Address is known as "An America Within Our Reach" and outlined Obama's vision for the future of the country as it recovered from the 2008 economic downturn, including the creation of a more just income tax system. He presented a series of policy proposals and buttressed them by crafting a shared emotional commitment to a specific understanding of the American national identity and the role of the individual in securing the future of the country.

families and communities, our economy and our country." (Obama, Barack H. "Statement on Signing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009." February 17, 2009.)

⁴²⁹ In pushing for healthcare reform, Obama remarked "[t]hat large-heartedness – that concern and regard for the plight of others – is not a partisan feeling. It is not a Republican or a Democratic feeling. It, too, is part of the American character. Our ability to stand in other people's shoes. A recognition that we are all in this together; that when fortune turns against one of us, others are there to lend a helping hand. A belief that in this country, hard work and responsibility should be rewarded by some measure of security and fair play; and an acknowledgement that sometimes government has to step in to help deliver on that promise." (Obama, Barack H. "Address to Congress on Healthcare Reform." September 9, 2009.)

⁴³⁰ It should be noted that the 2010 midterm elections played a role in delaying (and perhaps derailing) Obama's push for economic policies that emphasize justice over virtue. The Republicans regained the majority in the House of Representatives by picking up 63 seats. Some analysts point to the attempt to redefine the "American story" as one reason for the major Republican gains. In "President Obama at Mid-Term" Stefan Halper argues that as of 2010 the "Obama version of the American story has lost traction on a wholly different populist version of America advanced by the Tea Party, Glen Beck, Sarah Palin et al." (Halper, Stefan. "President Obama at Mid-Term." *International Affairs* 87, no. 1, 2011, p. 7.)

In the modern Presidency the State of the Union Address functions as the public expression of the power of “chief legislator.”⁴³¹ In *Addressing the State of the Union: The Evolution and Impact of the President’s Big Speech* Donna R. Hoffman and Alison D. Howard discuss the history of the oral address and its purpose in American democracy. They argue that Woodrow Wilson’s resumption of an oral address before Congress is related to its purpose in the modern presidency, presenting the legislative agenda of the chief executive. From the time of Franklin D. Roosevelt this role of the Address has been cemented and the contemporary addresses continue to present the legislative agenda of the President. Obama’s 2012 State of the Union address exemplified many of the themes of a speech outlining a legislative program, but it went beyond a simple layout of his agenda. In the address Obama constructed a vision of America and what it means to be an American to provide a strong *pathos* foundation for his particular policy proposals.

True to the traditional policy focus of the speech Obama did lay out a series of proposals for the future of the economy, including income tax reform. He stated that he wished “to speak about how we move forward, and lay out a blueprint for an economy that’s built to last – an economy built on American manufacturing, American energy, skills for American workers, and a renewal of American values.”⁴³² Obama proposed that Congress should cut taxes on manufacturing and give tax breaks to companies who do business in the U.S. He argued for education reform, better pay for teachers, and easier access to loans for aspiring college students. On energy Obama proposed that the U.S. spend more money on innovation and enforcement of environmental regulations on fossil fuels. Despite the breadth of his policy proposals Obama emphasized the necessity of income tax reform. Specifically he said “our most immediate

⁴³¹ Hoffman, Donna R. and Howard, Alison D. *Addressing the State of the Union: The Evolution and Impact of the President’s Big Speech*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2006). p. 3.

⁴³² Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President in the State of the Union Address." January 24, 2012.

priority is stopping a tax hike on 160 million working Americans while the recovery is still fragile.”⁴³³ For Obama the problem could be traced to inequality in income tax application. He pointed out “because of loopholes and shelters in the tax code, a quarter of all millionaires pay lower tax rates than millions of middle-class households. Right now, Warren Buffett pays a lower tax rate than his secretary.”⁴³⁴ Obama argued for a vision of justice in the application of income taxes, with higher earners paying more. He posited that tax reform “should follow the Buffett Rule. If you make more than \$1 million a year, you should not pay less than 30 percent in taxes.”⁴³⁵ In defending these tax increases Obama pointed out that it is an issue of fairness and argued that “we need to change our tax code so that people like me, and an awful lot of members of Congress, pay our fair share of taxes.”⁴³⁶

The elements of *pathos* in the State of the Union Address are directed at creating a collectivizing force in American public discourse in order to provide an emotional warrant for the adoption of Obama’s policy proposals. There are three primary elements that crafted this force. First, Obama exhorted the United States to remember World War II and the national mission of that time period. Second, Obama discussed the role that immigrants play in demonstrating the importance of the American promise of upward mobility. Third, Obama cited the efforts of the U.S. Armed Forces as exemplifying the collective commitment and individual sacrifice that undergirds the country’s success. These three elements of the State of the Union address were woven together to craft a feeling that the United States is exceptional due to the political structures that facilitate individual virtue and equality of opportunity.

⁴³³ Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President in the State of the Union Address." January 24, 2012.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., The theme of individuals paying their “fair share” of taxes is reiterated in Obama’s remarks upon signing the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, which is analyzed in the next chapter.

The process of collective identity formation is intimately connected to the existence of shared emotional commitments. In *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age* Alberto Melucci argues that “[c]ollective identity, the construction of a ‘we’, is then a necessity also for the emotional balance of social actors involved in conflicts.”⁴³⁷ Affiliation with specific groups is an important part of this collective identity formation, as Melucci notes: “[t]he possibility of referring to a love-object (‘Us’ against ‘Them’) is a strong and preliminary condition for collective action as it continuously reduces ambivalence and fuels action with positive energies.”⁴³⁸ This emotional commitment to the collective is especially important during times of change and deliberations about divergent futures. This is particularly true if the actions presented are to remain coordinated as “[w]hen facing changes, the necessity of renewing and possibly renegotiating the bond that ties individuals and groups together originates from this deep emotional commitment to a ‘We’ which must maintain its integrity in order to motivate action.”⁴³⁹ The creation of a strong affinity for a group is central to the collective identity of a group, as Obama demonstrates in the State of the Union through his use of the troops as an exemplar for this type of collective identity formation.

The story that Obama told in the State of the Union was one of family, country, and upward mobility. He began the address by welcoming home the last troops from Iraq and lauding their selfless commitment to country. Obama held them up as an example to be emulated. He said “[i]magine what we could accomplish if we followed their example. (Applause.) Think about the America within our reach... An economy built to last, where hard work pays off, and

⁴³⁷ Melucci, Alberto. *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*. Cambridge Cultural Social Studies Series. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1996, p. 83.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

responsibility is rewarded.”⁴⁴⁰ Obama specifically invoked the memory of World War II as it contributed to the strength of the example. He said “[a]t the end of World War II, when another generation of heroes returned home from combat, they built the strongest economy and middle class the world has ever known. (Applause.) My grandfather, a veteran of Patton’s Army, got the chance to go to college on the GI Bill. My grandmother, who worked on a bomber assembly line, was part of a workforce that turned out the best products on Earth.”⁴⁴¹ Obama’s invocation of World War II was designed to create an affective orientation towards the country as worthy of individual sacrifice and hard work. Obama recalled the power that World War II had for creating a collective motivation for sacrifice while he pointed to the benefit for the individual, fusing feelings of collective responsibility with individual empowerment.

World War II and the sacrifices made by the citizens in the United States are a part of the collective memory of the country. As a prominent public address that shaped the feelings about the conflict, FDR’s fireside chat “A Call for Sacrifice” provides a template for understanding Obama’s use of “World War II” through a *pathos* lens. In the radio broadcast Roosevelt tied sacrifices of blood and money together to create a sense of collective responsibility for the war. Roosevelt noted the sacrifices being made by the troops abroad and then proclaimed that “there is one front and one battle where everyone in the United States—every man, woman, and child—is in action, and will be privileged to remain in action throughout this war. That front is right here at home, in our daily lives, in our daily tasks.”⁴⁴² While the conflict in Iraq is far from the wide-scale war that Roosevelt faced, Obama found the military to be an exemplary demonstration of loyalty and commitment. He argued that the Armed Forces “exceed all expectations. They’re not

⁴⁴⁰ Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President in the State of the Union Address." January 24, 2012.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid

⁴⁴² Roosevelt, Franklin D. "A Call for Sacrifice, April 28, 1942." In *FDR's Fireside Chats*, edited by Russell D. Buhite and David W. Levy, 219-29. University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, 1992.

consumed with personal ambition. They don't obsess over their differences. They focus on the mission at hand. They work together. Imagine what we could accomplish if we followed their example."⁴⁴³ For Obama the "America within our reach" could be produced through a military-like commitment to country. This harkens back to the national mission of World War II.

The use of "World War II" and the contribution of that generation toward the development of the country is a potent example of *pathos* in the contemporary United States. In "War, Memory and the Public Mediation of Affect" Erika Doss argues that World War II provides a powerful emotional pull even for younger citizens that did not live through the war. Doss argues that comments about the contribution of the World War II generation can "evoke a nation forged by war and military triumphalism: war is celebrated as America's 'defining' identity; its unifying dynamics are held as the nation's most illustrious and 'lasting' accomplishment."⁴⁴⁴ Obama used the emotional power of the war to make an argument for the collectivism that he sees as fundamental to the future of the country.

Transitioning from a past-oriented description of World War II to lessons for the future led Obama to describe the reasons why his grandparents were willing to sacrifice their interests for their country. He argued that it was part of their commitment to the collective American values that facilitated the willful subordination of their interests. For Obama "[t]he two of them shared the optimism of a nation that had triumphed over a depression and fascism. They understood they were part of something larger; that they were contributing to a story of success that every American had a chance to share -- the basic American promise that if you worked hard, you could do well enough to raise a family, own a home, send your kids to college, and put

⁴⁴³ Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President in the State of the Union Address." January 24, 2012.

⁴⁴⁴ Doss, Erika. "War, Memory, and the Public Mediation of Affect: The National World War II Memorial and American Imperialism." *Memory Studies* 1, no. 2 (2008), p. 234.

a little away for retirement.”⁴⁴⁵ Though Obama didn’t use the phrase “American Dream” in the 2012 State of the Union Address he sought to create a vision for “an America within our reach.”⁴⁴⁶ He crafted a relationship between the historic progress of the country and the “American promise,” which as is an essential component of the success of the United States.

Obama emphasized the importance of a co-constitutive approach to the relationship between the individual and the collective through his discussion of immigration. The nation and the individual rely upon the other for their success as its status as a nation of immigrants demonstrates. Obama argued that “hundreds of thousands of talented, hardworking students in this country face another challenge: the fact that they aren’t yet American citizens. Many were brought here as small children, are American through and through, yet they live every day with the threat of deportation.”⁴⁴⁷ American citizenry is earned through the hard work that immigrants do while in the United States. They represent the future of the country that can (and will) be transformed through their hard work. For Obama, the immigrants who embody the best parts of the country should be afforded the opportunity to stay. He argued “let’s at least agree to stop expelling responsible young people who want to staff our labs, start new businesses, defend this country. Send me a law that gives them the chance to earn their citizenship. I will sign it right away.”⁴⁴⁸

Immigrants provide an excellent candidate for an exemplary group with a strong commitment to the collective identity of the nation. In the context of the history of the United States immigrants can be hailed as fulfilling two aspects of the American Dream, the commitment to hard work and privileging national success over individual gain. This feeling

⁴⁴⁵ Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President in the State of the Union Address." January 24, 2012.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

towards the immigrant is due in no small part to the influence of Theodore Roosevelt's four volume *The Winning of the West*. In the series Roosevelt argued that immigrants provided a key source of innovation and wanderlust in pushing the boundaries of the American Frontier ever outward.⁴⁴⁹ Roosevelt pointed to specific examples of immigrants that embodied this spirit, such as the Irish. He argued that the Irish Presbyterians pushed "past the settled regions... plunging into the wilderness"⁴⁵⁰ and "were the first and last set of immigrants to do this; all others have merely followed in the wake of their predecessors."⁴⁵¹ Through their encounter with the frontier and their taming of it they became Americans. For Roosevelt this transformation from immigrant to American proceeded quickly as a "single generation, passed under the hard conditions of life in the wilderness, was enough to weld together into one people the representatives of these numerous and widely different races; and the children of the next generation became indistinguishable from one another."⁴⁵² Roosevelt argued that immigrants were also the origin of a specifically "American" identity as they oriented themselves towards the collective, giving up markers of individual difference. He posited that "[l]ong before the first Continental Congress assembled, the backwoodsmen, whatever their blood, had become Americans, one in speech, thought, and character, clutching firmly the land in which their fathers and grandfathers had lived before them."⁴⁵³ In "We Want Americans Pure and Simple": Theodore Roosevelt and the Myth of Americanism" Leroy G. Dorsey and Rachel M. Harlow argue that these feelings toward the hardworking immigrant remain salient today. For Dorsey and Harlow "Roosevelt's *The Winning of the West* promoted a philosophy of life fundamental to the development of the American

⁴⁴⁹ Roosevelt, Theodore. *The Winning of the West: From the Alleghanies to the Mississippi, 1769-1776*. Vol. 1: Project Gutenberg EBook, 2004.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

race”⁴⁵⁴ relying on the strenuous conditions of the frontier to bring communities together through their common work. They argue that Roosevelt’s vision of immigration and the American spirit provide “the underpinnings for a metaphor of American culture that became popular in the early twentieth century and continues to resonate today.”⁴⁵⁵ Immigrants provide one exemplary group to model ourselves after while the armed forces provide another.

Obama began his conclusion of the address by returning to the introduction, which provided a view of national commitment by honoring the troops recently returned from Iraq. This strong appeal to national identity as service to the country sought to erase specific identity relations and create affiliations across groups. Obama argued that “[t]hose of us who’ve been sent here to serve can learn a thing or two from the service of our troops. When you put on that uniform, it doesn’t matter if you’re black or white; Asian, Latino, Native American; conservative, liberal; rich, poor; gay, straight.”⁴⁵⁶ For Obama the success of the United States rests on our ability to *work* together. Obama suggested that “[n]o one built this country on their own. This nation is great because we built it together. This nation is great because we worked as a team.”⁴⁵⁷ The identification of the history of the United States serves to demarcate our national identity from other countries that may not have been created through a democratic work in progress. The exemplification of our armed forces serves to strongly emphasize the collective identification with the nation over and above the individual, as it is the country that we are working for. Obama’s 2012 State of the Union Address sought to influence the emotional trajectory in the United States, shifting away from the feelings of individualism that dominated in the post-Cold War era until 2008.

⁴⁵⁴ Dorsey, Leroy G. and Harlow, Rachel M. “‘We Want Americans Pure and Simple’: Theodore Roosevelt and the Myth of Americanism,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6(1), 2003, p. 58

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President in the State of the Union Address." January 24, 2012

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid

Conclusion

President Reagan's rhetoric on taxes and the American Dream constituted a particular emotional climate from the end of the Cold War until the 2008 presidential election. One thing that made Reagan's influence so powerful and long-lasting was his capacity to embody the terms of the dream that he had for America. Arguing from a deep seated feeling that the best course for the United States was to promote an individual, materialistic mode of national politics Reagan swayed policymakers and citizens alike. The end of the Cold War only served to validate the feeling that free market ideals and individualism had triumphed over state controlled economies. Reagan's influence necessitated George H.W. Bush's "No New Taxes Pledge," and also provided the groundwork for George W. Bush's argument for the exceptionalism of the United States. The end of the Bush era provided a new opportunity to recreate the American Dream through a focus on the democratic ideals of the country rather than its free market pursuits.

