

Ideology and Argument: Mitt Romney and the GOP in the 2012 Election

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Abstract

This paper examines four rhetorical events during the 2012 presidential election to examine how ideology and argument are informed by one another in discussions of policy during campaigns. Using the first two Republican primary debates as well as the party platform and the nomination acceptance speech by Romney, this study offers a descriptive analysis and ideological study of the arguments made in 2012 by Mitt Romney during his campaign for President. The study argues that ideological constraints prevented Mitt Romney from adequately developing substantive or flexible policy arguments during the course of the election. The study also offers a way of examining ideology from the arguments provided by candidates and party officials. This study examines the way in which taxation, government, and constitution operate to organize arguments around the relevant ideological markers. Using the Affordable Care Act as an example of these processes, this thesis will provide an explanation for the failure of purity demands and ideological argument in the context of a moderate and independent electorate.

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I: Introduction

On November 6, 2012 the presidential election concluded and Barack Obama won by a comfortable electoral margin. Pundits credit the failure of the Romney campaign to a variety of factors: strategy, money, micro-campaigning, turnout, demographics, handouts, personal appeal, Hurricane Sandy, “hurricane” Chris Christie, and so on. Each side spent upwards of a billion dollars in their quest for the white house, and over half was spent on message conveyance (The Center for Responsive Politics, 2012; Gara, 2012). Over one million ads were aired by either side, breaking previous records by over 30 percent (Baum, 2012). After two years, six billion dollars, nine republican candidates, one million ads, and millions of votes, neither chamber of congress nor the presidency changed hands (Confessore & Bidgood, 2012). The recent release of the 2013 “Growth and Opportunity Project” report, commissioned by RNC chair Reince Priebus, reveals the internal assessment of the Republican Party’s viability in the near term, and seeks to explain the failures of the 2012 election (Republican National Committee, 2013). The report most heavily lays blame for 2012 on the party’s calls for ideological purity during the electoral process, driven in part by the Tea Party, and in part by the media. The report states in the first section, entitled ‘Messaging’: “The GOP today is a tale of two parties. One of them, the gubernatorial wing, is growing and successful. The other, the federal wing, is increasingly marginalizing itself, and unless changes are made, it will be increasingly difficult for Republicans to win another presidential election in the near future” (2013). One could just as easily parse another divide within the party between the ideological apparatus and the elected officials who implement and defend the policies suggested by the mouthpieces and ideologues within the GOP.

Following sweeping electoral victories in 2010 at the local, state, and federal level, the elected officials of the GOP pursued sweeping redistricting plans, new restrictions on reproductive rights in many states, and ended collective bargaining for many unions in the rust belt. On the one hand, the “growing and successful” wing of the Republican Party succeeded mainly due to filibuster-proof super-majorities at the state and local level acquired during the 2010 midterm elections. The “federal wing,” on the other hand, failed at implementing the same policies in congress. Standing astride this schism within the party is the figure of Mitt Romney. Once a governor, now a candidate for president; Mitt Romney’s candidacy and the arguments he made during the course of his campaign reveal tensions between competing ideological frames within the party.

This study argues that Mitt Romney’s argumentative strategy relied too much on tautological ideological referents and that this reliance created constraints on his argumentative choices. Policy prescriptions were poorly constructed to reach moderate and attentive audiences, and his attempt to reach these audiences was subverted by the ideological hold within the base of the party. The study examines the rhetorical problem that arises in the midst of this clash of ideals: first, by examining how Mitt Romney rhetorically responded to the ideological constraints, perceived or real, generated from the tension between factions of the Republican Party and second, by evaluating how the rhetorical constraints of ideology helped shape argumentative choices by Romney. This analysis will show how candidate choices provide ideological limits, constrains the content of arguments, and as a part of that process, how a type of ideological spillover occurs when the argument is insufficient to contain its ideological content.

Literature Review

While political campaigns have been studied extensively limited attention has been focused on the way in which argumentation strategies within campaigns evolve over the trajectory of a political campaign and the factors that help shape the evolution of candidates' political arguments over the course of a campaign. While political debates and conventions have been studied extensively there has been less attention focused on the early stages of a campaign when a candidates political arguments are formed and crystalized. Platforms have not traditionally been a particular focus of rhetorical criticism but the ideological components of the platform provide this study with a carefully and intentionally crafted rhetorical product in the space between early campaign arguments and national campaign strategies. The candidate acceptance speech marks an outward turn in the presidential campaign and thus offers a moment to examine the pivot from a mostly like-minded and conciliatory audience to a national stage and an ideologically diverse audience set. The negotiation between one and the other can help to illuminate ideological holdovers from early stages in the campaign process and provide insight to how ideology can function to transform, constrain, or reveal arguments for a candidate.

Primary Debates

Primary debates have several important functions related to the general election campaign, many of which are directly attributable to the types of arguments made by the candidate. As a fixture of our electoral system, primary debates occur first and are more numerous (usually) than general election debates, thus they provide more important information for voters, and have greater potential for influencing voter choice (Benoit & Stephenson, 2004; Trent & Friedenber, 2008). Primary debates deserve critical attention because of their potential to educate, influence, and eventually persuade voters in each party (Benoit, McKinney, &

Stephenson, 2002). Trent and Friedenbergr outline several factors of the primary process that contribute to these persuasion and impression formation functions (2008). Charges against the potential nominee can be used in the general election to attack them. Primary debates generate feedback on message salience for the candidate, and allow potential rhetorical strategies for shaping and altering discourses for the general election. The influence of voters upon the candidates is at its highest level during the primary campaign, and thus offers the most participatory potential of any phase of the electoral process. The primary allows candidates to orient themselves more personally toward voters through a smaller audience, and more potential for face-time with the candidates. Finally, Trent and Friedenbergr argue that it is the communication functions of the primary process that determines the true front-runners in the campaign by engaging the voters in a reflexive process of message formation.

Davis highlights several elements of candidate debates that make them the most important communicative practice of the primary season (1997). Time limitations on responses and the large number of candidates in the field increase the need for short, direct messages that can influence voters. They have more impact on out-of-office policy formation due to less formulated and more volatile voter attitudes prior to the campaign. The debates help unknown and out-of-office candidates gain recognition and form better impressions through national exposure unavailable during normal campaign activities. Lastly, the debates offer multiple opportunities for the eventual nominee to refine their debating skills for the nationally televised debates during the general election in the fall. Primary debates have historically been underutilized as a mechanism for understanding campaign rhetoric, and offer a more genuine and unfiltered view of the candidate than scripted messages (Benoit, et al., 2002).

Benoit, Henson, and Sudbrock examined the 2008 primary debates through a functional approach, and their insights into types of discourses are particularly salient when considering the latest round of Republican primaries (2011). They found that Republicans were more prone to attack members of their own party than attack the Democrats, that acclaim was used primarily to refine goals and ideals of each candidate, and that those acclaim statements related more to ideology within the party than with Democratic ideology (Benoit & Hansen, 2004). Benoit et al. found that attacks were most often directed at primary frontrunners, except when the frontrunner attacked, and then the attack was directed toward the opposition party (Benoit, et al., 2002). When attacked, frontrunners who made defensive statements risked acknowledging the attack, getting “off message,” and appearing defensive. Instead message change could be desirable for candidates facing shifting rhetorical conditions, with the understanding that an electorate desiring consistency could be dissuaded from changing their mind in line with the changing message (Benoit, et al., 2011). In 2008 Romney frequently varied his messages relating to Republican party issues, even when primary debates (which can be a source of great message variance) were excluded from the analysis (Benoit, et al., 2011). The multitude of candidates and messages can create problems for candidates who want to win, but because primary contests are constantly in flux, message changes are often necessary and usually expected (Benoit, et al., 2002).

Primary debates function to form impressions about the candidates, generate policy knowledge about the candidate and in general, and can persuade the viewer to change their vote if sufficiently convinced. Benoit et al. argue that these debates are qualitatively better sources of information for voters than campaign messages, and can provide crucial decisionmaking rationales for the electorate (2002). Candidates who spend more time talking about policy have a distinct advantage over the other competitors, voters looking to be persuaded listen more to

issues than character arguments when deciding who to choose (Benoit, 2003). Viewers form first impressions of unknown candidates and are open to changing their opinion based on performance in the primary debates (Benoit, 2003; Benoit & Hansen, 2004). Benoit and Hansen also note that viability and electability perceptions increase for all participants, barring any major mistakes during the contest. Viewers of primary debates both increase their knowledge of the candidates' policy positions and about policy in general following the debates (Benoit, McKinney, & Stephenson, 2002). The debates can increase preferences on particular issues, associate candidates more favorably with those issues, and raise the importance of those issues with viewers (Benoit & Stephenson, 2004). Significant changes in voter preference occur following the primary debates, and those preferences elicit a higher level of confidence from the viewers than before viewing the debates (Benoit, McKinney, & Stephenson, 2002; Benoit & Stephenson, 2004). Primary debates, most importantly, perform an agenda-setting function for the candidate, allowing the candidate to create issue salience with the audience, and then respond to feedback during the primary season, refining and developing better methods for persuading and informing voters as the process develops (Benoit & Stephenson, 2004).

Nominating Conventions

National nominating conventions have several important functions and purposes in shaping the rhetorical discourses for the general campaign for president. Conventions are culturally bound, ritualistic, products of delicate organizational balances, and representational expressions of the party. Conventions are ideal sites for locating and examining political campaign communication, their reliance upon competing rhetorical visions of the national identity and their ability to activate latent political affiliations place them at the intersection of political messages and audience persuasion (Stuckey, 2005; Davis, 1983; Smith & Nimmo,

1991). Nominating conventions substantially increase the amount of political information provided to the media for public consumption and generate comparatively greater political information for the public than any other phase of the campaign. Although fewer voters are making up their minds after the conventions historically, they still have a greater impact on the persuadable audience than the general election debates since it occurs early in the impression formation phase of the election (Davis, 1983; Panagopolous, 2007a; Panagopoulos, 2007b). The attention on the convention does not have to be divided between the two parties, or the multiple factions within the candidate's party, rather, there is an absolute focus on the candidate and the platform.