The election of Barack Obama in 2008 provided the United States with another candidate who would embody the realization of the American Dream, but in a very different way. Focusing on the American Dream as the access to an equal chance at success, and not simply the capacity of the individual to achieve that success, meant a different approach to freedom, government, and income taxes. President Obama has sought to create a feeling that the American Dream is rooted in the historical founding of this country and the basic idea that all people are created equal. As the next chapter demonstrates he approaches the American Dream in a way that hopes to combine the powerful elements of the individualist approach of Reagan with the collectivist approach of Roosevelt.

CHAPTER 6

THEORIZING THE *PATHEME*: THE “AMERICAN DREAM” AS AN EMOTIONALLY FULL SIGNIFIER

Though rhetorical studies has long recognized the importance of emotion to persuasion (going back as far as Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric*, which includes *pathos* as one of the core modes of suatory discourse)⁴⁵⁸ the emergence of neurological science has facilitated a renaissance in theorizing the connection between emotion, communication and action.⁴⁵⁹ Scholars across disciplines have begun to recognize the importance of emotion to communication and everyday decision-making.⁴⁶⁰ This includes contemporary rhetorical studies incorporating the insights of scientists, psychologists and sociologists in their studies of the emotional effect on the force of discourse.⁴⁶¹ Though this work is exceedingly valuable, it has heretofore relied on traditional rhetorical categories informed by logo-centric analysis. This chapter theorizes a new object of analysis, the *patheme*, for rhetorical scholars interested in attending to the effect that emotion plays in shaping and being shaped by rhetoric.

A *patheme* is an emotionally full signifier that works by transmitting a powerful sentiment. This rhetorical figure works by combining, in various ways, three modes of meaning-

⁴⁵⁸ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, trans. George Kennedy, (NY: Oxford University Press 2007). “The emotions [*pathē*] are those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgments and which are accompanied by pain and pleasure, for example, anger, pity, fear, and other such things and their opposites” (p. 113).

⁴⁵⁹ Gross, Daniel M. *The Secret History of Emotion: From Aristotle’s Rhetoric to Modern Brain Science*. (The University of Chicago Press, 2006)

⁴⁶⁰ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Antoine Bechara, “The Role of Emotion in Decision-making: Evidence from Neurological Patients with Orbitofrontal Damage,” *Brain and Cognition* 55 (2004) 30–40.

⁴⁶¹ Hariman, Robert & Lucaites, John Louis. “Dissent and Emotional Management in a Liberal Democratic Society: The Kent State Iconic Photograph.” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 31(1) (2001): 4-31; Waddell, Craig. “The Role of Pathos in the Decision-making Process: A Study in the Rhetoric of Science Policy.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76, (1990): 381-400.

making. First, the *patheme* activates a fundamental feeling, such as anger, fear, hope or pride. This is the result of the associational content of a term imbuing it with emotional meaning. Second, the *patheme* transmits a culturally or community relevant affect. Affiliational connections are forged through common history or cultural myths. Third, the *patheme* mediates conflicting argumentative approaches. Providing a univalent emotional experience undergirds the possibility of co-orienting audiences who might otherwise disagree. A particular *patheme*'s effectiveness will depend on the strength of group identification to generate a common orientation. These three interrelated mechanics produce a powerful emotionally charged signifier that can be deployed in the service of persuasion.

Theorizing the *patheme* expands the understanding of the rhetorical figure the “American Dream” President Barack Obama uses in a series of four speeches beginning with an address to Knox College on 2013. The speeches are part of Obama’s ongoing campaign for “A Better Bargain for the Middle Class,” which outlines his vision for the future of the country through a series of policy proposals designed to help specific groups achieve middle class status. The 2013 Knox College speech identifies the “American Dream”⁴⁶² as “a basic bargain -- a sense that your hard work would be rewarded with fair wages and decent benefits.”⁴⁶³ The Knox College address outlines the “American Dream” as the basic principle of the campaign, laying the foundation for its application to specific instantiations. The “American Dream” is subsequently applied to differing material circumstances by three other addresses that Obama delivers on this subject; one in Phoenix on home ownership, one in Scranton on college affordability, and the most recent delivered in Washington, D.C. on the issue of income inequality.⁴⁶⁴ This chapter argues that the

⁴⁶² Obama, Barack H., "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President on College Affordability." Lackawanna College: Scranton, Pennsylvania, August 23, 2013; Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President on Responsible Homeownership."

deployment of the “American Dream” in these addresses is a figure of enduring value that rhetorical studies currently has no adequate name for. Thus, this chapter seeks to provide a theoretical ground for understanding the operation of a *patheme*, a rhetorical figure most simply defined as an emotionally full signifier.

This chapter proceeds in three parts. The first part outlines the features of the *patheme* using theories of emotion and metaphor to describe how emotional meaning is created through a specific discursive object. The second part of this chapter distinguishes the *patheme* from the *ideograph*.⁴⁶⁵ Differences include but are not limited to the focus of a rhetorical criticism, the underlying operation of the figure, and the epistemological commitments underpinning their identification. The third part of this chapter develops an application for the theorizing and identifies the use of the “American Dream” by President Barack Obama as a *patheme*. This usage occurs in three speeches by Obama in 2013 as part of a speaking series entitled “A Better Bargain for the Middle Class.”

In the first part of this chapter theories arguing for a view of emotions as a process of physiological change induced by stimuli⁴⁶⁶ are synthesized with approaches to the transmission of social emotion through group affiliation and shared history. Teresa Brennan’s *The Transmission of Affect* provides a view of group-level emotional exchange as based on shared linguistic and community driven evaluations.⁴⁶⁷ This formulation of the social transmission of

Desert Vista High School: Phoenix, AZ, August 6, 2013, Obama, Barack, H. "Remarks by the President on Economic Mobility." THEARC: Washington, D.C. , December 4, 2013.

⁴⁶⁵ Theorized by Michael Calvin McGee in 1980 the *ideograph* “is an ordinary language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal” (McGee, Michael C. “The ‘Ideograph’: A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 66(1), 1980, p. 15). The ideograph works through an implied logical operation that deploys ideology to stand in for argument. Examples for McGee include “Equality” and “Liberty” among others.

⁴⁶⁶ Scherer, Klaus R. "What Are Emotions? And How Can They Be Measured?" *Social science information* 44, no. 4 (2005)

⁴⁶⁷ Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004.

emotion is combined with psychodynamic theories⁴⁶⁸ of metaphor to produce an analysis of the operation of a *patheme* in discourse. Psychodynamic theories of metaphor posit that the process of meaning-making occurs through the imaginative elements of the psyche, rather than simply cognitive appraisal. Hans Blumenberg's *Paradigms for a Metaphorology* and Paul Ricoeur's *The Rule of Metaphor* are the two accounts of metaphor applied in this chapter. Blumenberg argues that the source of metaphor is not rational, but imaginative.⁴⁶⁹ Ricoeur posits that metaphor can negotiate otherwise inconsistent meanings providing a sense of coherence even when there is tension within a metaphor itself.⁴⁷⁰ Taking these perspectives on emotion and language together provides a theory of the operation of a *patheme* in society, as it enters public discourse and shapes public affect it does so through a direct engagement with the emotions and can unite oppositional argument communities.

The second part of this chapter distinguishes the *patheme* from the *ideograph*. It is useful to distinguish the *patheme* from the *ideograph* for two reasons. First, they are directed at distinct aspects of rhetoric. What the *ideograph* is to ideological criticism, the *patheme* is to *pathos*-based criticism. The *patheme* provides a unique view of persuasion that is lost from a strictly ideological account. The use of the phrase "American Dream" is very different if it is deployed

⁴⁶⁸ There are three basic types of metaphor theories: cognitive, psychodynamic, and discursive. Cognitive theories of metaphor rely on the rational assessment of the metaphor creating enjoyment or pleasure in its aesthetic beauty. Cognitive metaphor theorists include Aristotle and Josef Stern. (Aristotle, *On Poetics*, trans. Seth Benardete and Michael Davis, South Bend: IN, St. Augustine's Press, 2002); (Josef Stern, *Metaphor in Context*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000). Psychodynamic theories of metaphor argue that the imagination supplies metaphor and acknowledges its power, but not from a cognitive derivation. Psychodynamic metaphor theorists include Hans Blumenberg and Paul Ricoeur. (Hans Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, trans. Robert Savage, Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010); (Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans R. Czerny, K. McLaughlin and J. Costello, Taylor and Francis e-Library 2004). Discursive theories locate the power of metaphor in the interaction of linguistic elements. Discursive metaphor theorists include I.A. Richards as well as Lakoff & Johnson. " (I.A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1965); Lakoff, George, and Johnson, Mark, *Metaphors We Live B*, University of Chicago press, 2008).

⁴⁶⁹ Hans Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, trans. Robert Savage, Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010

⁴⁷⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans R. Czerny, K. McLaughlin and J. Costello, Taylor and Francis e-Library 2004

by a Reaganite than when Obama uses the phrase. Understanding these differences requires a *pathos* based reading of the terms deployment and development. Second, distinguishing the terms enriches ideological criticism as well. If a term's primary mode of meaning-making occurs through the creation of powerful emotional reactions then tracing how these feelings are created can explain why rational argumentation may fail, such as in the case of climate change discourse. From a purely ideological perspective the rational interplay of terms is the relevant consideration, but as the preceding chapters of this project demonstrate persuasion does not necessarily occur solely through rational modes.

The third part of this chapter provides the application of the theoretical development of the *patheme*. In July 2013 Obama kicked off a campaign for "A Better Bargain for the Middle Class" with a speech at Knox College in Galesburg, Ill. The speech identifies "middle class" status as a pathway for the country and its citizens to better achieve the "American Dream." This pathway is then further explored in three later speeches, which identify key markers of entry into the middle class as well as barriers preventing realization of the Dream. The "American Dream" can be understood as a specific *patheme*, born out of Obama's larger project of reconfiguring the emotional climate in the United States to be more conducive to economic equality of opportunity. The key linkage in this regard occurs in Obama's remarks on the passage of the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012. In those remarks Obama argues that the income tax cuts facilitate mobility into the middle class, which is the vehicle for achieving the American Dream in his 2013 "Better Bargain" addresses. Connecting the "middle class" with the "American Dream" concretizes an otherwise abstract term, inviting individuals to celebrate their participation in the realization of the Dream, either through the pride in achieving middle class status or the hope to one day do so.

Emotional Basis of the *patheme*

Given that a *patheme* is a linguistic marker for a collection of social emotions, the nature of emotions and their social transmission is important. This section of the chapter constructs a view of the social transmission of emotions through language, where emotions are a process of synchronized physiological changes in response to an internal or external stimulus and their transmission involves culturally relevant information and linguistic data. The process of emotion formation is prior to cognitive assessment and has action tendencies⁴⁷¹ associated with the particular emotion that is felt. These action tendencies are also modified by culturally relevant considerations. Teresa Brennan in *The Transmission of Affect* theorizes the circulation of affect and the importance of a social theory of emotion. Empirical studies demonstrate that affiliation is central to the creation and sustainment of group emotional experience and is crucial in overcoming collective action problems in democratic countries.⁴⁷² Using these theories as building blocks for the theory of the *patheme* provides an account of a substantial point of meaning that taps into a powerful emotional connection. Successfully deploying a *patheme* thus requires an historic emotional investment on the part of the audience in a particular signifier.

Emotions are not simply the product of a cognitive assessment of a situation that induces bodily changes but include physiological changes coincident with perception. These changes might include an increase in heart rate, faster breathing, or even running away from a source of danger. In “The New Science of Mind and the Future of Knowledge” Eric Kandel describes the evolution of thinking about emotions and their relationship with cognition. Until 1884 emotions

⁴⁷¹ “Action tendencies” refer to the type of action that is most closely associated with a specific emotion. Fear creates flight or fight tendencies, anger creates tendencies to initiate conflict, etc.

⁴⁷² Groenendyk, Eric. "Current Emotion Research in Political Science: How Emotions Help Democracy Overcome Its Collective Action Problem." *Emotion Review* 3, no. 4 (2011); MacKuen, Michael, George E Marcus, W Russell Neuman, and Luke Keele. "The Third Way: The Theory of Affective Intelligence and American Democracy." In *The Affect Effect: Dynamics of Emotion in Political Thinking and Behavior*, edited by W. Russell Neuman, 124-51: The University of Chicago Press, 2007.

were believed to be caused by cognitive assessment and thus were derivative of rationality. Early consensus was that emotions were the result of a sequence of events where for example “a person recognizes a frightening situation; that recognition produces a conscious experience of fear in the cerebral cortex”⁴⁷³ and then the bodily reactions would follow, including “increased heart rate, constricted blood vessels, increased blood pressure”⁴⁷⁴ etc. William James’ 1884 essay “What is an Emotion?” argued against this prevailing view. James thesis was that “the bodily changes follow directly the PERCEPTION of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion.”⁴⁷⁵ James whittles away at the intellectual conception of emotion as rationally enclosed and concludes that emotions are “constituted by, and made up of, those bodily changes we ordinarily call their expression or consequence,”⁴⁷⁶ a theory that was confirmed in the 1990s with the development of sophisticated functional brain imaging.⁴⁷⁷

Emotions are a process of response and physiological changes in response to some stimuli, with appraisals influencing the action tendencies that are motivated by the emotion. Klaus R. Scherer’s essay “What Are Emotions? And How Can They Be Measured?” argues for a component process model of emotions, where “emotion is defined as an episode of interrelated, synchronized changes in the states of all or most of the five organismic subsystems in response to the evaluation of an external or internal stimulus event as relevant to major concerns of the organism.”⁴⁷⁸ Scherer describes three of characteristics of emotions that are useful for the present inquiry. The first is that they are event focused, which is to say that emotions arise in response to something. The event can be external such as the pride felt when one’s sports team wins, or the

⁴⁷³ Kandel, Eric. "The New Science of Mind and the Future of Knowledge." *Neuron* 80, no. 3 (2013), p. 551.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ James, William. "What Is an Emotion?" *Mind* 9, no. 34 (1884), p. 189-190. Emphasis in the original.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ Kandel, Eric. "The New Science of Mind and the Future of Knowledge." *Neuron* 80, no. 3 (2013).

⁴⁷⁸ Scherer, Klaus R. "What Are Emotions? And How Can They Be Measured?" *Social science information* 44, no. 4 (2005), p. 697.

event can be internal and evoke an emotion based on “memories or images that might come to our mind.”⁴⁷⁹ The second characteristic of emotions is that they are appraisal driven. Scherer argues that emotions arise in response only to relevant concerns and that these can involve transactional appraisals, where people evaluate “events and their consequences with respect to their conduciveness for salient needs, desires, or goals of the appraiser.”⁴⁸⁰ The third characteristic is that emotions have some behavioral impact and are associated with specific action tendencies. Emotions motivate actions and invite individuals and groups to consider certain actions depending on the emotion.

Emotions and the motivation to act are intimately connected, with specific emotions creating specific action tendencies. In “Emotions and Action” Nico H. Frijda argues for a view of emotions as creating a tendency to act. Frijda argues that there are two aspects of emotion that demonstrate a motivation for action “the phenomena of intent and of energizing behavior.”⁴⁸¹ For Frijda intent refers to the “functional equivalence of behaviors, their sharing of a common end state.”⁴⁸² Actions associated with emotions have some end or goal that is sought and oftentimes those ends or goals can be the same even for different emotions. “Energizing” refers to the feature of emotions where if an action takes place a person “cares about the end state, and that the action has priority over other goals.”⁴⁸³ The combination of the intent to craft certain end conditions and the durability of the actions once undertaken creates what Frijda terms “prosody” and refers to the movement of thought, emotion and action. Frijda argues that “[p]rosody of

⁴⁷⁹ Scherer, Klaus R. "What Are Emotions? And How Can They Be Measured?" *Social science information* 44, no. 4 (2005), p. 700.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Frijda, Nico H. "Emotions and Action." In *Feelings and Emotions: The Amsterdam Symposium*, 158-73. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 2004, p. 159.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

movement and thought manifests, it would seem, the structure of motivational states.”⁴⁸⁴ These motivated states contribute to a range of actions that the emotion configures though there are no fixed outcomes. Frijda concludes that “[e]motional experience is, to a large extent, experienced action tendency or experienced state of readiness.”⁴⁸⁵

The action tendencies of an individual may vary based on cultural and social context as well as idiosyncratic variance across people. Despite this wide possibility for variance, emotion theorists have identified some specific action tendencies with a number of emotions. In “Emotions and Rationality” John Elster argues that emotions can affect an individual’s decision-making in a variety of ways and with a spectrum of potencies. Anger may create a tendency to wish harm upon the object of anger, while fear can induce a fight or flight response. Elster notes that these action tendencies are moderated by the severity of the emotion that is felt, as the “term ‘fear,’ for instance, may denote visceral fear or fear proper, but it can also denote a simple belief-desire complex, as when I say I’m afraid it’s going to rain.”⁴⁸⁶ The reaction to an emotion can be rational choice so not all emotions need override rationality, but they do inform decision-making. A key inducing factor for emotions can be the beliefs that an agent holds, which then serve to modify their action tendencies.⁴⁸⁷

The action tendencies for an emotion need not lead directly to some particular and concrete movement, but rather can also facilitate *action readiness* where options are opened up or constrained. In “Emotions as Dynamic Cultural Phenomena” Batia Mesquita argues that the cultural context for emotion expression and realization works to shape these outcomes. For

⁴⁸⁴ Frijda, Nico H. "Emotions and Action." In *Feelings and Emotions: The Amsterdam Symposium*, 158-73. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 2004, p. 160.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁴⁸⁶ Elster, Jon. "Emotions and Rationality." In *Feelings and Emotions: The Amsterdam Symposium*, edited by Nico Frijda Antony S. R. Manstead, Agneta Fischer 30-48. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 2004, p. 39.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Mesquita action readiness is “the readiness to change the relationship between the self and the environment.”⁴⁸⁸ The environmental factors that we relate to also include other people and the perception of collective and individual commitments that can be culturally defined. As Mesquita explains “[d]efinitions of self and of others, as well as the schemas and goals for relationships, are to a large extent implicated by cultural models. Therefore, cultural models are likely to penetrate the relational aims—the end goals—that form the core of action readiness.”⁴⁸⁹ Individuals preferred means to achieve their end goals can be configured through the type of action readiness that they are culturally primed for and emotionally invested in.

While *emotions* are the temporary physiological response to an external or internal stimuli, *affect* describes emotions that take place within an evaluative context. Teresa Brennan’s *The Transmission of Affect* argues for a socially and culturally nuanced description of emotion and affect. She seeks to move past Neo-Darwinian approaches to emotion that understand people as self-contained individuals with evolution occurring at the level of generational change. Brennan argues that emotional states are transmitted between individuals and that these influence social evolution on a moment to moment basis. This transmission occurs through a complex process involving pheromones and observational data that are filtered through the cultural milieu. Brennan pays particular attention to the importance of human physiology, psychology, and sociology as she argues that through visual and olfactory input individuals can pick up on social affects and align themselves with that affect. Brennan defines affect as “the physiological shift accompanying a judgment.”⁴⁹⁰ She distinguishes affect from feeling arguing that “the evaluative or judgmental aspects of affects will be critical in distinguishing between these

⁴⁸⁸ Mesquita, Batja. "Emotions as Dynamic Cultural Phenomena." In *Handbook of Affective Sciences*, edited by K. R. Scherer R. J. Davidson, & H. H. Goldsmith, 2003, p. 876

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004, p. 5

physiological phenomena and those deployed in feeling.”⁴⁹¹ For Brennan feeling is the linguistic match that describes the affective state, not the state itself. She explores the possibility of the social transmission of affect, arguing that it is a social process with biological effects. This social process explains how the *patheme* achieves not only individual responses, but also systemic ones.

Brennan’s contribution to understanding how the *patheme* works in society is best expressed through her theory of the relationship between language, feeling and sensations. Social emotions must have something to adhere to, which is where the role of language becomes important. For Brennan language plays a vital interpretive and operational role in explaining emotional experience and transforming *sensations* into *feelings*. Brennan distinguishes between sensing and feeling where sensing is the “deployment of smell and hearing as well as open vision,”⁴⁹² and feeling is “the accurate and rapid interpretation of this information via language.”⁴⁹³ For Brennan “[f]eelings are sensations that have found a match in words.”⁴⁹⁴ Brennan’s account of emotion points to the connection between the senses, emotion, and language. The *patheme* is an interface between our sense of community and culture, the emotive force that these sensations invite, and the linguistic representation of those emotions. Our emotional climate is populated by cultural touchstones of great import with *pathemes* transmitting affect through our affiliative networks.

Recent empirical studies support Brennan’s contention regarding the importance of affiliation among groups, especially in a democratic context. In “Current Emotion Research in Political Science: How Emotions Help Democracy Overcome Its Collective Action Problem”

⁴⁹¹ Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004, p. 5

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 19

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Eric Groenendyk argues for the social glue of emotions in democratic societies. For Groenendyk the tension in a democracy between the public good of political activity and the individual's interest in minimizing their commitment to that public good could result in little democratic activity were it not for the role that affiliation plays in politics. A purely rational agent would choose to forgo participation in political contests if their participation was unlikely to affect the outcome. Despite this simple cost-benefit calculation people do choose to participate in politics. In a democratic country affinity groups are created through a variety of means including common belief in country, party affiliation, religious beliefs, and ethnic and racial identification.

Stronger feelings of belonging are more likely to encourage an individual to privilege the interests of the group over themselves. Synthesizing various approaches to group emotions Groenendyk concludes that "[i]ntergroup emotions theory suggests that, when social identity is salient, group identifiers will appraise stimuli in the group context as opposed to the individual context...In other words, individuals experience emotions on behalf of their group...These group-level emotions are empirically distinct from individual-level emotions."⁴⁹⁵ Individuals feel emotions not only as a result of their idiosyncratic responses, but also as part of the group responses to stimuli. An individual's affinity for a group can contribute to their shared emotional experience and contributes to their affective intelligence. This is perhaps why collectivizing *pathos* is so evident in times of national crisis, such as during The Great Depression or World War II. As people experienced common suffering they are more likely to make sacrifices that benefit their country over themselves.

The capacity of an individual within a democracy to remain in tune with the prevailing social emotions of a group is defined by their *affective intelligence*. Affective intelligence

⁴⁹⁵ Groenendyk, Eric. "Current Emotion Research in Political Science: How Emotions Help Democracy Overcome Its Collective Action Problem." *Emotion Review* 3, no. 4 (2011), p. 456.

describes a motivational structure for how individuals make political decisions that are neither based entirely on their beliefs about issues nor the cognitively derived rational choice model of behavior. In “The Third Way: The Theory of Affective Intelligence and American Democracy” Michael MacKuen et al. argue that individuals make decisions based on their relative comfort with a party or candidate and the issues being discussed. Party familiarity is one affective orientation and explains why some voting can be considered ideologically driven, even when it violates a rational choice model.⁴⁹⁶ The appraisals that are made for determining group affiliation, whether party or national, are made preconsciously and change how an individual assesses their “post-awareness introspection.”⁴⁹⁷ The influence that affective intelligence has on decision making leads Mackuen et al. to question the separateness of “reason and passion, cognition and affect.”⁴⁹⁸ They conclude that a more productive understanding of the two is a temporal sequencing approach, which recognizes that while initial affiliations are largely affective later appraisals can be more cognitive. The affiliations that drive groups together can be described through the process of social emotion creation and individual response to those social emotions.

Linguistic Basis of the *patheme*

As an element of discourse the *patheme* creates meaning, just as any word does.⁴⁹⁹ Words create meaning not simply in relationship to some external reality, but also because they have some relationship to other words. Humans process the meaning created by words with the

⁴⁹⁶ MacKuen, Michael, George E Marcus, W Russell Neuman, and Luke Keele. "The Third Way: The Theory of Affective Intelligence and American Democracy." In *The Affect Effect: Dynamics of Emotion in Political Thinking and Behavior*, edited by W. Russell Neuman, 124-51: The University of Chicago Press, 2007.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 150.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁹ The process and method of how words create meaning is not without controversy, but this chapter does not seek to provide a definitive answer to questions such as “how do words create meaning?” A far more doable task is to use vital insights that have been provided in others’ attempts to answer philosophical questions such as these.

historical and immediate context playing a role. Of particular difficulty in analyzing meaning making processes are words and phrases that do not have easily identified meanings. Aesthetic associations or imaginative uses of words create problems when attempting to nail down precisely how meaning is created. The *patheme* is one such figure that creates difficulty in providing a strict conceptual analysis of how it produces meaning for an audience. Fortunately for the present inquiry others have overcome similar difficulties in theorizing limit cases, such as metaphor. This section of the chapter seeks to explicate the linguistic operation of the *patheme* and does so by providing explanations of metaphor that are analogically related to the *patheme*.

The theorists of metaphor selected argue for a view of metaphor that recognizes it as not bound to cognitive processing but filled with imaginative potential. These theories include Hans Blumenberg's *Paradigms for a Metaphorology* and Paul Ricoeur's *The Rule of Metaphor*.

Blumenberg argues for a perspective of metaphor that emphasizes the non-conceptual nature of its operation, while Ricoeur discusses metaphor's capacity to unify sometimes contradictory meanings. The *patheme* operates analogously as it creates emotional meaning in the moment, and can overcome otherwise inconsistent meanings embedded in a term. In brief, the *patheme* works by accessing deeply embedded emotional associations and forging affiliative connections to activate a fundamental feeling on the part of the audience, orienting them towards a common purpose.

Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* provides some general commentary about how meaning arises in language, which is useful in theorizing the *patheme*. Saussure's inquiry into the operation of language as a system of signs explains a crucial process where words come to represent ideas and associations. Saussure outlines a theory of meaning that recognizes the economy of meaning, where the interrelationship of linguistic signs are

connected to each other. For Saussure a “language is a system in which all of the elements fit together, and in which the value of any one element depends on the simultaneous coexistence of all the others.”⁵⁰⁰ Language works through this web of meanings and associations. This does not render the psyche of the individual irrelevant however as Saussure argues that the sound of a word and the image that it invokes are inextricably linked, through a process of comparison. Saussure explains linguistic value as both “(1) something *dissimilar* which can be exchanged for the item whose value is under consideration, and (2) *similar* things which can be compared with the item whose value is under consideration.”⁵⁰¹ Saussure’s understanding of meaning as created in the mind of an individual embedded with contextual value provides a useful launching point for discussing metaphoric meaning as it relates to the *patheme*.

There are essentially three types of theories of metaphor; cognitive, psychodynamic, and discursive. This essay uses psychodynamic theories of metaphor as those provide accounts of the meaning creation through linguistic engagement of the senses. Cognitive theories of metaphor seek to rationalize the emotive elements of discourse, while discursive theories of metaphor remove the interaction with human bodies. Psychodynamic theories suggest that metaphor interacts with the psyche or imagination but does so in a non-cognitive way. The approach of Hans Blumenberg in *Paradigms for a Metaphorology* and Paul Ricoeur in *The Rule of Metaphor* takes seriously the role that people, as humans, play in creating metaphoric meaning. Their theories suggest that metaphor is derived from and works with the imagination, rather than the rational side of human experience, while overcoming assessments of difference that may reside in a rational understanding of a particular metaphor.

⁵⁰⁰ de Saussure, Ferdinand. *Course in General Linguistics*. Translated by Roy Harris. Peru, Illinois: Open Court, 2008. p. 113

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*

The first and most basic type of metaphor theories are cognitive theories of metaphor and can be traced to Aristotelian accounts, though Josef Stern provides a contemporary update to the this approach. Aristotle's account of metaphor in *On Poetics* defines metaphor as "the application of a word belonging to something else either from the genus [*genos*] to a species [*eidos*], or from the species to the genus, or from the species to a species, or according to analogy."⁵⁰² For Aristotle the process of creating meaning with metaphor is the recognition of the application of a non-standard word. A more contemporary example of a cognitive theory of metaphor is provided by Josef Stern in *Metaphor in Context*. Stern argues that metaphorical expression is generated through the comparison in the mind of the audience between two sets of possible meanings, the productive set (p-set) and the filter set (f-set). While the productive set contains all of the possible meanings of a given term, the filter set limits the meanings to those that are highly salient for a given context.⁵⁰³ This project does not use these cognitive theories to analogize the operation of the *patheme* because doing so would undermine the importance of emotion's central role in the meaning making process.

Discursive theories of metaphor are found in the work of I.A. Richards and George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. Richards outlines a theory of metaphor in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* that suggests metaphor is "the omnipresent principle of language"⁵⁰⁴ and works through the interaction of two semantic units, the tenor and the vehicle. For Richards, this interaction occurs as the tenor is "the underlying idea or principle subject which the vehicle or figure means."⁵⁰⁵ Meaning is created through the interaction between the vehicle and tenor of metaphor and provides a foundation for thought itself. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson provide a similar

⁵⁰² Aristotle, *On Poetics*, trans. Seth Benardete and Michael Davis, South Bend: IN, St. Augustine's Press, 2002), p. 51, 1457b

⁵⁰³ Josef Stern, *Metaphor in Context*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000, p. 139

⁵⁰⁴ I.A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1965 p. 15

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 97

account of in *Metaphors We Live By*. They argue that our conceptual system is built on metaphors and so thought itself is constructed from the transference of meaning that occurs through metaphoric expression.⁵⁰⁶ As is evident, these theories of metaphor sidestep the crucial question of how language affects people and is in turn affected by them. Blumenberg and Ricoeur's psychodynamic theories of metaphor provide a satisfactory account of the interface of language and the psyche, allowing room to analogize the process to emotive figures.