Even though changes in the context and media control have transformed the assemblies into mere ratifying processes for the nominee, many functions and purposes can still be attributed to the nominating convention. Most importantly, the convention functions to officially nominate the party's candidate for president. Conventions legitimate and reaffirm the electoral process by reenacting the delegate selection of the nominee. Through the legitimation and nomination phases, the convention boosts the credibility of the nominee and the party. Conventions, through their rallying function, provide a public display of party unity. The convention is more than just a way of introducing a candidate, but also re-introduces the party to the nation through a direct and unmediated view of the issues and themes of the candidate and the party. Critical to this function are the ratification of the party platform and the operation of the convention committee as the governing body of the party. Davis also notes a few minor functions of the nominating convention, a broker of last resort, a representation of the minority interests within the party and the legitimation of a non-consensus candidate. Conventions can confirm existing party loyalties, re-examine loyalties to the party, create fresh loyalties, and

attempt to shift and replace old attachments with new attachments. Conventions also provide the opportunity to give tangible meaning to the roles that parties play in organizing public preference by allowing interests within the party to communicate and formulate policy through the party platform (Trent & Friedenber, 2008; Davis, 1983; Smith & Nimmo, 1991; Shafer, 1988; Fine, 2007). Some critics argue that conventions are mere political ritual and that this diminishes their functional purpose for political rhetoric; however the ritualization functions indicate larger rhetorical frames into which the convention casts its televised performance for the wider electorate and still provides fertile ground for observing the processes of political rhetoric (Nordvold, 1970; Farrell, 1978; Pomper, 2007).

On the first couple days of the convention interest groups, party delegates, and the campaign staff of the nominee negotiate the party platform for the campaign season. Because the presumptive nominee must rely on congress to enact the platform's policies once elected, the parties face tension between the interests of campaigning and governing when drafting the platforms. Two viewpoints on the party platform indicate the tensions inherent in drafting the document. First, the rise of interest groups has shaped the ideological bent of the party platform. As the general public becomes less ideological, the party's delegates move more and more to the extreme ends of the spectrum, leading to the conflict between appealing moderate elements of the electorate and the ideological loyalists of the party base (Shafer, 1988; Pomper, 2007). Secondly, even though the platforms communicate the goals of the party, and have in the past been dominated by interest groups, they are more and more representative of the candidate's policy positions. Even though conflicts between interest groups and the party can lead to divisiveness, platforms tend to unify the party and provide an ideological compass for the down-ticket candidates. Critics might argue that platforms only represent rhetorical bombast, but three-

quarters of the policy platforms are actual policy statements, and a large majority of the platform content is adopted politically or symbolically after an electoral victory. Party platforms, then, establish the framework for nominee as presidential candidate, who is expected by the base to represent the party ideology in its purest form upon his nomination and electoral victory (Dearin, 1997; Parris, 1972; Fine, 2007; Davis, 1983).

Historically, nomination acceptance speeches represented the culmination of a long, drawn-out battle between delegates and party interests over their nominees for president. Since the reformation of convention nominating procedures and the primary process in the 1960's and 70's, alongside advances in television and internet technology, the acceptance speech has focused more and more on differentiated and mediated public audiences. The acceptance speech, as a discursive creation, has a larger effect size on voter preference than do the campaign advertisements, messages, press releases, or primary and general election debates. As nominating conventions changed from an instrumental function to a symbolic one, the advantages and barriers inherent in the context of the acceptance speech also changed during that time. The editorial and production discretion of network executives provides a barrier to the candidate by forcing the organizational structure to meet the demands of the television audience (Valley, 1974; Davis, 1983; Parris, 1972; Benoit, 2003; Trent & Friedenber, 2008).

Acceptance speeches have several purposes and strategies, all designed to present the candidate as presidential contender for the first time to the national electorate. The nominee must assume the leadership role of the party, they must generate a strong positive response from the convention audience in the hall, they must unify the party in anticipation of the campaign launch, and they must deliver a strong persuasive message to the public about the type of president the newly nominated candidate would be. The acceptance speech, as single most important speech of

a presidential campaign, can take several approaches to meet the functional and symbolic purposes of the candidate and party. Acceptance speeches tend to be more positive than negative, tend to highlight the philosophy and policy plans of the candidate, and tend to be suffused with a coherent theme. Historically, they have taken the structure of political jeremiad or enacted a personal vision for the future of America. They also include personal narrative, anecdote, historical reference, and make use of extended rhetorical schemes throughout. The speech frequently includes simplified partisan statements, laments about the present and celebrations of the future, statements about the crucial nature of the present election, statements seeking support from the whole constituency, and biographical arguments used to acclaim the candidate and attack the opponent. Pomper argues that the speech is a ritualized claim to the authority of the party and its ideology (Dearin, 1997; Ritter, 1980; Ritter, 1996; Sheckels, 2009; Trent & Friedenber, 2008; Medhurst, 2010; Pomper, 2007).

Acceptance speeches tend to be more praise than blame, more policy focused than character driven, and Republican challengers tend to attack more than their Democratic or incumbent counterparts (Benoit, 1999). Many individual acceptance speeches have been analyzed, but the first real rhetorical analysis examined the 1968 speeches from Hubert Humphrey and Richard Nixon. In Chicago, Humphrey failed to take a coherent, clearly outlined policy stance, and failed to use data to back up what policy claims he did espouse (Nordvold, 1970). In response, Nixon used structure and style to overcome these deficiencies in his own speech from that year, and overcame the constraints of a difficult war and turbulent domestic situation (Cline, 1975). Nixon took salient issues and rather than narrowing the focus to small distinctions, widened the contextual framework to avoid divisive statements or alienating policy proclamations (Smith C. R., 1971). Reagan was able to bridge the gap between vague

pronouncements and detailed policy argument to please both party loyalists and television audiences (Scheele, 1984). Clinton turned Dole's metaphors against him, proclaiming a "bridge to the future" in 1996 and contrasted the conservatism of the Dole/Kemp ticket to much rhetorical effect (Benoit, 2001). In 2008, Barack Obama responded more to the economic and political exigencies by heightening his attacks, rather than adhering to the generic expectations of the speech and limiting his rhetorical aggressiveness (Sheckels, 2009). Each candidate must respond to the moment and the challenger, and the best convention acceptance speeches balance the generic, strategic, and contextual elements facing the nominee at his national introduction. Speeches that fail to balance these elements either damage the candidate's chances or become irrelevant in lieu of more significant events. Given the varied sources and strategies available, the rhetorical choices made by the candidate reveal contextual factors (perceived or real) which shape the completed speech as heard by the television and convention hall audiences.

Dual Audiences and Mediated Discourses

The dual constraints of ideological and electoral audiences persist in the modern era as the most consistently constraining factor confronted by every presidential nominee. Candidates for presidency must both gain the support of the ideological audiences in anticipation of the upcoming campaign season and the electoral audiences in hope of victory in November. The rise of the dual audience constraint directly follows the shift away from radio toward television and the decline of party influence on the candidate and platform (Dearin, 1997; Pomper, 2007; Cline, 1975; Sheckels, 2009). Smith shows how Nixon negotiated between party leadership and party faithful with arguments for the former and exhortations for the latter, as well as balanced between a more conservative immediate audience and a less conservative home viewership with content choices designed for maximum appeal (1971). Scheele argues that Reagan appealed to

loyalists and viewers to much success in his 1980 acceptance speech and Benoit gives evidence that Clinton took advantage of a poorly chosen metaphor by Bob Dole to appeal to “swing” voters in 1996 (1984; 2001). Candidates can modify and shape the strategies designed to appeal to homogenous audiences to create multiple effects, and by doing so, appeal to more than just ideologues or moderates. Delegates are provided the firsthand opportunity to evaluate the performance of the candidate, but audiences at home must content themselves with the coverage provided by networks, cable news companies, or internet news sites.

In response to changing media conditions, conventions have transformed from bawdy, raucous, smoke-filled heavyweight bouts of party political muscle into a political spectacle broadcast to tens of millions of homes through the internet and television networks (Panagopoulos, 2007c). The conventions themselves adapted accordingly, exhibiting increased control from party operatives, while simultaneously losing much content previously considered “newsworthy” (Panagopoulos, 2007c; Cornfield, 2007; Morris & Francia, 2007; Pomper, 2007). The transition from deliberative body to ratification spectacle has correlated almost directly with the transition from the radio to the television to cable news and the internet. Televised conventions led to changes in the pacing, length, and tone of the speeches and convention order of business, including the candidate’s acceptance speech (Shafer, 1988). Shorter keynote and nominating speeches followed in the wake of streamlined conventions, and secondary speeches were altogether forgotten by the networks in the transition to the one hour per night broadcast (Panagopoulos, 2007c). The total effect has been a shift in control over the convention messaging from the parties themselves to the media industry (Morris & Francia, 2007).

For acceptance speeches in particular, newspapers tend to report on the policies outlined by nominees, not their speeches – even though their reporting on the focus, purpose, and tone of

the speech tends to be accurate more often than not (Benoit, Stein, & Hansen, 2001). As a result, newspaper reporting covers only about 14% of the content of acceptance speeches (Benoit, Stein, & Hansen, 2001). Inversely correlated to the time spent covering the conventions, cable coverage contains little to no content from the live convention proceedings itself, while network coverage (despite its significantly reduced airtime) is overwhelmingly made up of content from the live convention (Morris & Francia, 2007). A vicious cycle manufactured messaging has emerged: as television encouraged more and more efficient message control, parties have streamlined the order of the conventions; in response cable news channels increased their effort to control the coverage, leading to more party attempts at message control, and reducing the rhetorical content of the convention to a mere “infomercials” (Morris & Francia, 2007). Despite the pessimism inherent in this outlook, a recent surge in internet access increased the means of information conveyance for the parties, and potentially created sources for instantaneous political action in response to the convention through internet activism (Cornfield, 2007). Nominees must continuously struggle against this backdrop of interference to articulate their political vision, and the mediated environment makes audience constraints ever more important in the contemporary political climate.