The first psychodynamic account of metaphor explored here argues that metaphoric meaning is created through an instantaneous engagement with the imagination. Hans Blumenberg's *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*⁵⁰⁷ sketches out an account of metaphor as a product of imagination rather than reason. Blumenberg's inquiry describes a process whereby meaning is created not through a cognitive chain of reasoning, but through the immediate recognition of value. The second psychodynamic account of metaphor is Paul Ricoeur's *The Rule of Metaphor*, which expands on Blumenberg by examining the function of metaphor in discourse. Ricoeur argues for a tensional account of meaning, where metaphor creates certain meanings based on the tension between the associational and dissociational content of the term. The *patheme* operates in similar ways to Blumenberg and Ricoeur's metaphor in that it creates emotional meaning by working through a potential inconsistency or tension of meaning, providing an orienting function for the emotions of the audience.

⁵⁰⁶ Lakoff, George, and Johnson, Mark, *Metaphors We Live B*, University of Chicago press, 2008

⁵⁰⁷ Blumenberg's work has not been widely cited in rhetorical studies. This study of metaphor was only recently (2010) translated into English and so its uptake into the discipline is potentially forthcoming. Blumenberg's careful analysis of the history of specific scientific metaphors for truth is impressive and rooted in an understanding of the rhetorical potential of the terms, so it could have wide applicability in the field. For example he notes that the "possibility and potency of persuasive speech had been one of the elemental experiences of life in the polis—so elemental, in fact, that Plato could present the decisive phase of his mythic cosmogony in the "Timaeus" as the rhetorical act by which Necessity (*Ananke*) was swayed. It is difficult for us today to overestimate the importance of rhetoric, an importance that explains just how crucial it was that philosophy interpret persuasive force as a 'quality' of truth itself, and oratory, with all its 'tools of the trade', as nothing but the fitting implementation and amplification of that quality" (Blumenberg 2010, p. 3).

The initial mode of meaning making that characterizes the *patheme* is the non-conceptual origin of emotional content. In other words the cognitive process engaged is not one that creates a causal linkage between a term and an emotional feeling whereby the audience thinks that they should feel a particular emotion and decides to do so. Rather, the emotions are engaged directly by activating the associational content of a term. A similar process is described by Hans Blumenberg's *Paradigms for a Metaphorology* as the way that metaphor creates meaning. Blumenberg hopes to demonstrate that metaphor belongs to a category of non-conceptual thought. Blumenberg traces various metaphors that serve as exemplars for the philosophical pursuit of truth. His purpose in analyzing these metaphors for truth is to demonstrate that the imagination continually renews our set of conceptual building blocks, and in so doing pushes forward the philosophical enterprise.⁵⁰⁸

Blumenberg terms these metaphors 'absolute metaphor,' because the philosophical endeavors they animate rely on the force of the metaphoric comparison to provide the inertia for inquiry.⁵⁰⁹ Metaphor fills the gap of interpretation because it is a product of the imagination expressing a semantically unified and undistilled meaning. Absolute metaphor creates meaning as it is being expressed, in the moment. As Blumenberg explains "'absolute metaphor'... springs into a nonconceptualizable, conceptually unfillable gap and lacuna to express itself in its own

⁵⁰⁸ Hans Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, trans. Robert Savage (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), p. 8. The examples that Blumenberg covers stretch from Aristotle's "matter itself," through Francis Bacon's entwining of "labor and truth." Blumenberg terms these metaphors 'absolute metaphor,' because the philosophical endeavors they animate rely on the force of the metaphoric comparison to provide the inertia for inquiry. Blumenberg quotes Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and the *Physics*: "But as men proceeded in this way, the very circumstances of the case led them on and compelled them to seek further" [Aristotle, *Metaphysics, Books I-IX*, trans. Hugh Tredennick, (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press 1922), 23.]

⁵⁰⁹ As Blumenberg notes: [e]vidence of absolute metaphors would force us to reconsider the relationship between logos and the imagination. The realm of the imagination could no longer be regarded solely as the substrate for transformations into conceptuality—on the assumption that each element could be processed and converted in turn, so to speak, until the supply of images was used up—but as a catalytic sphere from which the universe of concepts continually renews itself, without hereby converting and exhausting this founding reserve. (Blumenberg 2010, p.4)

way.”⁵¹⁰ Through an analogous process the operation of a *patheme* expresses a fundamental feeling through its expression. It creates meaning in the moment, relying on the audience’s emotional fluency to create a persuasive force. Signifiers that express themselves in a primarily emotional mode do so through associational, non-cognitive means. Though Blumenberg provides the beginnings of an answer to the question of how a *patheme* functions in public discourse, another theoretical treatment of metaphor is useful in discussing some of its finer features.

In addition to the non-conceptual, immediate emotional meaning present in a *patheme*, there is also embedded within the *patheme* affiliational content that works to mediate opposing argumentative positions. In his 1975 book *The Rule of Metaphor* Paul Ricoeur describes the mechanics of this process in the linguistic operation of metaphor. For Ricoeur metaphor “is the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to redescribe reality.”⁵¹¹ Metaphor creates meaning through the presentment of similarity and dissimilarity of the constituent parts of the term and works to fill in the gaps between the conceptual spaces by operating within the tension of meaning.⁵¹² Ricoeur’s account of metaphor provides a valuable orienting function for the *patheme* as it recognizes the importance of associational content as well. Ricoeur’s metaphor functions through association and dissociation of possible meanings. For discourse evoking a powerful emotion through the deployment of a *patheme*, there is a process at work similar to Ricoeur’s metaphor. Presenting a view of reality which is idealized creates a sense of similarity to the ideal while also opening up distance from the non-ideal. This

⁵¹⁰ Blumenberg 2010, p. 122

⁵¹¹ Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans R. Czerny, K. McLaughlin and J. Costello. (Taylor and Francis e-Library 2004), p. 5

⁵¹² Ricoeur is motivated in part by his reliance on Nietzschean theories of truth and philosophy. Ricoeur applies Nietzsche in his questioning of philosophers as metaphor attacks both the priority of philosophy and also its very construction, where “[i]t is not only the order of the terms that is inverted, philosophy preceding metaphor; but the mode of implication is itself reversed, the ‘un-thought’ of philosophy anticipating the ‘un-said’ of metaphor” (Ricoeur 2004, p. 331). In enriching the field of studying figural discourse, Ricoeur is careful to avoid collapsing into a logo-centric account. This makes his understanding of metaphor particularly attentive to the non-conceptual formation of meaning.

also allows differing audiences to define ideality in different ways, creating a similar emotional experience but preserving a polysemous reading of the term. In this way the *patheme* constructs a powerful emotional meaning through the creation of feelings associated with a fictional, but emotionally compelling image.

Combining the insights of Blumenberg, Ricoeur and Brennan provides a threefold analysis of the operation of a *patheme*. First, a *patheme* activates a fundamental feeling by filling a non-conceptual gap. These can include emotions such as anger, fear, hope, pride, etc. This is not a function of argument, but rather the associational content of a term providing it with emotional meaning. Second, the *patheme* works by activating culturally relevant myths that reinforce the identity of the group. Unique cultural experiences will create different *pathemes* for different groups, but there may be overlap in a heterogeneous culture such as in the United States. Third, the *patheme* serves to mediate inconsistent argumentative propositions. Emotional meaning is created by orienting audiences in similar ways towards terms that they can define in different but powerful ways.

Distinguishing the *patheme* from the *ideograph*

As a rhetorical figure, the *patheme* is part of a family of similar concepts including metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, catachresis and the *ideograph*.⁵¹³ As its general theoretical basis is most closely related to the *ideograph*, this section is devoted to drawing out some distinctions between the two and arguing for the necessity of a *pathos* based rhetorical figure. After a brief sketch of the *ideograph*, this section discusses two core differences between the

⁵¹³ As a trope or figure the *patheme* is a “turning of a word from its original meaning” (O’Conor 1898, p. 291.). This list is not exhaustive as the “chief tropes are catachresis, metonymy, synechdoche, antonomasia, metaphor, allegory, fable, parable, simile” (O’Conor, John Francis Xavier. *Rhetoric and Oratory*. Boston, MA: DC Heath & Company, 1898, p. 291).

concepts. The first difference is the focus of a rhetorical criticism that utilizes the *patheme* or the *ideograph*. The second difference is the underlying operation of the figure, and the epistemological commitments underpinning their identification. The differences between the *patheme* and the *ideograph* do not disprove, negate, or otherwise supplant the concept of the *ideograph*. It is still an incredibly useful concept for rhetorical studies, just not one so elastic that it can encompass all of ideology and emotion.

In his 1980 essay “The ‘Ideograph’: A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology” Michael Calvin McGee carved out a new rhetorical concept, with a theory of the *ideograph*. McGee’s purpose in proposing the *ideograph* was to reinvigorate rhetorical criticism that took as its focus the ideology of a piece of discourse. He distinguished his project from a crass application of orthodox Marxism as he hoped to focus on a more general and useful concern regarding how collectivities behave in distinct ways from individuals in isolation.⁵¹⁴ In particular McGee argued for a mass consciousness that determined specific beliefs and functioned to direct social outcomes through conditioning, which for McGee was ideology in operation. In this regard the *patheme* is directed at explaining similar phenomena as the *ideograph*, but it points to how collectivities come to *feel* similarly about something, whereas the *ideograph* is concerned with belief. In defining the *ideograph* McGee outlined a specific set of criteria. He argued that:

An ideograph is an ordinary language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or anti-social, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁴ McGee, Michael C. “The ‘Ideograph’: A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 66(1), 1980.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

For McGee examples of ideographs included terms such as “liberty” and “equality” and functioned through an enthymematic process where the semantic content of the ideograph is provided by ideological conditioning. He argued that the ideograph recognized the role of a dominant ideology in the construction of key terms in political discourse. These key terms are then used to reinforce the dominant ideas that uphold that ideology. Though the purpose of the *patheme* and the *ideograph* may at times overlap, as it is plausible that an ideological system could use certain *pathemes* in sustaining its power, their mode of operation is quite different. The differences between the two stem from the distinction between the animating forces of each. For the *ideograph* there is an implied logical operation that makes the meaning undeniable.⁵¹⁶ In the case of the *patheme* meaning is created through emotional associations.

The first specific difference between the two concepts is that rather than “high-order abstraction” of the *ideograph* the *patheme* is a package of concrete associations⁵¹⁷ that work through the capacity to create affiliation with a specific group of even individual. Though we may never see “equality” walking down the street, a potential *patheme* such as “9/11” points to specific concrete event, heavy with its emotional meaning. The second difference between the two is the relationship to ideology is distinct. For the *ideograph* the creation of meaning occurs through ideology. Without an ideology to guide the meaning, there is no such thing as an

⁵¹⁶ McGee notes that “[n]or is one permitted to question the fundamental logic of ideographs: Everyone is conditioned to think of ‘the rule of law’ as a logical commitment just as one is taught to think that ‘186,000 miles per second’ is an accurate empirical description of the speed of light even though few can work the experiments or do the mathematics to prove it. (McGee 1980, p. 7)

⁵¹⁷ The “American Dream” *patheme* identified in this chapter has some direct concrete associations that President Obama discusses in his “Better Bargain” addresses. These concrete particulars include the ownership of a home and a college education, and can be grouped under the heading of the “middle class.” What might seem like an abstract association between the Dream and the hard working individual has historically concrete associations that may be taken for granted at this point. Those include the self-made entrepreneur, the rugged pioneer, and the subsistence farmer.

ideograph, but only the everyday usage of the term.⁵¹⁸ A *patheme* creates meaning through processes other than ideology, be it the development of myth, salient historical examples, or personal narrative. How *ideographs* and *pathemes* create meaning is the key difference between them. Where *ideographs* rely on the logical and enthymematic force of ideology to overlay the common word, *pathemes* are built from the cultural and social circulation of affect and represent a non-rational side of the human experience. In short, *ideographs* are words that make us think, while *pathemes* are words that make us feel.

The “American Dream” as a *patheme*

Throughout the history of the income tax in the United States there are two values that are in conflict, virtue and justice.⁵¹⁹ On the one hand the tax is derided as a tax on the virtuous exercise of entrepreneurial spirit. On the other hand the tax is defended as a necessary preservation of economic justice. The “American Dream” is similarly divided between the commitment to the individual on one hand and the commitment to the collective on the other.⁵²⁰ While participants in income tax debates may remain divided, the very notion of the “American Dream” demands a synthesis. It is through this synthesizing process that the “American Dream” Obama presents in 2013 becomes a *patheme*. It invites the American people to draw on a shared history of sacrifice and achievement and to understand their own place within the collective as a part of that history. The “American Dream” represents an individual’s commitment to the collective, a virtuous pursuit of justice. Through the collective emotional investment in the

⁵¹⁸ McGee argues “[t]hrough words only (and not claims), such terms as ‘property,’ ‘religion,’ ‘right of privacy,’ ‘freedom of speech,’ ‘rule of law,’ and ‘liberty’ are more pregnant than propositions ever could be. They are the basic structural elements, the building blocks, of ideology. Thus they may be thought of as ‘ideographs,’ for like Chinese symbols, they signify and ‘contain’ a unique ideological commitment; further, they presumptuously suggest that each member of a community will see as a gestalt every complex nuance in them.” (McGee 1980, p. 7)

⁵¹⁹ Weisman, Steven R. *The Great Tax Wars*. Simon & Schuster: New York, 2002.

⁵²⁰ Fisher, Walter R. “Reaffirmation and Subversion of the American Dream.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59, no. 2 (April 1973): 160-167.

signifier of the “American Dream” hope and pride emerge as positive affective responses depending on one’s relationship to the dream, while fear that the Dream may be lost is easily experienced across diverse groups. In order to create clear cultural affiliations Obama marshals the “middle class” as the concrete demonstration of an individual having achieved the American Dream. In doing so he crafts the possibility of specific emotional responses for individuals who have attained the dream, and for those still aspiring to do so.

This section of the chapter argues that Obama’s use of the “American Dream” works through four speeches meeting the criteria for a *patheme*, as it seeks to evoke a strong emotional response from the audience. The initial and primary address in this regard is Obama’s July 24, 2013 speech delivered at Knox College in Galesburg, Ill. In this speech he initiates his campaign for “A Better Bargain for the Middle Class” outlining the importance of the middle class as the site for the realization of the “American Dream.” Obama expands upon the specific criteria for entry into the middle class in three subsequent addresses, discussing home ownership, education and rising inequality. Taken together these speeches develop the “American Dream” as “what makes this country special – the idea that no matter who you are or what you look like or where you come from or who you love, you can make it if you try.”⁵²¹ The speeches outline the concrete pathway of middle class status with its attendant ownership of a home and college degree as the key to achieving the Dream.

There are three elements that make up the *patheme*. The first element is that a *patheme* activates a fundamental feeling through the use of emotional association. The second element of the *patheme* is that it activates culturally relevant myths that reinforce the identity of the group. The third element of the *patheme* is that it allows inconsistent argumentative positions to fuse with a common affective orientation. Obama’s use of the “American Dream” figures across these

⁵²¹ Obama, Barack H., "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013.

speeches is designed to evoke a strong emotional feeling, produce a culturally relevant affect, and mediate otherwise inconsistent argumentative positions. It does so by crafting hope for people that have not yet achieved middle class status or pride for those that have. The invocation of the middle class is a specific culturally important marker in the United States and serves to unify the individualism of Reagan with the collectivism of FDR.

The use of a *patheme* in the “Better Bargain” campaign is directly related to the collectivizing *pathos* that Obama marshalled in the 2012 State of the Union Address examined in Chapter 5. This collectivizing energy is given a specific vector in 2013 with Obama’s successful passage of the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012. In his remarks on January 1, 2013 on the passage of the bill Obama contextualized the feelings of collective responsibility to the “middle class” and the responsibility that the country has towards the possibility of upward mobility into that position. In those remarks Obama maintained an orientation towards income taxes that emphasized the “fair share” that each group should pay. This rearticulation of income tax policy is designed to undermine the dominant feelings of individualism embedded within tax discourse by John F. Kennedy and consolidated by Ronald Reagan. By returning to the feeling of promoting justice through the fair application of tax policy expounded by FDR Obama hopes to reinscribe equality of opportunity into the collective emotional vocabulary regarding the American Dream.

The Presidency is a crucial site for the emotional negotiation of the American Dream. In “The Rhetorical Presidency and the Myth of the American Dream” Leroy Dorsey argues that the president can craft a coherent vision of the American Dream and get people oriented towards their vision. For Dorsey “[r]hetorical presidents can take the disparate elements of individualism and community and shape them into a coherent vision. That can craft an American Dream not

only to preserve the integrity of the individual but also to safeguard the sanctity of the community.”⁵²² As this project has demonstrated various president have different visions for the Dream and advance those varied understandings. Theodore Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan both focused on the virtuous individual, but saw the role of government differently. FDR emphasized the democratic values of the country and the importance of ensuring equality of opportunity through income tax policy. Dorsey argues that “[t]he President must engage the Dream, giving it a mythic coherence that affirms the better nature of its heroes and the community. To be sure, the president must realize the nation is only as strong as the myth that he tells about it.”⁵²³

President Obama’s engagement with the American Dream and the attempt to provide it with some mythic coherence is directed at imbricating positive feelings toward the virtuous individual with positive feelings towards democratically secured equality of opportunity. In the Knox College speech on July 24, 2013 Obama invokes the American Dream in a way that combines the democratic values of the country with the virtuous pursuit of individual success into a unified vision for America. For Obama the American Dream is “what makes this country special -- the idea that no matter who you are or what you look like or where you come from or who you love, you can make it if you try.”⁵²⁴ This understanding of the American Dream unifies the classical commitment to American values and democracy with the modern feeling that individualism can provide material comfort. The figure becomes a *patheme* by crafting the fundamental feelings of hope and pride in the audience, advancing the culturally relevant myth of middle class upward mobility, and mediating the inconsistent argumentative approaches contained within the American Dream by uniting materialism and moralism. The *patheme* of the

⁵²² Dorsey, Leroy G. "The Rhetorical Presidency and the Myth of the American Dream." In *The Prospect of Presidential Rhetoric*, edited by James Arnt Aune & Martin J. Medhurst, 130-59: Texas A&M University Press, 2008, p. 132.

⁵²³ Ibid., p. 153-154.

⁵²⁴ Obama, Barack H., "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013.

“American Dream” develops out of the collectivizing *pathos* in Obama’s remarks on the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, specifically the focus on the fair treatment of the middle class that is announced as a new direction for the country.

The passage of the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 provided Obama with a specific policy to announce as he worked to craft a new public feeling headed into 2013. He remarked that a “central promise of my campaign for President was to change the tax code that was too skewed towards the wealthy at the expense of working middle-class Americans. Tonight we've done that.”⁵²⁵ This announcement of a successful pivot towards “working middle-class Americans” establishes a new direction for policy and the vision of the country going forward. In remarking on the passage of the bill President Obama argued that it creates a more fair and just tax system, specifically for the middle class. This recalls both the rhetoric of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s 1935 “Message to Congress on Tax Revision” and the importance of the “middle class” for Bill Clinton’s statements on tax reform. In the short remarks Obama noted that “...today’s agreement enshrines, I think, a principle into law that will remain in place as long as I am President: The deficit needs to be reduced in a way that's balanced. Everyone pays their fair share. Everyone does their part. That's how our economy works best. That's how we grow.”⁵²⁶

The idea that taxpayers should pay their “fair share” is rooted in the Depression era tax reform of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In 1935 FDR pushed for income tax reform because as he put it, “[o]ur revenue laws have operated in many ways to the unfair advantage of the few, and they have done little to prevent an unjust concentration of wealth and economic power.”⁵²⁷ For FDR one of the overriding purposes of income taxation was the creation of a more equitable distribution of wealth among the populace. In *Their Fair Share: Taxing the Rich in the Age of*

⁵²⁵ Obama, Barack H. "Statement by the President on the Tax Agreement." January 1, 2013.

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

⁵²⁷ Roosevelt, Franklin D., "Message to Congress on Tax Revision." June 19, 1935.

FDR, Joseph Thorndike argues that the 1935 reform was not primarily a revenue generation device, but rather “Roosevelt wanted to make a statement about fairness and economic justice.”⁵²⁸ Thorndike argues that Roosevelt was responding to the populist pressure from Huey Long and other progressive advocates, as well as pushing an agenda of equality of opportunity. This reading of the reform effort comports well with Roosevelt’s statement on wealth and the role of progressive income taxes. He argued that the “movement toward progressive taxation of wealth and of income has accompanied the growing diversification and interrelation of effort which marks our industrial society.”⁵²⁹ Roosevelt correlated the role of the community in establishing conditions for the accumulation of large incomes with the necessity of collective action to regulate that acquisition. Roosevelt represents a clearly collectivist understanding of wealth and its creation. He argued that “[w]ealth in the modern world does not come merely from individual effort; it results from a combination of individual effort and of the manifold uses to which the community puts that effort.”⁵³⁰ Obama moderates this view of collectivism through a focus on the middle class as the important site of actualizing the productive possibilities of tax reform.

Obama’s remarks on the passage of the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 demonstrate a clear commitment to the importance of the middle class in pursuing equity in income tax policy. This serves as a concretizing example of the type of fairness that Obama seeks in income tax policy. Obama remarked that “[w]e can come together as Democrats and Republicans to cut spending and raise revenue in a way that reduces our deficit, protects our middle class, provides ladders into the middle class for everybody who’s willing to work

⁵²⁸ Thorndike, Joseph J. *Their Fair Share : Taxing the Rich in the Age of FDR.*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 2013

⁵²⁹ Roosevelt, Franklin D., "Message to Congress on Tax Revision." June 19, 1935.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*

hard.”⁵³¹ This focus on the middle class is not unique to Obama, but reflects an incorporation of Bill Clinton’s rhetoric on income tax reform. President Clinton outlined his feelings toward the middle class in an address at Georgetown University in 1991 titled “The New Covenant: Responsibility and Rebuilding the American Community.” Clinton argued that middle class individuals had been left out of the economic policies of Reagan and Bush. He noted that “[f]or 12 years, these forgotten middle class Americans have watched their economic interest ignored and their values literally ground into the ground.”⁵³² For Clinton those values were “individual responsibility, hard work, family and community.”⁵³³ Obama is working with a similar understanding of the feelings of the middle class in the 2013 Knox College address inaugurating his campaign seeking “A Better Bargain for the Middle Class.”

Obama’s “Better Bargain” campaign is a series of public appearances and speeches around the country that the President hopes will reconfigure the debate about economic inequality in the United States. Initiated in July 2013 the ongoing campaign began with a speech delivered in Galesburg, Illinois at Knox College. The Knox College address lays out his agenda and vision for the future of the U.S. economy and identifies the problem as Obama sees it. For him when “the rungs on the ladder of opportunity grow farther and farther apart, it undermines the very essence of America -- that idea that if you work hard you can make it here.”⁵³⁴ The solution to the problem of rising inequality, the rungs growing farther apart, is to create easier access to the characteristics of a middle class existence. The purpose of the rest of the speech, and his subsequent addresses, is to propose solutions to this problem. As he puts it “I’ll lay out

⁵³¹ Obama, Barack H. "Statement by the President on the Tax Agreement." January 1, 2013. Each of the four speeches examined that are part of the “Better Bargain” campaign articulate this exact same sentiment, with all of them using the “ladder” metaphor to describe how one pulls themselves into the middle class.

⁵³² Clinton, William Jefferson. "The New Covenant: Responsibility and Rebuilding the American Community." Georgetown University, October 23, 1991.

⁵³³ Ibid.

⁵³⁴ Obama, Barack H., "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013.

my ideas for how we build on the cornerstones of what it means to be middle class in America, and what it takes to work your way into the middle class in America: Job security, with good wages and durable industries. A good education. A home to call your own. Affordable health care when you get sick.”⁵³⁵ Obama’s travels took him to Tennessee to discuss jobs, Arizona to remark on home ownership, and then back to the east coast where he spoke about education in Scranton. In each case the President relates the problem of inequality as eroding the American Dream and proposes that access to the middle class be strengthened, with the focus changing from jobs to home ownership to education.⁵³⁶

The introduction of Obama’s Knox College Address lays the foundations for the presentation of the “American Dream” as a *patheme*. The beginning of the address relates the story of how Obama came to deliver the commencement speech there in 2005. Discussing his travels through Illinois (as its newest senator), Obama recalls the times he spent talking with the citizens of the state. He specifically remembers the stories of individuals that felt it was harder to get by, workers that had been laid off, teachers who couldn’t afford basic necessities, and young people that couldn’t afford college. For Obama the thing that these people had in common was that they “believed in the American Dream, but they felt like the odds were increasingly stacked against them. And they were right. Things had changed.”⁵³⁷ He relates the history of the post-

⁵³⁵ Obama, Barack H., "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013.

⁵³⁶ In the speech on home ownership Obama argued “we’ve got to strengthen the FHA so it gives today’s families the same kind of chance it gave my grandparents to buy a home, and it preserves those rungs on the ladder of opportunity” (Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President on Responsible Homeownership." Desert Vista High School: Phoenix, AZ, August 6, 2013). In the speech on education he said “one of the most important things we can do to restore that sense of upward mobility -- the ability to achieve the American Dream, the idea that you can make it if you try -- one of the most important things we can do is make sure every child is getting a good education” (Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President on College Affordability." Lackawanna College: Scranton, Pennsylvania, August 23, 2013). In the December address on income inequality Obama remarked that “we’ve also seen how government action time and again can make an enormous difference in increasing opportunity and bolstering ladders into the middle class” (Obama, Barack H. "Remarks on Economic Mobility." THEARC: Washington, D.C. , December 4, 2013).

⁵³⁷ Obama, Barack H., "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013.

World War II era noting that a “growing middle class was the engine of our prosperity.”⁵³⁸ He then defines the bargain of that time period saying “[w]hether you owned a company, or swept its floors, or worked anywhere in between, this country offered you a basic bargain -- a sense that your hard work would be rewarded with fair wages and decent benefits....”⁵³⁹ This invites an idyllic and nostalgic view of that era, creating a sense that the collectivism of World War II was united with the individualism after the war leading to prosperity. Though this feeling was more fully explored in Obama’s 2012 State of the Union, he briefly mentions WWII to import the positive feelings about the nation that are associated with the World War II generation.⁵⁴⁰

Obama’s discussion of the more distant past is then coupled with an analysis of the 2008 recession and its effect on the middle class. He argues that “the trend of a winner-take-all economy where a few are doing better and better and better, while everybody else just treads water -- those trends have been made worse by the recession.”⁵⁴¹ For Obama the problems of inequality were present before the recession and exacerbated by the crisis. This is also the impetus for action for him as it relates to the character of the country. He argues that “[w]hen the rungs on the ladder of opportunity grow farther and farther apart, it undermines the very essence of America -- that idea that if you work hard you can make it here.”⁵⁴² This provides the set up for Obama’s discussion of the way forward “reversing these trends,”⁵⁴³ which he argues has to be “Washington’s highest priority.”⁵⁴⁴ Obama explains that in pursuing change and reform he “will be engaging the American people in this debate”⁵⁴⁵ with his “ideas for how we build on the

⁵³⁸ Obama, Barack H., "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013.

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰ Doss, Erika. "War, Memory, and the Public Mediation of Affect: The National World War II Memorial and American Imperialism." *Memory Studies* 1, no. 2 (2008)

⁵⁴¹ Obama, Barack H., "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013.

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

cornerstones of what it means to be middle class in America, and what it takes to work your way into the middle class in America.”⁵⁴⁶ This outlines Obama’s strategy for crafting an emotional commitment to the future of the country and the individual’s role in securing that future. The *pathos* of this address is found in Obama’s future focus with the achievement of the American Dream through the entry into the middle class. The *patheme* of the “American Dream” is integrated into this overall strategy of emotional persuasion that Obama sets up.

The first characteristic of a *patheme* is that it evokes a fundamental feeling on the part of the audience. The “American Dream”⁵⁴⁷ presented by Obama in the Knox College address works to craft responses of pride or hope in the audience. Individuals that have attained the middle class status that he connects with achieving the Dream can feel pride in their accomplishments and in their country for facilitating that achievement. For people that have not yet managed to make it to middle class status there is the hope of a better future for themselves and their children. These positive emotions open up the possibility of viewing the American Dream as connected to specific policies and associates the Dream with a specific group, the middle class. In Obama’s December 4, 2013 “Remarks on Economic Mobility” a very different emotional reaction is sought. In that speech Obama seeks to induce fear that the Dream may ultimately slip away as income inequality steepens and upward mobility ceases. Fear can be a powerful motivating force as it directs the audience towards specific action tendencies.

In arguing for a specific vision of the “American Dream” in the Knox College address Obama provides a way for varied audiences to positively orient towards the future with either

⁵⁴⁶ Obama, Barack H., "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013.

⁵⁴⁷ Obama says of the Dream: “When we think about our own communities -- we're not a mean people; we're not a selfish people; we're not a people that just looks out for “number one.” Why should our politics reflect those kinds of values? That’s why we don’t call it John’s dream or Susie’s dream or Barack’s dream or Pat’s dream -- we call it the American Dream. And that’s what makes this country special -- the idea that no matter who you are or what you look like or where you come from or who you love, you can make it if you try” (Obama, Barack H., "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013).

hope or pride. Obama argues that we need to strengthen the opportunity for individuals to enter the middle class, providing a hopeful view, while he also acknowledges the pride of accomplishment that comes from achieving individual success. Obama argues that “we've got to rebuild ladders of opportunity for all those Americans who haven't quite made it yet -- who are working hard but are still suffering poverty wages, who are struggling to get full-time work.”⁵⁴⁸ This provides a pathway for *hope*, defined as believing “that something positive, which does not presently apply to one’s life, could still materialize and so we yearn for it.”⁵⁴⁹ Obama also acknowledges the feeling of accomplishment that comes from achieving success. He argues that “[i]f we focus on what matters, then more Americans will know the pride of that first paycheck. More Americans will have the satisfaction of flipping the sign to ‘Open’ on their own business.”⁵⁵⁰ This evokes a sense of *pride*, defined as “a pleasurable emotion resulting from actions that indicate that the self is indeed good, competent, and virtuous.”⁵⁵¹ The hope and pride created through Obama’s deployment of the elements of the Dream serves to unify what could be opposing understandings of the importance of the individual and collective.