Rationale

Communication studies covering presidential primary discourse tends towards the statistical and quantitative (Benoit & Hansen, 2004; Benoit & Stephenson, 2004; Benoit, et al., 2011; Benoit, Henson, & Sudbrock, 2011; Benoit, McKinney, & Stephenson, 2002; Benoit, et al., 2002), but fails to examine policy arguments and rhetorical strategy at the level of the debate itself. Dominated by functional analysis, this area of presidential and campaign rhetoric begs for more critical treatment by rhetorical scholars. Current work on primary debates is focused on the

functional analysis work done by Benoit and others. The research does provide much insight into audience response to debates, the forms of statements made in debates, and the appearance or disappearance of certain argumentative trajectories in a campaign. The current research points to a significant impact of primary debates on other stages in the campaign, but does not provide insight into how ideological demands can shape that impact by limiting argumentative choice. Functional analysis can suggest strategies for future situations but fails to provide a rhetorical reason as to why those particular strategies operate in the context of the ideological struggle at the heart of presidential primaries.

Early message formation in primary debates provides a rich area for discovering the formative stages of the party platform. Candidates in primaries are representative of internal party interests, vying for influence over voter opinion among party loyalists. Interest groups and voters examine candidate performances in primaries to determine the extent of their loyalties or their ideological distance from the agenda of the group. In order for the public to engage parties and interest groups in a meaningful and substantive way, policy formation criticism must take a central role in informing the public about the different modes of political ideologies. Every campaign cycle finds groups and partisans in a tug-of-war for the rights to make policy pronouncements for the entire party. Since the heart of our liberal democratic tradition is citizen engagement and civic responsibility, campaign rhetoric, and the policies it is influenced by should be open and accessible to public deliberation. Individual opportunities to engage public officials about the makeup of the party ideology are few, and rhetorical scholars play a key role in shaping both academic and public discussion about policymaking.

Decreasing trust underlies much of the civic crisis that our democratic institutions face today, yet the public reports satisfaction with the politicized and increasingly partisan

information they do receive (Pew Research Center, 2012a; Pew Research Center, 2012b). Even if discursive gaps between political rhetoric and public interest cannot be bridged by rhetorical criticism alone, it remains a crucial starting point for understanding the ways in which political ideologies are deployed by candidates. Tracing policy formation trajectories from the earliest stages of a candidacy to the start of the national campaign provides a fuller picture of the ways that preliminary choices by candidates shape future rhetorical choices. There remain significant barriers to public knowledge about the origins and intentions of campaign rhetoric; however, a sustained investigation into the formative stages of a candidate's political arguments can provide insight into the framework which drives decisions later in the process. Nomination acceptance speeches already have well established standing in the traditional rhetorical criticism literature, yet very few scholars examine the choices and policy arguments that culminated in those moments on the final night of the political convention. Perhaps with a wider view of the candidate's initial arguments, refined against the choices of their own political coterie can help illuminate more practical understandings of campaign rhetoric than have existed previously in the discipline.

Method and Theory

This project undertakes an inductive or emic method to uncover policy arguments and ideological markers within several moments of the campaign. Admittedly, the selection of artifacts derives from a deductive assumption about the importance of these particular electoral events (debate, platform, speech), but this project hopes to expand and enrich some of the theoretical understanding that informs this particular selection of discourses. Approaching each of the elements inductively allows this project to let each moment speak from the instance of its own discursive formation, rather than determining the policy-rhetoric connection beforehand. A

true inductive approach to this project would involve much more extensive examination into any and all rhetorical artifacts related to Mitt Romney and his relationship to the Republican Party and ideology, a scope far too broad for this particular examination. Instead, this study relies on the relevant literature which suggests that each of these moments offers a unique opportunity to examine political rhetoric and its effects on the public and then proceed inductively from each of those points outward to make connections with larger rhetorical practices.

The project utilizes two theoretical concepts to examine the relationship between argument and ideology in the 2012 presidential election. First, drawing from the work of Kenneth Burke, this project develops a framework for examining the ideological stance from which Mitt Romney articulates his policies (Burke, 1966). A particular concept (health care) is *selected* early by Romney, a concept which *reflects* ideological arguments present within the larger body of Republican ideology, and *deflects* complaints about Romney's own ideological inconsistencies. Three loci function to connect Romney's arguments to the heart of Republican ideology: taxation, government, and constitution. Particularly:

During a national election, the situation places great stress upon a *division* between the citizens. But often such divisiveness (or discontinuity) can be healed when the warring factions join in a common cause against an alien enemy (the division elsewhere thus serving to reestablish the principle of continuity at home). It should be apparent how either situation sets up the conditions for its particular kind of scapegoat, as a device that unifies all those who share the same enemy. (Burke, 1966, p. 51).

Burke attempts to provide ground for ideological critics to stand on with two articulations of the process through which ideal rhetorical concepts are constructed: "'idealization' ends on two weighty words ... 'synecdoche,' is used in the sense of 'part for the whole' ... 'tautology,' ...

insofar as an entire structure is infused by a single generating principle, this principle will be tautologically or repetitively implicit in all the parts” (Burke, 1966, p. 55).

This project examines how The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (hereafter Affordable Care Act or ACA) functions as both a ‘synecdoche’ and a ‘tautology’ for Republican ideology in the areas of taxation, government, and constitution. More particularly, it will examine the ways that Mitt Romney deploys the construct of the Affordable Care Act as a synecdoche for ideological markers within the audience about taxation, government and constitution. In the opposite direction, this project also analyzes the tautological relationship between the ideological markers of the Republican Party and the argumentative choices allowed to the candidates within the party.

Burke argues that there are two types of terms, those that homogenize and those that establish difference (Burke, 1966, p. 49). The binary typology established by this division, however, seems ill suited to deal with the possible range of argument forms and ideological contents. More specifically, certain conceptual linkages flow both directions during this project; at certain times argument informs us about ideological structure, and at others, ideological concepts reveal the political implications of certain arguments. Some arguments perform a double function of both unifying and dividing and some ideological concepts demand that arguments perform one role in one context and the opposite role in another. Finally, a type of ideological excess presents itself wherein difference or similitude are extended beyond the argument itself through a series of enthymematic utterances, and become elements within the prevailing ideological framework. In order to deal with this complex interrelation between argument and ideology, a second theoretical concept is needed to analyze the fluid dynamic that operates to inform both.

Conceding that ideological criticism frequently suffers from a directional bias either in favor or against the particular object of study, this project will attempt to ground the analysis in both theories outlined above. The Burkean concepts of terministic screening, scapegoating, synecdoche and tautology are observed in the descriptive analysis phase of the project and thus provide explanations for the policy formation around certain ideological loci. The study will thus provide a synchronic analysis of the Affordable Care Act, dubbed “Obamacare,” in relation to the presidential election process and the formation of Republican ideological arguments within the midst of a party divide. The particular time and candidate allow this analysis to focus on the particularized operations of a tautological ideological stance in relation to fundamental synecdochal relationships made in early argument formation.

The main analysis of the study will be organized into four chapters. Chapter two will offer a descriptive analysis of Romney’s arguments in two early primary debates for clues as to the future direction of the policy arguments. It examines the primary debates held in Iowa (Ames) and in New Hampshire (Goffstown). The two debates at the start of the primary season offer a unique glimpse into why Romney was able to overcome challenges by Gingrich and Santorum, and features many of the policy arguments directly related to the formation of the party platform. Iowa and New Hampshire provide presidential aspirants with an electoral reflection of their rhetorical success or failure and have several advantages as a rhetorical artifact for examination. First, the debates are held in close proximity to the primary election, allowing the critic to examine the locus between base persuasion and policy rhetoric. Second, the debates focus primarily on issues directly related to those local electorates and are in many ways shaped to project local concerns to a national audience. Finally, the Iowa and New Hampshire primary debates determine the capacity for challengers to unseat the favorite, and how competing policy

arguments delimit and refine the eventual victor's policy rhetoric. For each of the debates, I examined the transcripts and watched the video coverage of the debate to locate particular policy positions outlined by the Romney campaign in an effort to establish an ideological framework from which to judge his later rhetorical choices at the convention.

Chapter three examines two rhetorical artifacts from the Republican nominating Convention. This chapter offers a descriptive evaluation of the rhetoric of the 2012 Republican Convention in order to articulate the rhetorical demands placed upon the Romney campaign by the platform promises made in 2012. This chapter examines how ideology contributed to a radical policy stance and what constraints placed on the candidate can be gleaned from this particular rhetorical artifact of the campaign. This Chapter will also analyze the acceptance speech delivered by Mitt Romney in relation to the rhetorical constraints and strategies developed throughout the campaign. The study will examine the perceived and real constraints of the speech within each ideological field, and determine the extent to which Romney shifted the tone of his rhetoric to appeal to moderates. It will also examine the strategies used to appeal to base voters, and the function of those strategies vis-à-vis the policy arguments and moderate appeals made during the speech. By examining the arguments within Romney's policy rhetoric, the study hopes to uncover a strategy of identification with base, moderate, and independent voters that can direct critics toward an explanation for the rhetorical failure of the Romney campaign. The study examines the policy-rhetoric-strategy function at a couple levels: that of ideology, as it articulates itself from within the party platform and at the level of policy as it is articulated by both Romney and the party platform. Functioning at both the level of ideological relation to the electorate and the candidate-policy relation to the electorate, the announcement

speech exposes countervailing rhetorical forces that are present together at no other time during the election cycle so clearly and displayed before the public so widely.