The positive emotions associated with the American Dream provide inertia for considering new actions in a favorable light and are rooted in a precognitive identification with America. Barbara L. Fredrickson in “The Role of Positive Emotions in Positive Psychology: The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions” argues that positive emotions prime audiences to have a more open mind. Fredrickson argues that positive emotions “broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires, widening the array of the thoughts and actions that come

⁵⁴⁸ Obama, Barack H., "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013.

⁵⁴⁹ Lazarus, Richard S. "Hope: An Emotion and a Vital Coping Resource against Despair." *Social Research* 66, no. 2 (Summer 1999), p. 653.

⁵⁵⁰ Obama, Barack H., "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013.

⁵⁵¹ Haidt, Jonathan. "The Moral Emotions." In *Handbook of Affective Sciences*, edited by K. R. Scherer R. J. Davidson, & H. H. Goldsmith, 852-70. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

to mind.”⁵⁵² Pride “broadens by creating the urge to share news of the achievement with others and to envision even greater achievements in the future.”⁵⁵³ Hope is innately future focused, as it “generates happiness and enthusiasm about the future.”⁵⁵⁴ Hope can be created through “envisioning positive dreams about the future”⁵⁵⁵ and “realistically thinking about how to achieve these dreams.”⁵⁵⁶ These emotions arise in response to the deeply rooted belief in the American Dream. In *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation*, Jim Cullen argues that “[i]n the twenty-first century, the American Dream remains a major element of our national identity...the United States was essentially a creation of the collective imagination.”⁵⁵⁷ This identification sustains the individual as well through the freedom of choice, as “it is a nation that has been re-created as a deliberate act of conscious choice every time a person has landed on these shores. Explicit allegiance, not involuntary inheritance, is the theoretical basis of American identity.”⁵⁵⁸ These feelings are buttressed by the cultural myths that are embedded into the American Dream and wielded by Obama.

A powerfully negative emotional response is crafted in Obama’s December 2013 “Remarks on Economic Mobility” as he seeks to create a public fear of losing the American Dream for the country. In the address Obama argues that the “combined trends of increased inequality and decreasing mobility pose a fundamental threat to the American Dream, our way of life, and what we stand for around the globe.”⁵⁵⁹ *Fear* is defined as “the emotional anticipation of

⁵⁵² Fredrickson, Barbara L. "The Role of Positive Emotions in Positive Psychology: The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions." *American psychologist* 56, no. 3 (2001), p.220.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁴ Lombardo, Thomas. *Wisdom, Consciousness, and the Future*. Xlibris Corporation, 2011, p. 70.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁷ Cullen, Jim. *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2003, p. 6.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ Obama, Barack H. "Remarks on Economic Mobility." THEARC: Washington, D.C. , December 4, 2013.

something painful or destructive”⁵⁶⁰ and has specific action tendencies associated with it.⁵⁶¹

These action tendencies can range from fight or flight responses in the case of extreme fear, or priming an individual to change their behavior.⁵⁶² Obama wants the American people to fight for their historic values and way of life as he argues “the idea that a child may never be able to escape that poverty...should offend all of us and it should compel us to action. We are a better country than this.”⁵⁶³ Obama’s appeal to the specific qualities of the country seeks to motivate action on the part of the audience to defend the Dream for others as well as chase it for themselves.

The second characteristic of the *patheme* is the presentation of salient cultural myths that provide a strong collective affiliation and organizing function. There are two myths embedded in the “American Dream” of the “Better Bargain” addresses, the importance of the middle class and the narrative of upward mobility through individual effort. These combine to create a concrete site for the actualization of the Dream and a method for individuals to use to propel them into that crucial place. By presenting the middle class and virtuous individual side by side, Obama can craft a strong affiliational network between collective and individual effort. These are part of what makes the Dream so distinctly American.

In arguing for income tax reforms as part of the “Better Bargain” Obama positions the middle class as the primary site that needs to be protected, tapping into salient cultural affinity for the group. He argues that “as we work to reform our tax code, we should find new ways to make it easier for workers to put away money, and free middle-class families from the fear that

⁵⁶⁰ Lombardo, Thomas. *Wisdom, Consciousness, and the Future*. Xlibris Corporation, 2011, p. 106.

⁵⁶¹ Elster, Jon. "Emotions and Rationality." In *Feelings and Emotions: The Amsterdam Symposium*, edited by Nico Frijda Antony S. R. Manstead, Agneta Fischer 30-48. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 2004.

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ Obama, Barack H. "Remarks on Economic Mobility." THEARC: Washington, D.C. , December 4, 2013.

they won't be able to retire.”⁵⁶⁴ This focus on the middle class concretizes the abstract “American Dream” by providing a specific site for its actualization. In his “Remarks on Responsible Homeownership” delivered in Phoenix two weeks after the Knox College address Obama argues for an even more concrete understanding of the American Dream. For Obama “the chance to own your own home”⁵⁶⁵ is “the most tangible cornerstone that lies at the heart of the American Dream, at the heart of middle-class life.”⁵⁶⁶ For Obama the other “cornerstones of what it means to be middle class in America”⁵⁶⁷ are a “good job with good wages,”⁵⁶⁸ “a good education”⁵⁶⁹ “affordable health care”⁵⁷⁰ and “secure retirements even if you’re not rich...”⁵⁷¹ Not only does Obama locate the American Dream as residing in the middle class, but he also outlines the specific trappings that go along with it.

The “middle class” is a potent cultural touchstone in the United States. Kirk J Stark and Eric M Zolt in “Tax Advice for the Second Obama Administration: Tax Reform and the American Middle Class” argue that the phrase “middle class” is an elastic term with broad definitional potential. For Stark and Zolt “the term ‘middle class’ carries significant rhetorical power - at least in the political arena - for better or for worse there is no single definition or common understanding that applies across all settings.”⁵⁷² This elasticity contributes to the persuasiveness of the term as they point out that “definitional elasticity is, of course, part of the term's longstanding appeal, enabling political entrepreneurs to make relatively ‘flexible’

⁵⁶⁴ Obama, Barack H., "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013.

⁵⁶⁵ Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President on Responsible Homeownership." Desert Vista High School: Phoenix, AZ, August 6, 2013.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁷ Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President on College Affordability." Lackawanna College: Scranton, Pennsylvania, August 23, 2013.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

⁵⁷² Stark, Kirk J, and Eric M Zolt. "Tax Advice for the Second Obama Administration: Tax Reform and the American Middle Class." *Pepp. L. Rev.* 40 (2013), p. 1212.

commitments to their constituencies.” In fact many people are able to identify with the term as “[s]tudies show that most people believe themselves to be part of the ‘middle class’”⁵⁷³

contributing to the broad appeal of the phrase.

The middle class is an historic part of the values that have shaped the American Dream for more than a century. E.J Dionne in *Our Divided Political Heart* argues that the Populist movement of the late 1800s combined with the Progressive movement of the early 1900s through the focus on the middle class.⁵⁷⁴ For Dionne the moderating influence of this focus provided a broader appeal and generated greater political success for the advocates of progressivism. He notes that campaigns “on behalf of fairness and justice have often succeeded when they joined the aspirations of the left-out with those of the aspiring middle class.”⁵⁷⁵ Obama positions his defense of the middle class in a similar vein, arguing that “if we don’t have a growing, thriving middle class then we won’t have the resources to solve a lot of these problems. We won’t have the resolve, the optimism, the sense of unity that we need to solve many of these other issues.”⁵⁷⁶ For Obama the middle class is the key site to actualize the American Dream and his arguments tap into the belief in the United States that everyone does and should have the opportunity to achieve success.

The second culturally relevant narrative that Obama deploys in the “American Dream” *patheme* of the “Better Bargain” addresses is the belief in the possibility of upward mobility for anyone that is willing to work hard. As Obama notes in the Knox College address “we call it the American Dream. And that’s what makes this country special -- the idea that no matter who you

⁵⁷³ Stark, Kirk J, and Eric M Zolt. "Tax Advice for the Second Obama Administration: Tax Reform and the American Middle Class." *Pepp. L. Rev.* 40 (2013), p. 1212.

⁵⁷⁴ Dionne, E.J. *Our Divided Political Heart: The Battle for the American Idea in an Age of Discontent*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2012.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. Ebook.

⁵⁷⁶ Obama, Barack H., "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013.

are or what you look like or where you come from or who you love, you can make it if you try.”⁵⁷⁷ This invokes the materialistic American myth of progress and upward mobility, where anyone can achieve the highest levels of success with the humblest of beginnings. In his “Remarks on College Affordability” Obama points to education as a specific pathway for achieving the Dream through upward mobility. He argues that “one of the most important things we can do to restore that sense of upward mobility -- the ability to achieve the American Dream, the idea that you can make it if you try -- one of the most important things we can do is make sure every child is getting a good education.”⁵⁷⁸ Connecting the American Dream to sheer effort is deeply embedded in the American psyche. Richard Weiss in *The American Myth of Success: From Horatio Alger to Norman Vincent Peale* argues that the belief that all people can “exclusively by their own efforts...make of their lives what they will has been widely popularized for over a century”⁵⁷⁹ Weiss argues that this belief has “a strong hold on the popular imagination”⁵⁸⁰ in the United States.

The focus on the individual’s achievement is also related to a historic commitment in the US to an anti-elitist, rugged self-reliance on the part of the people. In *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*, Seymour Lipset connects the longstanding American investment in individualism with the residual religious character resulting from the Protestant foundations of the country. Lipset argues that “Americans are more inclined to be workaholics than other industrialized populations”⁵⁸¹ due partly to the influence of Protestant sects who “have fostered egalitarian, individualistic, and populist values which are anti-elitist. Hence, the political ethos

⁵⁷⁷ Obama, Barack H., "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013.

⁵⁷⁸ Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President on College Affordability." Lackawanna College: Scranton, Pennsylvania, August 23, 2013.

⁵⁷⁹ Weiss, Richard. *The American Myth of Success: From Horatio Alger to Norman Vincent Peale*. (University of Illinois Press, 1988) p. 3

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ Lipset, Seymour Martin. *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company 1997) p. 60

and the religious ethos have reinforced each other.”⁵⁸² The ideal to be realized is the level playing field, where it is the sweat of a person’s brow and not the size of their pocket book that determines their destiny.

Obama’s politics are specifically crafted around this vision of the hardworking American as he cites the working class promise that has been a part of the American Dream since the Gilded Age. By employing a belief in individualism embedded within American democracy Obama accesses positive feelings about the founding of the United States and the role of the individual in building the country.⁵⁸³ Obama proclaims that “I will not accept deals that don’t meet the basic test of strengthening the prospects of hardworking families. This is the agenda we have to be working on.”⁵⁸⁴ The emotional pull of working class values is strong for American citizens, as empirical research has shown. Kristen Lucas’ “The Working Class Promise: A Communicative Account of Mobility- Based Ambivalences” argues that individuals gravitate towards blue-collar family roots, even when those individuals are transitioning into an upper-class lifestyle.⁵⁸⁵ It is this notion of Americans as essentially hard-working that provides the possibility of synthesizing the individualism of free-market capitalism with the collectivism of a democratically united country. For Obama the chance to work towards something better isn’t simply a matter of policy preference, but a necessary component of the American national identity. In the December 2013 address on income inequality he argues that this is “the defining challenge of our time: Making sure our economy works for every working American. It’s why I

⁵⁸² Ibid, p. 61

⁵⁸³ Lucas, Kristen. “The Working Class Promise: A Communicative Account of Mobility- Based Ambivalences,” *Communication Monographs* 78(3) 2011, p. 347-369

⁵⁸⁴ Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013.

⁵⁸⁵ Lucas, Kristen. “The Working Class Promise: A Communicative Account of Mobility- Based Ambivalences,” *Communication Monographs* 78(3) 2011, p. 347-369

ran for President. It was at the center of last year's campaign. It drives everything I do in this office."⁵⁸⁶

The third element of the *patheme* is that it mediates inconsistent argument positions. The "American Dream" that Obama uses in the "Better Bargain" addresses does this by uniting the belief in the materialistic myth of progress and economic expansion with the moralistic myth of democratically secured equality of opportunity. The union of these positions synthesizes the various perspectives on the Dream that have been discussed throughout this project. From Theodore Roosevelt's belief in the "strenuous life" of the individual to the FDR's defense of making people pay their "fair share" of taxes through Reagan's reaction to the "tyranny" of income taxes, Obama seeks to provide a feeling that these views are compatible and can work harmoniously.

The "American Dream" can be divided into two parts, individual achievement and collective value. In "Reaffirmation and Subversion of the American Dream" Walter Fisher titles these two halves the "materialistic myth" and the "moralistic myth."⁵⁸⁷ For Fisher, the materialistic myth is "grounded on the puritan work ethic and relates to values of effort, persistence, 'playing the game,' initiative, self-reliance, achievement and success."⁵⁸⁸ In contrast the moralistic myth is "well expressed in basic tenets of the Declaration of Independence"⁵⁸⁹ that all people "are created equal...endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights...among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness"⁵⁹⁰ and the purpose of government is "to secure these rights."⁵⁹¹ Each aspect of the American Dream supports a different vision of

⁵⁸⁶ Obama, Barack H., "Remarks on Economic Mobility." THEARC: Washington, D.C., December 4, 2013.

⁵⁸⁷ Fisher, Walter R. "Reaffirmation and Subversion of the American Dream." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59, no. 2 (1973), p. 161.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*

freedom as well, where the materialistic myth “undergirds competition as the way of determining personal worth, the free enterprise system, and the notion of freedom, defined as the freedom from controls, regulations, or constraints that hinder the individual’s striving for ascendancy in the social-economic hierarchy of society.”⁵⁹² In contrast the moralistic myth “tends toward the idea of freedom that stresses the freedom *to be* as one conceives”⁵⁹³ themselves. The fusion of these myths results in the commitment to an American Dream that believes in the country as the guarantor of freedom and equality, promoting virtue through justice.

Obama self-consciously seeks to unite the two sides of the myth in the Knox College Address, arguing both that it is the character of the individual and the exceptional governing structure in the United States that undergirds the “American Dream.” He says that the only thing he cares about is “to make this country work for working Americans again”⁵⁹⁴ and that doing so will support his vision of the American Dream. Specifically, Obama argues that “thanks to the grit and resilience and determination of the American people -- of folks like you -- we’ve been able to clear away the rubble from the financial crisis”⁵⁹⁵ presenting the materialistic myth as one side of that vision. On the other side he argues “[a]nd in the end, isn't that what makes us special? It's not the ability to generate incredible wealth for the few; it's our ability to give everybody a chance to pursue their own true measure of happiness.”⁵⁹⁶ Obama also seeks to unify the American Dream’s competing emphasis on individual and collective goods in the conclusion of his December 2013 “Remarks on Economic Mobility.”⁵⁹⁷ These are the more generally competing feelings that the individual should have primacy or the collective governing

⁵⁹² Fisher, Walter R. "Reaffirmation and Subversion of the American Dream." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59, no. 2 (1973), p. 161.

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁵⁹⁴ Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁷ Obama, Barack H. "Remarks on Economic Mobility." THEARC: Washington, D.C., December 4, 2013.

structure should take precedence. Obama hopes to combine them by collapsing the distinction between the collective and the individual as he argues that “government can’t stand on the sidelines in our efforts. Because government is us.”⁵⁹⁸

In the conclusion of the Knox College address Obama unites the two sides of the myth and presents it as a unified course of action, supporting justice and virtue, saying:

Here in America, we’ve never guaranteed success -- that's not what we do. More than some other countries, we expect people to be self-reliant. Nobody is going to do something for you. (Applause.) We've tolerated a little more inequality for the sake of a more dynamic, more adaptable economy. That's all for the good. But that idea has always been combined with a commitment to equality of opportunity to upward mobility -- the idea that no matter how poor you started, if you're willing to work hard and discipline yourself and defer gratification, you can make it, too. That's the American idea.

Obama concludes the address with a focus on the future saying “[w]e have to have the courage to keep moving forward. We've got to set our eyes on the horizon. We will find an ocean of tomorrows. We will find a sky of tomorrows for the American people and for this great country that we love.”⁵⁹⁹

Conclusion

This chapter has proposed that rhetorical studies needs a new term to describe extant rhetorical phenomenon, potent emotional symbols in American public discourse. By proposing that rhetorical scholars adopt the *patheme* as a unit of analysis in their critical efforts, this project could link rhetorical studies with some of the theoretical advances in neuroscience and psychology. The examination of theoretical literature on the operation of metaphor and emotion provides a three-fold analysis of the *patheme*. A *patheme* works through the emotional associations of a term with the deployment of a culturally specific myth affectively orienting the

⁵⁹⁸ Obama, Barack H. "Remarks on Economic Mobility." THEARC: Washington, D.C. , December 4, 2013.

⁵⁹⁹ Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President on the Economy." Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013.

audience and mediating inconsistent argumentative propositions through this common orientation. By pointing to *pathemes* that are persistent through time rhetorical studies would provide a diachronic analysis of the development of persuasion through *pathos* rather than simply discussing recurrent argumentative themes and tropes. Unearthing potent affective symbols in the American psyche may reveal cultural shifts and constants as well as providing resources for predictive assessments of dynamic public discourse in the United States.

This chapter has also proposed that the “American Dream” operates as a *patheme* in Barack Obama’s “Better Bargain” Addresses, growing out of the *pathos* effort to craft an investment in the collective good. This effort is an attempt to reverse the feelings of individualism inculcated primarily through the advocacy of Ronald Reagan, feelings that were strong as Obama took office in 2009. After the passage of the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 Obama introduces the specific method for rearticulating the “American Dream” with a focus on the middle class and economic equality of opportunity. Building into his deployment of the “American Dream” feelings of hope, pride, or fear promotes specific action tendencies in support of the *patheme*. These strong emotions are culturally configured through the narrative of upward mobility and the figure of the “middle class,” ultimately facilitating a fusion of the materialistic and moralistic halves of the “American Dream.”

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This project has engaged in assessing the development and modification of emotional commitments to justice and virtue in deliberative rhetoric⁶⁰⁰ in the United States on the income tax dating from 1894 through 2013. The mode of analysis has been to examine the *pathos*⁶⁰¹ of these deliberations, as they typically deviate quite quickly from a strictly rational mode of persuasion.⁶⁰² The contribution to rhetorical studies of this analysis is twofold, one practical and one theoretical. The practical contribution is derived through the specific case studies, which focus on *pathos* in discourse and are organized according to a rhetorical history perspective.⁶⁰³ These case studies occupy the space of Chapters 2-5 and track the dynamic emotional climate in the United States through time, with the attendant rhetorical shifts accompanying changing emotional tides. The theoretical contribution is sought through building a theory of the *patheme* in Chapter 6, which examines President Obama's use of the "American Dream" in the recent campaign for "A Better Bargain for the Middle Class." The *patheme* offers a specific rhetorical

⁶⁰⁰ Rhetoric "is an art, a human enterprise engaging individual choice and common activity" and deliberative rhetoric "is a form of argumentation through which citizens test and create social knowledge in order to uncover, assess, and resolve shared problems" (Goodnight, G. Thomas. "The Personal, Technical, and Public Spheres of Argument: A Speculative Inquiry into the Art of Public Deliberation." *Argumentation & Advocacy* 48, no. 4, Spring 2012, p. 198).

⁶⁰¹ *Pathos* is defined as "the deliberate art for the construction of shared emotion." Condit, Celeste M. "Pathos in Criticism: Edwin Black's Communism-as-Cancer Metaphor." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 1 (2013), p. 3

⁶⁰² From the very beginning this seems to be the case as in 1894 when William Jennings Bryan declared he was "clad in the armor of a righteous cause," whereas his opponent Bourke Cockran argued an income tax would be a "betrayal of our ancient principles."

⁶⁰³ Rhetorical history is defined as "the historical study of rhetorical events and the study from a rhetorical perspective of historical forces, trends, processes and events" (Zarefsky, David. "Reflections on Making the Case." In *Making the Case: Advocacy and Judgment in Public Argument*, edited by Kathryn M. Olson. Michigan State University Press: East Lansing, 2012, p. 11).

figure containing *pathos* and so can offer a way to track emotions both diachronically and synchronically.

This chapter is divided into three sections: assessment, application, and summary. The first section discusses the strengths and limitations of the theory of the *patheme* noting that it provides strong explanatory power, but that its scope may be restricted. The second section discusses this project's impact on argumentation studies and enumerates the contributions of the rhetorical history approach to interdisciplinary study. The third section summarizes the chapters noting key moments in the transformation of public emotion in the United States and deliberations on the income tax.

Assessing the *patheme*

What does the *patheme* offer as a theoretical construct? In assessing the usefulness of this theory, the scope and limitations are discussed as well as the future research possibilities that it entails. A useful definition of *theory* is found in "Research on Knowledge-Making in Professional Discourses" by Graham Smart et al. They define *theory* "as a generalising, evidence-supported assertion, or 'knowledge claim,' regarding the nature of, and sometimes causalities within, a particular realm of material and/or social reality."⁶⁰⁴ As a theory in this vein, the *patheme* seeks to make a claim about the relationship between discourse and emotion supporting this claim by tracing a bi-directional causative structure supporting that relationship. This section applies an assessment of sociological theory to the *patheme*. Through the application of five criteria the *patheme* is assessed regarding its predictive and explanatory power, theoretical advancement, practitioner applicability, data incorporation, and research

⁶⁰⁴ Smart, Graham, Stephani Currie, and Matt Falconer. "Research on Knowledge-Making in Professional Discourses: The Use of Theoretical Resources." In *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Professional Communication*, edited by Vijay Bhatia and Stephen Bremner, 85-98. New York, NY: Routledge, 2014, p. 86.

methods. As currently constituted the *patheme* scores well on many of these metrics, though the potential for a limited scope is noted.

In *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* Barney G.

Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss argue that theories of social behavior have five “interrelated jobs”:

(1) to enable prediction and explanation of behavior; (2) to be useful in theoretical advance in sociology; (3) to be usable in practical applications—predictions and explanation should be able to give the practitioner understanding and some control of situations; (4) to provide a perspective on behavior—a stance to be taken toward data; and (5) to guide and provide a style of research on particular areas of behavior.⁶⁰⁵

Applying these five criteria to the *patheme* demonstrates some of the strengths of the theory as well as its limitations. As an explanatory device for identifying and analyzing how a term acquired emotional potency, the *patheme* is well constructed. Tracing a rich emotional history of words, slogans, and perhaps even images could inform an analysis of their use in contemporary discourse. Though the scope of the *patheme* is most likely too limited to replace a rigorous *pathos* study, it could be excellent operating in a supplementary role. That has been its use in this project, as it identified the “American Dream” *patheme* in relation to the individualizing and collectivizing *pathos* surrounding income tax debates throughout time.

The first criteria for assessing the usefulness of a particular theory is its capacity to predict and explain behavior. In this regard the *patheme* is likely stronger in explanation than it is prediction. By combining an assessment of the specific emotions associated with a particular discursive object and the cultural or community relevance of the transmission of affect, the *patheme* offers clear metrics for evaluating and explaining what otherwise might be an ambiguous linguistic device. The *patheme* also offers two limited predictive possibilities, future transformations of existing *pathemes* and the emergence of new ones. After identifying an

⁶⁰⁵ Glaser, Barney G, and Anselm L Strauss. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2012, p. 3.

existing *patheme* and tracing its creation through a collection of emotional associations it may be possible to predict its future directions. For example the “American Dream” *patheme* may reacquire the individualism of Reagan if the Tea Party produces a serious national candidate. Predicting the emergence of a new *patheme* would require assessing historically similar figures. For example “Ronald Reagan” may operate as a *patheme* in certain discourse communities and, if President Obama’s reforms are successful, it is possible that in another generation “Barack Obama” may operate similarly for a different discourse community.

The second criteria of useful theories is that they represent an advance in the field. In this regard the *patheme* provides a useful entry point for analyzing the specific contribution that an emotional word or phrase may have on deliberative argument. In “Insufficient Fear of the ‘Super-Flu?’ The World Health Organization’s Global Decision-Making for Health” Celeste Condit argues that linkages between emotion and deliberation are productive in maximizing the benefits of each decision-making mode. For Condit “an ideal for public deliberation would include at least two components: active reflection on the emotive components of deliberations and inclusion of the maximal possible range of relevant affective weightings and inputs.”⁶⁰⁶ Though the *patheme* does not address all of Condit’s concerns regarding the unsuccessful and counter-productive attempts to exclude *pathos* from deliberation, it could provide another tool in assessing the role of “affective processing as a component of public deliberation.”⁶⁰⁷ Locating a linguistic manifestation of a certain set of feelings, and thus identifying a *patheme*, could facilitate an analysis of emotion in deliberative activity. Frequency of use and intensity of feeling could be noted as a way to provide an emotional barometer for a given public controversy.

⁶⁰⁶ Condit, Celeste M. "Insufficient Fear of the "Super-Flu"? The World Health Organization's Global Decision-Making for Health." 1-31: *Poroi: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Rhetorical Analysis & Invention*, 2014, p. 8.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid.

The third criteria in assessing the contribution of a theory is its practicality. Are the explanations and predictions that the theory formulates useful for practitioners' understanding and control? In addressing this concern the *patheme* has large potential, but also possible pitfalls. A well-constructed *patheme* could provide a high level of explanation for a rhetor and even give them some ability to shape audience feelings and expectations. A poorly constructed *patheme* could easily lead rhetor and audience astray as emotions are complex and indeterminate processes with no fixed outcome. The quality of the work assessing the *patheme* is likely to influence its usefulness in application. One potentially useful application in this regard is in post-conflict rhetoric, as there are many emotionally sensitive issues at play in those situations. In *Western Intervention in the Balkans: The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict* Roger D. Petersen argues that strategies for creating peace relied on an assessment of disputants as essentially rational, when emotions played a huge role in sustaining the conflict.⁶⁰⁸ Petersen notes the importance of rhetoric in crafting these emotions in post-conflict situations, as “political entrepreneurs may employ a series of posters, symbols, and rhetoric that are thoroughly built on existing political resentment.”⁶⁰⁹ Incorporating a specific assessment of the symbols being used, and identifying *pathemes*, could assist actors working towards peace avoid inflammatory rhetoric.

The fourth criteria for assessing the usefulness of a theory is that it provides a perspective on behavior and facilitates a specific stance towards data. The perspective that the *patheme* provides is a focus on case studies; the stance towards data is a focus on the cultural development of feeling seeking to unify disparate communities. Smart et al. note that a “case study typically focuses on a situation involving one or several individuals, on a pattern of

⁶⁰⁸ Petersen, Roger Dale. *Western Intervention in the Balkans: The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*. Cambridge University Press: New York, 2011.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p 42.

recurrent social interactions, or on a single event”⁶¹⁰ and data can include documents, examples, and observation.⁶¹¹ Building a theory from data “means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research.”⁶¹² Building the theory of the “American Dream” *patheme* required assessing the components parts of the Dream as it developed through time, necessitating a focus on the income tax debates that took place nearly four decades before the emergence of the specific phrase. This cultural development of individualism and collectivism is essential to understanding how Obama uses the “American Dream” in 2013. This approach could be replicated in pursuing other *pathemes*, though the case studies and data would differ, the method would likely produce results.

The fifth criteria for assessing the usefulness of a theory of social behavior is its capacity to guide a style of research in the future. The *patheme* provides a number of diverse and wide-ranging possible future directions for research. The first area would be to explore potential *pathemes* in the material presented in this project. The “American Dream” *patheme* is not exhaustive of the debates over the income tax and there are many other potential terms that could be emotionally full signifiers. These could include “Ronald Reagan” and the “middle class” just to name a few. The second direction would be to identify *pathemes* in other areas of rhetorical discourse. Scholars have noted the power that particular narratives have in certain discourse communities, such as the story of Galileo for science.⁶¹³ It could be the case that the simple invocation of “Galileo” invites a strong emotional response and so it may be a *patheme*. The

⁶¹⁰ Smart, Graham, Stephani Currie, and Matt Falconer. "Research on Knowledge-Making in Professional Discourses: The Use of Theoretical Resources." In *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Professional Communication*, edited by Vijay Bhatia and Stephen Bremner, 85-98. New York, NY: Routledge, 2014, p. 86.

⁶¹¹ Ibid.

⁶¹² Glaser, Barney G, and Anselm L Strauss. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2012, p. 6.

⁶¹³ Lessl, Thomas M. "The Galileo Legend as Scientific Folklore." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 85, no. 2 (1999): 146-168.

third direction would be to broaden the theory of *pathemes*. For example working on finding visual *pathemes*, or re-examining powerful rhetorical artifacts in visual rhetoric such as the Iwo Jima photograph,⁶¹⁴ could provide new and different discursive objects that capture a strong emotional sentiment.

Academic Contributions

There are two important academic contributions stemming from the general approach of this study. The first contribution comes from the focus on *pathos*, “the deliberate art for the construction of shared emotion.”⁶¹⁵ This focus has provided an analysis of important moments that may have been lost using a traditional argument studies approach, such as the linkages between general collectivizing *pathos* and the specific deployment of those emotional forces in income tax deliberation. In this section the contribution of *pathos* studies to argumentation studies is explored, with its importance noted for untangling seemingly intractable domestic political disagreements, enriching the understandings of uncertainty, and acknowledging the capacity of feeling to overcome other considerations such as ideology. The second contribution of this project resides in the rhetorical history approach that is used throughout. Combining the rhetorical history approach with a view of *pathos* in persuasion could provide useful interdisciplinary engagements with political and environmental science. Each field has begun nascent studies of the effect that emotion has on persuasion, but they lack a rich understanding of context and the historical development of emotion. This section notes the usefulness of a rhetorical history approach to these diverse inquiries.

⁶¹⁴ Hariman, Robert, and John Louis Lucaites. "Performing Civic Identity: The Iconic Photograph of the Flag Raising on Iwo Jima." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88, no. 4 (2002): 363-92.