Chapter four will synthesize the descriptive evaluation of the rhetoric into an examination of the way in which the relationship between ideology and policy arguments is manifest in critical issues in the campaign. The chapter will trace the relationship between ideology and policy across three broad themes that emerge from the rhetoric: taxation, the role of government and the appeal to the constitution. Chapter five will summarize the study's conclusions on the relationship between ideology and policy rhetoric and will discuss the way this relationship manifests itself in the republican rhetoric of "obamacare."

II. The Primary Debates

Primary debates have several important functions related to the general election campaign, many of which are directly attributable to the types of arguments made by the candidate. The following chapter will describe the arguments made by Mitt Romney during his first two primary debate appearances. The first, in Goffstown, New Hampshire, and the second, in Ames, Iowa, both exhibit a wide range of arguments from the campaign's early period, but also show the early development of Romney's primary rhetoric in response to the debt ceiling crisis over the summer of 2011. The chapter will identify different patterns, themes, and forms of arguments developed across both of the primary appearances to suggest contributions to later campaign arguments.

The Goffstown, New Hampshire Debate at St. Anselm

The Goffstown debate, held at Saint Anselm College on June 13, 2011 marked the first primary appearance for Mitt Romney in the 2012 election cycle. As such, it provides the first opportunity to examine Romney's arguments in the context of his competition from within the Republican Party. Entering the debate, Romney held a double digit lead over his nearest rivals in almost every poll conducted prior to his appearance in Goffstown (NBC News/Wall Street Journal, 2011; Public Policy Polling, 2011; Jones, Romney Support Up; Widens Advantage in 2012 Preferences, 2011; Ipsos Public Affairs, 2011; CNN, 2011; ABC News/Washington Post, 2011). Romney also held a significant margin over his rivals in head-to-head polling against Barack Obama, providing him with an advantage in questions of competing against the incumbent and general electability. Knowing that he was significantly better positioned to win

the primary contests over the course of the following year, Romney only needed to hold serve against a wide ranging field of primary challengers.

The debate in Goffstown began with an introductory statement from each of the candidates. Romney started with an attempt at self-deprecating humor, “Hopefully I’ll get it right this year” he said, referring to his failed bid for the Republican nomination in 2008 (CNN, 2011). The rest of the opening statement introduces his wife and family, and utilizes his children and grand-children to articulate a future-oriented frame within which many of his arguments in this debate will be cast. His “five sons,” “five daughters-in law,” and “16 grandkids” provide the reasoning for why he wants to “make sure their future is bright” and ensure “that America is always known as the hope of the earth.”

After the opening statements, Romney is asked what policies he would enact to create jobs as President. His response alternatively attacks Obama, Pelosi, and Reid, but does not provide a specific policy proposal to create jobs. Romney says that “what this president has done has slowed down the economy. He didn’t create the recession, but he made it worse and longer.” The warrant for Romney’s claim relies on long-term employment figures, housing price weakness, and home foreclosures, but then refers to four policies “card-check, cap-and-trade, Obamacare, reregulation” which have little to no connection to the criticisms of the president. One of those policies, cap-and-trade, never passed congress, and the other three are not specifically tied to the evidence provided by Romney earlier in the response. At the end of his answer, Romney refers to his private sector experience as a reason why his policies would be successful, but never outlines the specific policies he would implement once elected.

The next question for Romney specifically asks him to differentiate between the health care reforms passed in Massachusetts while Romney was governor of the state and the

Affordable Care Act passed by the Obama administration. Romney offers five reasons why the ACA was a failure:

You know, let me say a couple things. First, if I'm elected president, I will repeal Obamacare, just as Michelle indicated. And also, on my first day in office, if I'm lucky enough to have that office, I will grant a waiver to all 50 states from Obamacare. Now, there's some similarities and there are some big differences. Obamacare spends a trillion dollars. If it were perfect -- and it's not perfect, it's terrible -- we can't afford more federal spending. Secondly, it raises \$500 billion in taxes. We didn't raise taxes in Massachusetts. Third, Obamacare takes \$500 billion out of Medicare and funds Obamacare. We, of course, didn't do that. And, finally, ours was a state plan, a state solution, and if people don't like it in our state, they can change it. That's the nature of why states are the right place for this type of responsibility. And that's why I introduced a plan to repeal Obamacare and replace it with a state-centric program.

Romney promises to repeal the reforms immediately, and barring repeal, he promises to grant a waiver to the states that excuses them from implementing the act. Romney turns from repeal and implementation to the cost of the program, describing the fiscal impact in three ways: the overall cost (one trillion dollars), the increases in taxes (500 billion dollars), and the Medicare savings switch (500 billion dollars). Finally, Romney makes a state's rights argument on the size and scope of the program. Each of these three argument types are repeated again later in the debate on other issues.

Given a chance to expand his argument, Romney relies on his own experience in implementing and administering Massachusetts health care reform to chide Obama for not consulting him before developing and passing the Affordable Care Act. "And I can't wait to

debate him and say, Mr. President, if, in fact, you did look at what we did in Massachusetts, why didn't you give me a call and ask what worked and what didn't? And I would have told you, Mr. President, that what you're doing will not work.” Despite the numerous similarities between the two policies, Romney argues that the federal version of the program fails to provide the flexibility of the state program, but the warrants for his argument relies on the same premise as the first instance, the simple fact that one is a state program, and the other is a federal program. “It’s a huge power grab by the federal government” he says next, reiterating his fundamental argument against the Affordable Care Act, the balance between federal and state authority over health care reform. Not once during this exchange in Goffstown does Mitt Romney refer to the policy as anything other than Obamacare, a trend that will be repeated in Ames later that year.

The next policy that Romney is asked to weigh in on is the Auto Bailout. During his response Romney repeats a similar formula of arguments as those he made arguing against the Affordable Care Act. First, the bailout “wasted a lot of money” which was “used unnecessarily” to deliver “a big check from Washington” allowing Obama to “put his hands on the scales of justice and give the company to the UAW.” The argument ignores history and places blame on Obama for the bailout, when the policy was authored by the Bush administration and Obama was responsible only for the implementation. The warrants of cost and federal control are once again brought to bear upon the policy, and this time the bogeyman is not the federal government but the United Auto Workers of America. The modification from the health care argument maintains the power-grab theme, but moves away from a federal power grab to a union power grab.

The second argument modifies the federal-state warrant to make an argument along the public sector/private sector axis.

There is a perception in this country that government knows better than the private sector, that Washington and President Obama have a better view for how an industry ought to be run. Well, they're wrong. The right way for America to create jobs is to -- is to keep government in its place and to allow the private sector and the -- and the energy and passion of the American people create a brighter future for our kids and for ourselves.

Once again, Romney uses his own experience, this time as private businessperson, rather than governor to make an argument from authority about his expertise on the matter. Obama's policy will fail inevitably because it begins from the wrong perspective, that of federal action. John King, the CNN moderator, asks Romney to clarify his own position, quoting from an opinion piece authored by Romney in 2008, and asks Romney if he was wrong to advocate bankruptcy for GM and Chrysler. "No, I wasn't wrong," he says "because ... If they just get paid checks after checks from the federal government, they're going to be locked in with high UAW costs, legacy costs. They'll never be able to get on their feet... That's the wrong way to go... Don't have government try and guide this economy." Romney's argument relies primarily on the division between public and private economic policies, creating a core warrant Romney relies on again and again to oppose policy positions of the Obama administration.

Romney's next response deals with the role of federal government assistance when natural disasters strike. Given the opportunity to articulate a nuanced position on the role of the Federal Emergency Management Administration, Romney outlines his general philosophy towards the federal government, providing the primary debate audience with a formula for determining the value of federal programs. Romney says that "Every time you have an occasion to take something from the federal government and send it back to the states, that's the right direction. And if you can go even further and send it back to the private sector, that's even

better.” The litmus test for a successful government program does not rely on the program’s aims, achievements, or performance but rather is a categorical denial of the usefulness of the federal government in implementing programs.

The next part of Romney’s answer articulates another way to determine the worth of federal programs, and inverts the traditional logic of federal budget decisionmaking. He says “Instead of thinking in the federal budget, what we should cut -- we should ask ourselves the opposite question. What should we keep? We should take all of what we're doing at the federal level and say, what are the things we're doing that we don't have to do?” When challenged by John King on the particular question of disaster relief, Romney reverts to a value-based warrant for his position and places disaster-stricken communities in opposition to the “future for our kids.” Arguing for the relief of current Americans at the expense of future ones, Romney argues that status quo policy of federal aid “makes no sense at all.” Arguing that debt is more damaging than natural disasters places Romney directly in opposition to decades of federal support for local communities in times of crisis, and denies the ability for communities to receive that assistance at the expense of future generations. Rather than articulating a more complex position, Romney resorts to an either/or, zero-sum argument about the value of disaster relief efforts.

Romney deals with the question of the debt ceiling limit in his next answer. First, he challenges the leadership of the president on deficit spending. He argues that congress will not raise the debt ceiling unless Obama shows his willingness to cut government spending. Again, we are taken back to the topic of spending in Washington, “the number one issue that relates to that debt ceiling is whether the government is going to keep on spending money they don't have.” Romney argues for cuts in entitlement programs, but only refers to a “whole series of ideas” about how to reduce entitlement spending without specifying which of the ideas from

“these people up here” (the other presidential contenders) he would support. Romney asks the rhetorical questions “Where are the president’s ideas?” and “But why isn’t the president leading?” The implied answer to the first is that Obama has no ideas to rein in spending, and to the second that Obama does not know how to. Romney suggests that cuts can be tried “in different states and different programs at the federal level” harkening back to his earlier responses on the topics of health care and the auto bailout. After five paragraphs of responses to the debt ceiling question, Romney did not answer the original question of his position on raising the debt ceiling.

Romney is pressed again by the moderators, “Governor, what happens if you don’t raise it? What happens then? Is it OK not to?” Romney changes the topic back to government spending, and then betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of the concept of the debt limit. His response that, “at some point, you hit a wall. At some point, people around the world say, ‘I’m not going to keep loaning money to America to pay these massive deficits pay for them because America can’t pay them back and the dollar is not worth anything anymore’” treats the debt ceiling as if it were a credit card or bank loan limit. The debt, however includes interest held by the United States government more than any other amount of actual money loaned from other nations, and while a default on the debt would indeed empty out confidence in the American dollar, our debt payments do not go to other nations, but mostly to our own accounting books to pay back interest on money already spent in previous years. These payments include “the spending in the budget bills it has already passed, the Social Security checks promised to retirees, the payments due to private companies with federal contracts and the interest on bonds it has sold” (Cooper & Story , 2011). Refusing to raise the debt ceiling will not actually decrease the deficit or get out of existing payment obligations but merely “make it impossible to borrow

the money that the government needs to pay for them.” Finally, Romney concludes his argument by tying the entire debate back to the Affordable Care Act and says “We really can’t afford another trillion dollars of Obamacare” (CNN, 2011).

At this point, Romney responds to a series of questions with short answers for the rest of the debate. Romney argues that in the debate on the separation of church and state, “Our nation was founded on a principal of religious tolerance. That’s in fact why some of the early patriots came to this country and we treat people with respect regardless of their religious persuasion.” Given the problems Romney faces among his own base in regards to his Mormon faith, the constraints on Romney’s response dictate this as his only possible answer that both deals with the question of his own religion while maintaining a stance that satisfies the audience. On the question of a federal definition of marriage, Romney strays from the typical state’s rights position on every other issue to state his support for a constitutional amendment defining marriage as monogamous and heterosexual.

On “Don’t Ask/Don’t Tell” Romney implies without stating directly that he too would have removed the military policy only after “conflict was over.” The curiousness of this response is twofold. First, he does not specify which conflict he is speaking about. If speaking to the question of the war in Afghanistan, his position on staying there indefinitely would beg the question of its removal during a conflict he never intends to leave. Secondly, if speaking about the conflict ongoing in the War on Terror, this too provides an open-ended timeline for removing the policy. The non-specificity of the response provides Romney with the flexibility, should he become president, of denying his intentions of ever removing the policy, and then keeping the doctrine in place.

Romney is next given the opportunity to clarify his previous positions on abortion, resolving the contradiction between his pro-choice stance as a governor and his pro-life stance as a presidential candidate. Resolving the contradictory stances requires him to deal with the constraints of an increasingly liberal electorate on this question with the rigid stance of his party base. Given that Romney is involved in a primary debate in which the base plays heavily into choosing the candidate for the general election and the fact that he is sharing the stage with pro-life advocates like Rick Santorum and Michelle Bachmann, Romney's response is fairly predictable. "People have had a chance to look at my record" he says, "and look what I've said as -- as I've been through that last campaign. I believe people understand that I'm firmly pro-life. I will support justices who believe in following the Constitution and not legislating from the bench. And I believe in the sanctity of life from the very beginning until the very end."

Romney's response to the question of eminent domain provides him with another opportunity to reiterate the public/private dichotomy in relation to economic matters. The ability for the federal government to provide land to private businesses to pursue energy development is "the wrong way to go" he says, because "the right of eminent domain is a right which is used to foster a public purpose and public ownership for a road, highways, and so forth" not for the "purposes of a private enterprise." Romney then takes up the issue of energy independence and articulates support for "oil, natural gas, clean coal," "nuclear power ultimately," and "all the renewables" last. Prioritizing fossil fuels over nuclear power and renewables aligns Romney directly with the largest energy industries first, and the least capitalized of those industries last.

The final question that Romney deals with in Goffstown has to do with the winding down of the war in Afghanistan, and the end of conflict operations there. Romney defers to the decisions of our generals involved in the war to determine a timeline for withdrawal, but then

confuses the Taliban with the Afghan military. “It's time for us to bring our troops home as soon as we possibly can, consistent with the word that comes to our generals that we can hand the country over to the Taliban military in a way that they're able to defend themselves. Excuse me, the Afghan military to defend themselves from the Taliban. That's an important distinction.” An important distinction indeed! This fundamental misunderstanding, even if unintentional, displays a lack of fine distinctions needed for foreign policy knowledge in the region. The final segment of his answer articulates an isolationist foreign policy agenda that is markedly different from his predecessors in the party: “we've learned that our troops shouldn't go off and try and fight a war of independence for another nation. Only the Afghans can win Afghanistan's independence from the Taliban.” If the distinctions between Afghani military and Taliban forces are as important as Romney indicates, and his misunderstanding of the difference is real, maybe we should be relieved that he does not wish to get involved in conflicts overseas.

Asked to choose one of his other competitors he would rather have Romney reiterates his arguments against the Obama administration. His three complaints are on the economy, size of government, and foreign policy: “He has failed in job one, which was to get this economy going again. He failed in job two, which was to restrain the growth of the government. And he failed in job three, which is to have a coherent, consistent foreign policy... this hit or miss approach has meant a couple of successes...but a lot of misses, like throwing our friends under the bus.” In his closing remarks, Romney states again that the economy is the most important issue in the election, because the people in America want “rising housing prices” and the “incomes they deserve” so that “They don't have to wonder whether the future is brighter than the past.” This marks a return to the opening statement at the beginning of the debate, bookending Romney's

arguments with calls to a better economy for the benefit of future generations of children and grandchildren.

In Goffstown, Romney utilizes several different types of arguments. He uses refutation to point out problems with the current administration, repeating over and over that Obama has failed to live up to expectations, failed to meet his own promises, and failed to fix the problems with the status quo. Romney uses a “spending bad, government bad, states/private sector good” series of arguments on topics ranging from health care, to the auto bailout, to disaster relief. He repeatedly places the private sector in an authoritative relationship to the federal government, and transposes this argument onto his own claim to authority throughout the debate. Romney maintains a rigid stance on questions of social policy, including questions of marriage equality, abortion, and the separation between church and state. Finally, Romney delivers all of his arguments through a lens of future-oriented morality, placing the economic and social well-being of the current generation in a deferential relationship to those generations to come of age in the future.

The Ames, Iowa Debate at Iowa State

Two months later in Ames, Iowa, Romney would again debate against the entire Republican field. Approaching the podium at Iowa State University, Romney faced a new challenger to his nomination. Even though Rick Perry would not appear until the following debate in Simi Valley at the Reagan Library, his presence in the nomination fight could already be seen in a substantial drop in Romney’s lead over the field (USA Today, 2011; CNN, 2011; Thomma & Recio, 2011; Rasmussen, 2011; Pew Research Center, 2011; Jones, 2011; Public Policy Polling, 2011; Washington Post, 2011; NBC News, 2011). Romney’s debate performance

in Ames, while similar in many ways to that in Goffstown, provided much more specific policy argument than before, and offers several rhetorical differences that provide much insight to his campaign strategy. Contextually, the field would have new ammunition with which to attack the president on his economic policies. The recent debt ceiling debate provided Republican contenders with a particular policy angle and a specific policy that generated massive GOP opposition in congress. Overall the debate in Ames would provide less spoken material from Mitt Romney, but in many ways statements which were rhetorically deeper and richer for analysis.

Romney's first response on the economy mirrors many of the same strategies used in the first debate. Romney begins with a similar argument from experience and concludes with a non-specific and unwarranted argument against Obama: "if you spend your life in the private sector and you understand how jobs come and how they go, you understand that what President Obama has done is the exact opposite of what the economy needed to be done. Almost every action he took made it harder for entrepreneurs to build businesses, for banks to make loans, for businesses to hire, and to build more capital" (FOX News, 2011). Romney does not specify any of the administration's policies that he claims made it harder for entrepreneurs, banks, or businesses to create economic growth.

The next section of Romney's first response outlines his 7 step plan to create economic growth for the nation.

One is to make sure our corporate tax rates are competitive with other nations. Number two is to make sure that our regulations and bureaucracy works not just for the bureaucrats in Washington, but for the businesses that are trying to grow. Number three is to have trade policies that work for us, not just for our opponents. Number four is to have

an energy policy that gets us energy secure. Number five is to have the rule of law. Six, great institutions that build human capital, because capitalism is also about people, not just capital and physical goods. And number seven is to have a government that doesn't spend more money than it takes in.

Each of the seven arguments establishes a policy direction for Romney and forms the basis for his arguments in each of the areas for the rest of the debate. He argues for lower corporate taxes, less regulation, more trade agreements, energy security, rule of law, human capital, and balanced budgets. On some of the issues, he does not provide anything more than a nonspecific statement about the issue like, "Number five is to have the rule of law." Each argument begs the question of what particular policies Romney will support to achieve the steps outline, and some, like the fifth response, begs the question of why Romney believes that we live in a nation without the rule of law.

Romney's second answer replies to a specific complaint made by the other candidates about his leadership role on the debt ceiling. Brett Baier asks him why he failed to lead on the debt ceiling debate, and was "missing in action" for much of the standoff and debate in congress. Despite his support for the Republican opposition, his absence and delay makes Baier wonder "Is that leadership?" Romney begins his response by shifting the topic away from the debt ceiling in particular to the more general question of size of government. Arguing that a ten percent increase in the proportion of government spending to economic size is unsustainable, Romney makes the claim that we are "inches away from no longer having a free economy." We are left without specifics as to what threshold or brink Romney is referring to, and why government spending relates to the level of freedom in the economy.