⁶¹⁵ Condit, Celeste M. "Pathos in Criticism: Edwin Black's Communism-as-Cancer Metaphor." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 1 (2013), p. 3

This project could have useful applications for argument studies, as the influence of strong emotions in political deliberations is widespread. The contemporary U.S. political climate is characterized by hyperpartisanship with members on the right and the left complaining that reasonable argument is no longer possible. Jim Cooper (D-TN) said of Congress “[m]embers walk into the chamber full of hatred. They believe the worst lies about the other side”⁶¹⁶ and former Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN) lamented “partisanship is out of control.”⁶¹⁷ The study of recent rancorous political argument has been largely pre-occupied with the failure of reason, which for some underlies the “problem of faction”⁶¹⁸ and can be corrected through the judicious application of reasoned argument.⁶¹⁹ Though reason can do many things, it is unlikely to be sufficient to overcome deep seated political disagreements, as rancor is not caused by a failure to present *reasoned* arguments for one side or the other. In *The Righteous Mind*, Professor Jonathan Haidt explains that recent psychological studies suggest reason provides the post-hoc rationalization for the argumentative positions people find most appealing.⁶²⁰ This project has demonstrated that important point. Throughout more than 100 years of changing policy and argument advocates on all sides of the income tax offer passionate defenses of their positions.

By proposing argument scholars incorporate *pathos* into their analyses this project could also link the study of public argument with some of the theoretical advances in neuroscience and rhetorical studies more generally. Evaluating the role *pathos* can play in the construction and effectiveness of argumentation could broaden some already existing themes in argument theory.

The focus on uncertainty in argumentation and deliberation is a particularly promising point of

⁶¹⁶ Cooper, Jim as cited in Joe Nocera, "The Last Moderate." *New York Times*, September 5, 2011.

⁶¹⁷ Lugar, Richard. "Terry Sanford Distinguished Lecture." Sanford School of Public Policy, Duke University, February 12, 2013.

⁶¹⁸ Rowland, Robert C. "Reasoned Argument and Social Change: An Introduction." In *Reasoned Argument and Social Change* edited by R. Rowland. Washington, D.C.: National Communication Association, 2011, p. 1.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

⁶²⁰ Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. Random House LLC, 2012.

engagement. David Zarefsky's keynote presentation at the Third International Conference on Argumentation posited that argumentation is "the practice of justifying decisions under conditions of uncertainty."⁶²¹ For Zarefsky, though certainty cannot be achieved, "[t]his does not mean that outcomes are irrational but rather they are guided by rhetorical reason. Warrants are evoked from the cumulative experience of a relevant audience, rather than from a particular structure or form." The cumulative experience of an audience would include its emotional reaction to, and understanding of, cultural myths and potent symbols. This works not only for argument, but also for deliberation. G. Thomas Goodnight explained "[a]s deliberation raises expectations that are *feared or hoped for*, public argument is a way to share in the construction of the future."⁶²² The deliberative construction of the future and the orientation towards that future cannot be based on arguments grounded solely in logical demonstration, as those arguments rely on certainty as their justification. The alternative to the inclusion of reasoning through *pathos* is to simply forget that all deliberative arguments are grounded in uncertainty. Rather than fearing for this uncertain future of deliberative argument, the possibility of a more human form of reasoning should be embraced.

Rather than simply focusing on the effect ideology has on constructing warrants and channeling argument, *pathos* centered studies could broaden the understanding of an argument's persuasive effects. In "Pathos in Criticism" Celeste Condit argues "[o]ne major problem is how to integrate theories of ideology (or logos) with theories of pathos."⁶²³ As Condit observes "...the intensity of the feelings about affiliations that people experience carry an enormous

⁶²¹ Zarefsky, David. "Argumentation in the Tradition of Speech Communication Studies. Keynote Presentation." In *Third International Conference on Argumentation*. University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 1994.

⁶²² Goodnight, G. Thomas. "The Personal, Technical, and Public Spheres of Argument: A Speculative Inquiry into the Art of Public Deliberation." *Argumentation & Advocacy* 48, no. 4 (Spring 2012), p. 198, emphasis added.

⁶²³ Condit, Celeste M. "Pathos in Criticism: Edwin Black's Communism-as-Cancer Metaphor." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 1 (2013), p. 3.

potential power, a power that may supercede ideology and constrain all other elements of response to a discourse.”⁶²⁴ This understanding could enrich various argument studies, such as analyzing the efficacy of climate change discourse or immigration reform argumentation. It could be the case that simply knowing the science behind extreme weather events or the economics behind wage fluctuations isn’t the only method of persuasion. The vectors for persuasion could also include feelings of fear for future generations or anxiety regarding one’s own employment as powerful examples of *pathos*. This project’s method of approaching texts also has implications for broader ranging studies in other disciplines than rhetorical studies.

The rhetorical history approach of this project could be useful in interdisciplinary contexts, including political and environmental science. The approach is best defined as “the historical study of rhetorical events and the study from a rhetorical perspective of historical forces, trends, processes and events.”⁶²⁵ The rhetorical history perspective of this project traces the development of feelings regarding the country and the place of the individual within the nation, and assesses how these feelings are articulated to deliberations on the income tax. Early populist sentiments strongly in favor of governmentally imposed tax justice eventually gave way to the progressivism of Teddy Roosevelt and his democratic individualism. The Great Depression and World War II moved the emotional barometer towards feelings of collective identity and national pride, influenced by the collectivizing *pathos* of FDR. The “American Dream” emerged in 1931 and emphasized the democratic idealism present in the feeling that upward mobility was still possible. John F. Kennedy’s election in 1960 and his defense of innovative individualism began to change feelings towards the collective benefit of the income

⁶²⁴ Condit, Celeste M. "Pathos in Criticism: Edwin Black's Communism-as-Cancer Metaphor." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 1 (2013), p. 7

⁶²⁵ Zarefsky, David. "Reflections on Making the Case." In *Making the Case: Advocacy and Judgment in Public Argument*, edited by Kathryn M. Olson. Michigan State University Press: East Lansing, 2012, p. 11.

tax. This trend was pushed to the limit by Ronald Reagan who lived the materialist American Dream, espoused it in his public speeches, and passed income tax reductions on the basis of strong feelings of individualism. Reagan's legacy endured until the election of Barack Obama in 2008 when the new President began work on resuscitating a collectivizing *pathos*, culminating in his 2012 State of the Union Address.

This project's longitudinal understanding of emotion in discourse could be useful in interdisciplinary engagements with political and environmental science. While both disciplines have begun to incorporate emotional assessments into some analyses, the sophistication of their methods is wanting and the communication theories they apply are outdated. Political science uses an Aristotelian perspective on emotion and *pathos*, which misses much of the theoretical advances in rhetoric that this project applies. Environmental science has begun to recognize the power of emotion to persuasion, but has an overly reductionist view of the development of communication and the role of *pathos*. This project would be useful in both areas as it provides a specific understanding of developing emotional meaning in discourse.

Political science has seen a renewed interest in rhetoric as a way to broaden the understanding of deliberative democracy.⁶²⁶ Political scientists have used Aristotelian ideas to argue that to “describe rhetoric as a form of reasoning is to show that trust and emotion are integral parts of public reasoning rather than corruptions of it or supplements to it.”⁶²⁷ Focusing on emotion as a corrective for overly rational theories of judgment has led these theorists to utilize Aristotle's notion of *pathos*. In “Emotion Talk and Political Judgment” Susan Bickford expands upon the Aristotelian account of emotion and argues “we should recognize that emotion talk is both a constituent of our judgments and also gives us the materials to remake those

⁶²⁶ Garsten, Bryan. "The Rhetoric Revival in Political Theory." *Annual Review of Political Science* 14, no. 1 (2011): 159-80.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 170

judgments, and thus ourselves, and thus the world.”⁶²⁸ While it is refreshing there are interdisciplinary engagements with rhetoric and the advancing field of *pathos*, the work in political science remains rooted in Aristotelian descriptions of discourse and emotion. By providing a more nuanced account of the interrelationship between discourse and emotion political science could more accurately describe policy decision-making.

Environmental science has focused on the role emotion plays in communication because the public often ignores pressing scientific evidence, particularly in the area of climate change. In “Emotional Anchoring and Objectification in the media reporting on climate change” Birgitta Höijer argues that environmental communication occurs along two tracks, anchoring and objectification. Each method makes some unknown object known, anchoring “by bringing it into a well-known sphere of earlier social representations so that we may compare and interpret it”⁶²⁹ and objectification “makes the unknown known by transforming it into something concrete that we can perceive and experience with our senses.”⁶³⁰ Höijer notes that discourse on climate change seeks to make an unknown phenomena known through various emotion-laden strategies, such as inducing fear or providing hope. What Höijer lacks in this analysis is an understanding for how the emotions surrounding climate change are configured through a broad array of messages, rather than the isolated efforts of the media. The historical and contextual approach of this project would be a useful model for assessing how emotions about climate change are configured through overall economic trends and social dynamics, potentially enriching the analysis of climate change rhetoric.

⁶²⁸ Bickford, Susan. "Emotion Talk and Political Judgment." *Journal of Politics* 73, no. 4 (October 2011), p. 1036.

⁶²⁹ Höijer, Birgitta. "Emotional Anchoring and Objectification in the Media Reporting on Climate Change." *Public Understanding of Science* 19, no. 6 (2010), p. 718.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 719.

Chapter Summaries

This section provides short summaries of the chapters, with key findings highlighted.

Chapter 1 outlines the entanglement between deliberations on the income tax and the “American Dream” with the tension between individualism and collectivism present in both. In deliberations on the income tax this tension is explored through the focus on justice or virtue by disputants. While proponents of a progressive income tax point to its promotion of justice, opponents may deride it as violating the sovereignty of the virtuous individual. These arguments interface with the modern understanding of the American Dream, which emerged during the Gilded Age.⁶³¹ While the classical understanding of the Dream is rooted in Thomas Jefferson’s agrarian democracy, and takes the rugged self-actualized farmer as its ideal, the modern version attaches individualism to capital rather than land. Each version is strongly attached to the idea that democracy must secure the possibility for individuals to live their lives unhindered by an aristocracy or ruling class.

Chapter 2 begins the rhetorical history of deliberations on the income tax by analyzing the introduction of the first peacetime tax in 1894, its nullification in the Supreme Court, and eventual resuscitation through the 16th Amendment. Pointing to the emotional investment in systemic justice on the one hand, and the virtuous individual on the other, this chapter engages with the 1894 debate between William Jennings Bryan and Bourke Cockran in the House of Representatives. Bryan’s populist sentiment in favor of taxes on wealthy individuals was contrasted with the elitism of Cockran. Chapter 2 then relates the issues in the dispute to Teddy Roosevelt’s defense of an income tax and a specific vision of America in “The New Nationalism.” Roosevelt configured his defense of the income tax on a belief in the role of

⁶³¹ The late 1800s characterized by industrialization, the closure of the Western Frontier, and the emergence of massed capital.

American democracy as securing the possibility for individualism. Correlating with the rise of progressivism in the United States (championed in part by Roosevelt) the feeling of democratic individualism has had enduring potential.

Chapter 3 begins with the outbreak of World War I in Europe and the influence this had on the American populace at the time. Shattering the feeling that the globe and the United States were on an inexorable path towards progress, the war ignited a sense of nationalism in American values. The income tax was strengthened as Woodrow Wilson encouraged the commitment to spending blood and treasure in defense of democratic ideals abroad. These feelings dissipated in the 1920s leading to broad reductions in income tax levels. As the Great Depression accelerated in 1931 the specific phrase “American Dream” emerged for the first time, capturing the lost hope of the average citizen. FDR’s election in 1932 filled this gap as he worked to reconfigure public emotions regarding the crisis and the possibility of recovery. A key part of this rhetorical process was the defense of income taxes as a method of providing justice and requiring everyone pay their “fair share.” The outbreak of World War II erased the last vestiges of the Depression and focused attention on national survival and the individual sacrifices necessary to maintain the integrity of the country and its values. These sacrifices included a steeply progressive income tax rate as the collective took precedence over the individual.

Chapter 4 describes the relatively stagnant period of the 1950s as the Red Scare and national security overrode income tax reform. The election of John F. Kennedy in 1960 represented an infusion of youthful vitality in the vision of the American Dream, and his arguments for income tax reform emphasized the importance of the innovative individual in the construction of the country. Ronald Reagan accelerated the individualizing *pathos* of the Kennedy era and associated income taxes with the tyranny that began the American Revolution.

Reagan presented himself as a rugged individualist who prevailed over his social conditions and pushed income tax policies seeking to remove government from interfering with the exercise of virtuous individualism. Ronald Reagan declared the largest tax cut in U.S. history represented “a second American revolution for hope and opportunity.”⁶³² This revolution in feelings about the American Dream, with a focus on the acquisition of material wealth and the unnecessary role of government involvement, would hold sway until 2008.

Chapter 5 traces the endurance and eventual movement away from the feelings Reagan crafted. Moving from George H.W. Bush’s “No New Taxes Pledge” to Bill Clinton’s “New Covenant” reveals an attempt by Clinton to rearticulate the value of government in securing a place for the middle class. George W. Bush consolidates the middle class focus, but infuses that focus with Reagan’s individualism through the passage of a large income tax reduction. 9/11 reconfigured the emotional landscape in the U.S. around nationalism and the defense of free market idealism, sustaining Reagan’s legacy throughout the Bush years. The election of Barack Obama in 2008 came during an economic recession, representing a hopeful change for many. Barack Obama resuscitates the democratic individualism of Teddy Roosevelt in a 2011 speech, and in his 2012 State of the Union Address strongly argues for a feeling of collective responsibility. These efforts by Obama to craft a collectivizing *pathos* provide the emotional groundwork for the deployment of a unified vision of the “American Dream” in the 2013 campaign for “A Better Bargain for the Middle Class.”

Chapter 6 discusses the theoretical contribution of the project, the *patheme*. Working to build a theory of a specific emotion-laden discursive object, this chapter moves through theories of emotion and metaphor before applying the concept to the case study. Theories of emotions as a process of synchronized physiological changes in response to a stimuli are combined with a

⁶³² Reagan, Ronald. "Address to the Nation on Tax Reform." 1985.

view of the social transmission of affective states. This synthesis is used to describe how a word could percolate through a social system to produce a systemic change. Psychodynamic theories of metaphor provide a view of the linguistic operation of the *patheme* as it moves through language and provides a non-cognitive, instantaneous response. This provides an account of the three criteria for identifying a *patheme*: 1) It evokes a strong emotional response, 2) It transmits a culturally or community relevant affect, 3) It mediates conflicting argumentative approaches. This theory of the *patheme* is then applied to Obama's deployment of the "American Dream" in 2013. His usage provides a strong emotional response through hope for the future, pride in achievement, or fear that it is slipping away. It also transmits a culturally relevant affect by circulating feelings regarding upward mobility and the importance of the middle class. Lastly, it mediates conflicting argumentative approaches by unifying the materialist and moralist understandings of the American Dream.

This concluding chapter has assessed the theory of the *patheme* using five criteria related to its explanatory power, advancement, practicality, applicability, and future impact. Overall, the *patheme* meets many of the metrics for a good theory. The *patheme* has good explanatory power, especially when a historical and contextual approach is used in developing a case for one's existence. The theoretical advancement of the concept lies primarily in the capacity to supplement *pathos* studies and deepen linkages with studies of deliberative rhetoric. Practical uses for the *patheme* could include their use in post-conflict areas, but require a rich understanding of the background emotional investments or they could go awry. Applying the research program that has been undertaken in this project could produce new and interesting results, as future studies might uncover *pathemes* in the case studies presented or find new examples in a wide range of rhetorical endeavors.

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