The next half of Romney's answer refers to a particular response that crops up again and again in the Ames debate, the purity test. Romney "signed a pledge" that "would not raise the debt ceiling" without an agreement to "cut, cap, and balance." In the same vein as the infamous Grover Norquist tax pledge, the purity test allows Romney to articulate his steadfastness in the face of ideological dilution. Of particular concern to the Republican Party in 2012, the ideological purity test allows the party to establish which candidates are the most strictly aligned with their own views of particular policy positions. This iteration of the test ensures that candidates will act in accordance with their party's preferred stance on the budget by refusing to raise the debt ceiling unless the spending is cut and capped at a percentage of GDP, and significant steps are made to balance the budget.

Baier asks Romney to clarify his position on this particular issue, which leads to a strange and slightly uncomfortable response from the governor.

Look, I'm not going to eat Barack Obama's dog food, all right? What he served up was not what I would have done if I'd had been president of the United States. If — if I'd have — if I'd have been...If I'd have been — well, I'm not — I'm not president now, though I'd like to have been. If I were president, what I would have done is cut federal spending, capped federal spending as a percentage of the total economy, and then worked for a balanced budget amendment. If we do that, then we can rein back the scale of government. And that's the right thing to do.

The reference to Obama's policies as dog food implies two possible arguments, both of which represent a serious undercurrent of disdain in Romney's arguments. The first is an implicit reference to the President as a canine, a dehumanizing and completely inappropriate response from Romney. Given the benefit of the doubt that Romney clearly couldn't be that offensive, the

second possible argument imagines the disdain Obama holds for the American people in the same way a person would for their pet. Romney makes a comment about his 2008 loss to John McCain, saying that even though he is not the President, he would “like to have been” elected. Romney restates his “cut, cap, and balance” policy position before finishing his argument on the debt ceiling.

Chris Wallace asks Romney the next question, on jobs, and uses a tone and question which are very critical of Romney’s business experience arguments. Wallace’s question begins with an anecdote about Romney’s business practice: “As head of Bain Capital, you acquired American Pad & Paper. Two U.S. plants were closed and 385 jobs were cut. Later, you bought Dade International. Almost 2,000 workers were laid off or relocated. And when you were governor, Massachusetts ranked 47th of the 50 states in job growth. Question, you are going to be the jobs president?” Romney’s response echoes the disdain from the previous answer, “Absolutely, Chris. Let me—let me tell you how the real economy works.” Despite the extensive experience and credentials held by Wallace, Romney still treats him as though he doesn’t understand what outsourcing or job growth are. Romney repeats the same statement again, this time focusing on those in D.C., “I know there are some people in Washington that don’t understand how the free economy works.” Here Romney is articulating a position of authority over both congress and the moderator for the debate. “I understand how the economy works,” he says, “If people want to send to Washington someone who spent their entire career in government, they can choose a lot of folks. But if they want to choose somebody who understands how the private sector works, they’re going to have to choose one of us, because we’ve been in it during our career.” Romney’s final argument on jobs uses his experience as governor in Massachusetts to provide empirical proof that his business experience informs his

policy positions in a way that is beneficial to the country. He cites jobs “being lost month after month after month” when he became Governor, and argues that “we were able to add jobs, balance our budget” and that “our unemployment was below the federal level three of the four years” he was in elected office.

The larger argument made in this segment has to do with free market forces versus governmental action to guide the market. Romney points out that at Bain Capital, “we invested in about 100 different companies” but that “Not all of them worked” and that a common misconception is that investments “always” “go well.” Not so, Romney argues. “Not all of them worked,” and “they don’t always go well” but in the free market that is the way of the system. This reinforces many of the free market principles Romney articulated in the Goffstown debate, and specifically references the concept of the government guiding the market as a problematic policy.

Romney’s next response deals with immigration policy. His first policy argument says that we should distinguish between skilled and unskilled worker permits, and advocates a policy that would “staple a green card” “to their diploma.” Romney’s argument relies on a system that creates preferences based on the “needs of our employment sector” and import “technology and innovation that comes from people around the world.” He also specifically calls for more security and enforcement at the border, as well as the enforcement of laws against businesses who hire immigrants illegally. The essential argument maintains many of the policy positions already part and parcel of the proposed immigration reform packages brought before congress during the Bush years.

Romney is given the opportunity to clarify his ideological commitment to cutting taxes later in the Ames debate, and he responds emphatically, “I don’t believe in raising taxes. And as

Governor I cut taxes 19 times and didn't raise taxes". The question of taxation moves here beyond the realm of pragmatic policy debate into a realm of ideological beliefs and commitments. The shift away from argument to belief marks a shift in his rhetorical response, now his position can be summed up with the simple, unambiguous "I don't believe in raising taxes." Romney argues that Obama's policy led to a decrease in our nation's credit rating while ignoring the cause of that downgrade, congressional unwillingness to make a timely deal on the debt ceiling. Romney takes the opportunity to make another argument from authority, "our president simply doesn't understand how to lead and how to grow an economy." Romney again cites his record as governor of Massachusetts to make the case for his nomination:

I was very proud of the fact that Republicans and Democrats worked together in Massachusetts to cut spending. I came in, we had a huge deficit. I went to the legislature and I said I want expanded powers to unilaterally be able to cut spending not just slow the rate of growth but to cut spending and they gave it to me and I did. We cut spending. Every single year I was governor we balanced the budget. And by the end of my term we had put in place over a two billion dollar rainy day fund. That kind of leadership is what allowed us to get a credit upgrade from Standard & Poor's. And that's the leadership we finally need in the White House.

Romney relies on empirical examples of bipartisan cooperation, deficit reduction, spending cuts, balanced budgets, and a credit upgrade to explain his leadership credentials.

In the next segment, Romney replies affirmatively when asked if he would walk away from a 10:1 ratio of spending cuts to tax increases—an absolute unwillingness to compromise. The question, unlike typical primary debate questions, takes the shape of a loyalty oath. The moderator asks each candidate to either respond yes or no to a particular question, or, the

moderator asks them to raise their hand if they agree. Brett Baier asks the question in Ames: “Can you raise your hand if you feel so strongly about not raising taxes, you’d walk away on the 10 to one deal? (APPLAUSE)”. The audience applauds in response to the universal assent by the candidates for nomination. After the affirmation of faith in the anti-tax ideology before, in the structure of a belief statement, Romney is asked to pass a test of purity on stage with every other candidate by raising his right hand and affirming his commitment. The pressure to conform on stage with tax ideologues like Rick Santorum, who initially fielded the question, constrains the moderates like Pawlenty, Huntsman, and Romney from addressing the issue with anything other than an absolute affirmative.

Romney’s next question deals with the Affordable Care Act and his responses are almost identical to the response in Goffstown. He begins with state’s rights, moves to an argument to grant states waivers from having to implement the policy, then shifts to an argument about government mandates and the necessity of state resistance to federal impositions of health policies. Brett Baier then asks Romney to clarify his statement from the Goffstown debate that “our troops shouldn’t go off and try to fight a war of independence for another nation.” Romney makes the argument that 10 years is too long to train military forces and establish security and freedom in a nation, and that it is time for the United States to place the burden back on the people and institutions of Afghanistan. Romney makes the argument that Obama’s decision to reduce troop presence was political and ignored the recommendations of generals in the field. Romney maintains his position on withdrawal, but again fails to specify the timetable or conditions for withdrawal.

The next issue for Romney is marriage equality. Romney repeats the argument made in Goffstown about the federal definition of marriage. “I believe the issue of marriage should be

decided at the federal level” he says, “Marriage is a status. It’s not an activity that goes on within the walls of a state. And a result our marriage status relationship should be constant across the country.” Once again, Romney’s response on social issues inverts the state’s rights position to argue for a constitutional amendment. When policies interfere with the market (like the ACA or energy policy) then the federal government should be subject to state preference, however when policies are social or ideological in nature (marriage or abortion), then federal control is the only means to ensure state and local compliance with the rigid agenda. Romney closes this section by describing his vision of the nuclear family, “I believe we should have a federal amendment in the constitution that defines marriage as a relationship between a man and woman, because I believe the ideal place to raise a child is in a home with a mom and a dad.”

In his closing statement, Romney reiterates the argument from experience while making several jabs at President Obama:

This country is in economic crisis. I think the people of this country understand that. And we have, unfortunately, as the leader of this country a man who is out of his depth and who doesn’t understand what is needed to do to get this economy going again. He just doesn’t understand how the economy works, because he hasn’t lived in the real economy. I think in order to create jobs; it’s helpful to have had a job. And I fundamentally believe... (LAUGHTER)... that what we need in this country is someone who’s willing to go to work, who believes in America, who believes in free enterprise, who believes in capitalism, who believes in opportunity and freedom. I am that person. I love this country. And I will do everything in my power to strengthen our economy and keep America the hope of the Earth.

Romney makes several ad hominem arguments about the President that reveal the level of disdain with which he seems to hold Obama. First, the reason Obama is out of his depth, Romney argues, is because he hasn't lived in the real economy. The next attack reveals the basis for that argument when Romney says that "it's helpful to have had a job" and that "what we need in this country is someone who's willing to go to work." This implies that of the many occupations held by Obama none are "real" jobs, and that the reason is because he isn't "willing to go to work." Romney continues by making the argument that the president doesn't believe in America, free enterprise, capitalism, opportunity or freedom, but "I am that person" he says. Each of these attacks reveals much about Romney's opinion of the President, and shows the (lack of) depth and quality of the arguments made by Romney in the debates at Goffstown and Ames.

The types of arguments made in Ames do not differ substantially from those made in Goffstown, but a few significant differences are worth noting. First, Romney participates in two different purity tests on the questions of the debt ceiling and tax increases, reiterating his commitment to key ideological markers presented by the Republican Party. Second, Romney's argument from experience and empirical evidence from Massachusetts is much more prominent in Ames. The extensive references to his own governorship reveals that perhaps the specter of another qualified conservative governor about to enter the race (Rick Perry) posed more of a threat to his own credentials than Romney would like to admit. Finally, Romney escalates his rhetoric aimed at Obama, almost verging into the offensive. His implied arguments about "dog food" and "willingness to work" seem to be toeing a line very close to attacks on the basis of intelligence or commitment, not on the basis of policy difference. Each of these differences provides new angles from which to examine the formative campaign arguments made by Mitt

Romney, and establishes the basis for many of the arguments made in the party platform and acceptance speech in Tampa the following year.

III: The Nominating Convention

The nominating convention has evolved into a rhetorical event that plays an important role in focusing public attention on comparing and contrasting the final candidates of the major parties. The following chapter will offer a detailed evaluation of the arguments and ideologies reflected in the specific rhetoric of 2012 Republican Convention in Tampa Florida as manifest in the Party Platform and the acceptance speech of Mitt Romney.

The Rhetoric of the 2012 Republican Platform

The 2012 Republican platform entitled “We Believe in America” displays on its cover page, behind the title, the first sentence of the Preamble to the Constitution, Article 1, Sections 1-2, and the first five Amendments to the Constitution (Committee on Arrangements for the 2012 Republican National Convention, 2012). On the following page, the platform is dedicated “with appreciation and reverence for: The wisdom of the Framers of the United States Constitution, who gave us a Republic, as Benjamin Franklin cautioned, if we can keep it.” Both the epigraph and the cover page place front and center the United States Constitution as a rhetorical base upon which the rest of the platform will be articulated. These rhetorical presentations provide the frame through which the ideology of the Republican Party is presented throughout the document. Does the platform actually represent core ideological principles? The preamble to the party platform immediately dismisses any doubts to the contrary: “The 2012 Republican Platform is a statement of who we are and what we believe as a Party and our vision for a stronger and freer America” (p. i).

The preamble also outlines a series of threats to the American Dream. First, it argues that economic uncertainty and “the longest and most severe economic downturn since the Great Depression” undermine the opportunities for jobs, homes, and hope. “Federalism is threatened and liberty retreats,” it says due to the size and scope of government as well as increased debt and deficit. The preamble states that what is needed is “trustworthy leadership and honest talk” about the state of the nation and the threats that it faces. A rebirth of Jeffersonian principles will allow the nation to “begin anew” in order to restore a “wise and frugal government.” The crisis facing the nation demands the Republican Party answer the call to the question they ask themselves in the preamble, “If not us, who? If not now, when?”

After outlining the threats posed by the status quo, the preamble makes a series of arguments about the character of the “American people.” They “possess vast reserves of courage and determination and the capacity to hear the truth and chart a strong course,” “are eager for the opportunity to take on life’s challenges,” and “are the most generous people on the earth.” After articulating the exceptional character of its people, the preamble begins an argument about what is needed to restore the principles outlined above and preserve the unique character of the people and nation:

America has always been a place of grand dreams and even grander realities; and so it will be again, if we return government to its proper role, making it smaller and smarter. If we restructure government’s most important domestic programs to avoid their fiscal collapse. If we keep taxation, litigation, and regulation to a minimum. If we celebrate success, entrepreneurship, and innovation. If we lift up the middle class. If we hand over to the next generation a legacy of growth and prosperity, rather than entitlements and indebtedness.

The domestic restoration must also be accompanied by a foreign policy illuminated by “the torch of freedom and democracy” to “stand against tyranny and oppression.” The foreign, domestic, and individual policies must all be oriented around the exceptional character of the people and the nation.

Returning to the Constitution, the preamble names it the “owner’s manual” and describes it as “the greatest political document ever written” (p. ii). Paralleling the visual representation on the cover and the epigraph dedication to the founders, the use of the Constitution as the handbook for governance dictates a series of policy warrants that will inform the remainder of the platform. “Trust the people. Limit government. Respect federalism. Guarantee opportunity, not outcomes. Adhere to the rule of law. Reaffirm that our rights come from God;” these are the ideological frameworks through which the Republican Party argues for particular policies. The preamble closes by reminding readers once again that the document provides “a vision of where we are headed and an invitation to join us in that journey.” Established at the outset by the platform committee, the constitution is rhetorically presented as the loci for all ideological and characterological assessments of the party and its candidates. Political existence is constituted by one’s relationship with the founding document, and for the Republican platform committee; that commitment to the document includes a strain of constitutional originalism that is applied throughout the platform to policy analysis.

The first chapter of the platform is titled “Restoring the American Dream: Rebuilding the Economy and Creating Jobs” and the contents of the chapter predictably outline a series of policy proposals for economic growth and job creation (p. 1). The prominence of taxes within Republican ideology simply cannot be overstated. The word tax and all of its derivatives (taxation, taxes, taxpayer, etc.) appears 99 times in the 62 page document and fifty times in the

first twelve pages. Iteration of the tax theme operates in one of two ways, either to praise the cutting of taxes, or to malign their imposition. Appearing on the second page of the platform, the initial section of the document leaves no question as to the direction or details of the policy. Under the heading of “Tax Relief to Grow the Economy and Create Jobs” we find the following tax cut policies at the heart of the conservative ideology:

Extend the 2001 and 2003 tax relief packages—commonly known as the Bush tax cuts—pending reform of the tax code, to keep tax rates from rising on income, interest, dividends, and capital gains; Reform the tax code by reducing marginal tax rates by 20 percent across-the-board, in a revenue-neutral manner; Eliminate the taxes on interest, dividends, and capital gains altogether for lower and middle-income taxpayers; End the Death Tax; and Repeal the Alternative Minimum Tax. (p. 2)

The platform committee argues that these taxes are responsible for declining global competitiveness, increasing “class warfare,” and restricted religious freedoms. Tax policy connects each argument and is the singular policy focus driving most of the related economic prescriptions. Small business growth, freedom, and job creation are all warrants for a policy of lower taxes, with maximum economic freedom as the driving ideology behind the central theme. “Excessive taxation and regulation impede economic development,” “lowering taxes promotes substantial economic growth,” “the tax system must be simplified,” all appear on page one.

The argument presented by the Committee in the platform that “Taxes, by their very nature, reduce a citizen’s freedom” echoes Hayek and Friedman, and orients the constraints on economic policy arguments to one theme (p. 2). Taxation arguments tautologically refer to the central tenet of the ideology within the platform. Taxation represents the criterion for determining how free each individual citizen is in relation to their government. Citizens are

referred to as taxpayers thirty-four times in the document, triggering the ideological connection back to a constitution of freedom and citizenship through the concept of taxation. Governmental control exerts itself on the freedoms of the citizen by restricting their economic productivity and consumer choice through “excessive taxation” or “hypertaxation” (pp. 1,3) . The committee articulates three policy types that would limit a citizens’ freedom by misusing their taxes— income redistribution, unnecessary and ineffective programs, and corrupt bureaucratic practices.

Related to the social programs arguments above, the general economic claims are oriented toward macroeconomic philosophy and toward foreign conceptions of proper economic models for our country. Corporate taxes are to blame for decreasing competitiveness overseas (p. 2). Inflation, typically a sound macroeconomic trend indicating a country is experiencing growth, is condemned as a “hidden tax” on the American people (p. 4). The committee centers their entire section on the budgetary process around “tax expenditures” and the “entitlement” programs they support (pp. 3-4).

The platform committee notes that typically the infrastructure of our towns (roads, bridges, etc.) is a non-partisan issue and protected from ideological influence. The committee then accuses that Obama “has changed that, replacing civil engineering with social engineering as it pursues an exclusively urban vision of dense housing and government transit” (p. 5). Setting aside for a moment the implicit racism inherent in terminology “urban vision” and “dense housing,” I would like to note that the attack on the President is elevated to the level of ideology and vision. Obama wants to replace infrastructure development with “social engineering” to pursue an “*exclusively* urban vision” implying that this vision is exclusive of the rural and small town experience described by Romney. The platform then constructs the real enemy behind crumbling infrastructure programs: “the Democrats’ Davis-Bacon law continues to drive up

infrastructure construction and maintenance costs for the benefit of that party's union stalwarts.”

A particular piece of legislation allows for the Administration to divert money to their political supporters, and the consequence of that is the bridge collapsing in Minnesota, the roads always having potholes, the emptying out of the rural township due to the forces of globalization. The direction of the urban/rural differentiation allows Romney and the Republicans to access many of the structural and social problems they construct as symptoms of the Obama administration.

The platform committee outlines the basic formula of the first argument type; it places the role of government at the heart of the American Dream early in the preamble, “America has always been a place of grand dreams ... so it will be again, if we return government to its proper role, making it smaller and smarter” (p. i). Governments' role for the platform committee is primarily smaller, and secondarily smarter. Restructuring the government in this way includes eliminating domestic programs including entitlements, taxes, tort law, and regulations. Entire programs are cast aside for their properties of redistribution, litigation, or regulation. Growth and prosperity are dependent upon the minimization of government interference in the economy. Throughout the platform, the committee recommends a plethora of areas where the Romney administration would return federal control to the states: transportation policy (p. 6), federal work training programs and pension accounts (p. 7), right-to-work laws and collective bargaining rights (p. 8).

Federalism orients many aspects of the Republican ideology, and filters the way in which the appropriate policy/locality balance is deployed onto argument. The committee recommends a blanket review of every federal program in the context of the Tenth Amendment and Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution. The litmus test for policies within the argumentative milieu of government is the federalism test. Purity tests are now applied to legislation the same

way the ideology applies them to candidates. The next paragraphs of the platform describe the ideological promise at the heart of the federal/state divide—freedom. While this particular passage informs much of the analysis in Chapter 4, I feel like it is necessary to include it here because it contains many elements of both ideological fields:

When the Constitution is evaded, transgressed, or ignored, so are the freedoms it guarantees ... the elections of 2012 will be ... a referendum on the future of liberty in America. The Republican Party ... stands for the rights of individuals, families, faith communities, institutions – and of the States which are their instruments of self-government ... we condemn the current Administration’s continued assaults on State governments in matters ranging from voter ID laws to immigration, from healthcare programs to land use decisions. Our States are the laboratories of democracy from which the people propel our nation forward, solving local and State problems through local and State innovations. We pledge to restore the proper balance between the federal government and the governments closest to, and most reflective of, the American people.

(pp. 10-11)

Constitutional violations are equated with violations of personal freedom. The 2012 election of Mitt Romney is presented as a referendum on the federalism question. The Obama administration is criticized on a wide range of policies because of their “assaults on State governments.” A proper balance is promised; one that harmonizes with its citizens wishes and is “most reflective” of the polis. In reality, many of the rights of “individuals, families, faith communities, institutions” are protected by explicit federal protections against state intrusions. The committee reflects that we should view, like the framers, “States as laboratories of democracy.”

The platform committee moves from an argument about reverence for the constitution into a criticism of the administration for its violation of those fundamental principles. The tone of the following section moves from one of disappointment to an accusation of outright disregard for the principles within the document:

... adherence to the Constitution stands in stark contrast to the antipathy toward the Constitution demonstrated by the current Administration ... to evade the confirmation process ... using executive orders to bypass the separation of powers and its checks and balances, encouraging illegal actions by regulatory agencies ... openly and notoriously displaying contempt for Congress, the Judiciary, and the Constitutional prerogatives of the individual States, refusing to defend the nation's laws in federal courts or enforce them on the streets ... gutting welfare reform by unilaterally removing its statutory work requirement, buying senatorial votes ... evading the legal requirement for congressional consultation regarding troop commitments overseas. (p. 9)

The platform accuses the Obama administration of a wide swath of violations against the Constitution. Ranging from charges of evasion and deception to outright illegal actions and a refusal to defend the Constitution, the chain of accusations scales all the way up to bribery and the illegal use of the military. The committee constitutes the rhetorical "current Administration" as a serial violator of founding principles, and as the primary foil for the rest of the chapter. The committee establishes the dichotomy between both ideologies in contest for the presidency in 2012: "we are the defenders of the Constitution and our political heritage, they want to violate the constitution and destroy the political body by destroying its heritage."

Several times throughout the chapter the committee uses the Constitution and the Bill of Rights to establish litmus tests for status quo policies. The Tenth Amendment litmus test was

examined above as an element of the federalist argument, and the chapter uses tests of the First, Second, Fourth, Fifth, and Ninth to establish ideological arguments against too many policies to name. The Constitutional litmus test functions much like the political purity test in this way. The rhetorical ideal of the Constitution is held up by the committee as a filter, and all laws or policies that do not conform to that constituted rhetorical device are justified for elimination or reform.

The rhetorical construction of life provides a disjuncture between Republican ideals of the Constitution as perfect, original document and their willingness to impose value-driven policies onto that Constitution through amendment. Two versions of the “return” theme can be observed at work in the platform with the committee’s the need to be “Faithful to the “self-evident” truths enshrined in the Declaration of Independence” and “assert the sanctity of human life and affirm that the unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life which cannot be infringed” (pp. 13-4). The return functions to justify the Constitutional amendment, by amending the founding document, the Republican Party can bring it into harmony with an even purer document, the Declaration. The return also functions to highlight the need to protect the value of “the unborn child” as a representative of human purity in the sense of religious and spiritual purity. Both versions of the return, to purer documents and humans, can be contextualized through the previous arguments about the Obama administration, completing the repair by linking the topic back to the Constitution.

Now that the basic definitions and protections of life can be enshrined in the Constitution as a remedy for the erosion of the ideal society, the Republican Party ideology can constitute the family as the product of a marriage between one man and one woman. Extending outward from the protection of pure life, the marriage debate constitutes a debate about the conditions for the production of that life. Only within the “ideal” family structure should life be nurtured, and only

through the federal definition of that family structure can the “erosion” be stopped, or returned to an original state. The threat of “activist judges” to enact “court-ordered redefinition” of marriage must be reversed through a return to an original definition, one that “for thousands of years in virtually every civilization, has been entrusted with the rearing of children and the transmission of cultural values” (p. 10). The social principle remains so embedded within the ideology, that changes must be made to the Constitution to conform to the social ideology that is inconsistent with political reality. The definition of the family is under threat, legal redefinition undermines the fundamental structure at the heart of “virtually every civilization,” and a return to the “original” family structure is the only way to guarantee the successful “transmission of cultural values.”

The 2012 platform committee is also fairly clear as to the central role that “Obamacare” plays within the ideology of the party:

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act—Obamacare—was never really about healthcare ... From its start, it was about power, the expansion of government control over one sixth of our economy, and resulted in an attack on our Constitution ... It was the high-water mark of an outdated liberalism, the latest attempt to impose upon Americans a euro-style bureaucracy to manage all aspects of their lives ... Congressional Republicans are committed to its repeal; and a Republican President, on the first day in office, will use his legitimate waiver authority under that law to halt its progress and then will sign its repeal. Then the American people, through the free market, can advance affordable and responsible healthcare reform that meets the needs and concerns of patients and providers. Through Obamacare, the current Administration has promoted the notion of abortion as healthcare. We, however, affirm the dignity of women by protecting the

sanctity of human life. Numerous studies have shown that abortion endangers the health and wellbeing of women, and we stand firmly against it. (pp. 32-33)

The diatribe against the ACA taps into every element of the constitution theme. The “expansion of government control” represents an “attack on our Constitution.” Repealing the legislation would protect “the sanctity of human life” and end the “notion of abortion as healthcare.” The “euro-style bureaucracy” invades the family and attempts to “manage” “their lives” through “an outdated liberalism.” Patients and providers cannot maintain a workable relationship due to the legislation interference with free-market principles, and communities are endangered by its existence. The legislation’s unpopularity in the face of its continuing existence is an insult to and incongruity within the body politic. Everything about the healthcare legislation as rhetorically constructed by the platform committee implicates its inherent threat to the principles of Republican ideology.

Each major element of the Republican platform (taxation, government, and constitution) informs the structure of the next chapter and provides the lens through which I will analyze the development of Mitt Romney’s campaign arguments. Written immediately prior to the acceptance speech delivered by Romney in Tampa, the 2012 GOP platform provides a moment of ideological crystallization that critics only have an opportunity to examine once every four years. As such, its policy proposals are inherently critical to understanding how the arguments developed in the primary debates by a given candidate are filtered through the party itself and consequently redeployed by the candidate during their acceptance speech.

The Rhetoric of Romney's Acceptance Speech

Mitt Romney had plenty of rhetorical advantages entering the Tampa convention. First, the economic situation, while improving, remained bleak. Tepid growth figures and weak unemployment data continued to persist (Boston Herald, 2012; Crutsinger, 2012). Second, there were a large group of voters who were still capable of being persuaded to vote for the Republican. Polls indicated that 15% of the electorate could still change its mind, and 14% of Obama supporters were uncertain of their choice (The Washington Post, 2012). The internal data in the Washington Post poll also indicated that Romney was better situated than the President to make arguments about correcting the economy. Finally, Romney held several biographical advantages when making arguments about the economy. His business experience as the head of Bain Capital, his "turnaround" of the Salt Lake City Olympics, and his general wealth and success were all personal indicators of his economic authority.

Romney confronted significant rhetorical barriers in Tampa, barriers ill-suited for strategies oriented around core ideological beliefs. Primarily, Romney had yet to define himself to the larger electorate, even after two attempts at the nomination. "Romney's six years of presidential campaigning did not provide voters with a sense of Mitt Romney – the speech in Tampa was an opportunity for Romney to introduce himself beyond mere campaign rhetoric," said one review (Ball, 2012). Matt Taibbi calls Romney a "man from nowhere," an "archipelago man" to whom "nations are meaningless" (Taibbi, 2012). Secondly, the more constraining barrier on Romney was his ideological relationship with the Republican base. Two-thirds of his supporters were anxious about a potential Romney administration (CBS News, 2012). The selection of Paul Ryan for running mate indicates the level of concern given to this constraint by the Romney campaign. Compared with previous running mates from both parties, Ryan represented the most ideologically radical choice for Vice President in recent history (Silver, 2012). Threatened by lackluster base support, Romney's speech

needed to satisfy crucial ideological elements within his own party and simultaneously balance that demand with the need to define himself with some substance to the national audience.

Romney's dominant rhetorical strategy in Tampa relied too heavily on ideological opposition to taxation, a rhetorical choice which limited many other policy arguments in the speech, and ultimately evacuated the arguments of any substance. One sees the framework established between freedom and taxation in the party platform repeated very early in the speech: "Freedom, freedom of religion, freedom to speak their mind, freedom to build a life and, yes, freedom to build a business with their own hands" (ABC News, 2012, p. 9). The interconnections between religious freedom, freedom of speech, and the freedom to build families and business are tied back to the income/taxation theme frequently in the next few lines. Romney invokes "Castro's tyranny" seconds later, makes the argument that business opportunity remains a major impetus for legal immigration to the United States (p. 10). Families need the money from excessive taxation to "get a little ahead, put aside a little more for college, do more for the elderly mom" (p. 12). Businesses are prevented from successful hiring and firing practices, philanthropy increases, and the chain of economic problems feeds the massive national debt (p. 13).

"Now is the moment where we can stand up and say, 'I am an American, I make my destiny, we deserve better, my children deserve better, my family deserves better, my country deserves better'" (p. 19). Romney describes his vision of America as isolated within the individual American and their personal destiny as deserving priority over the needs of the whole. The decidedly past-oriented strand of American exceptionalism is reiterated in Romney's own break from his father, while eliding the advantages provided to a son of business mogul and Michigan governor George Romney:

I grew up in Detroit, in love with cars. And wanted to be a car guy like my dad. But, by the time I was out of school I realized that I had to go out on my own. That if I stayed

around Michigan in the same business I'd never really know if I was getting a break because of my dad. I wanted to go someplace new and prove myself. (p. 36)

The dual move to “go out” on one’s own and denying the advantages of an upper-class background ignores the clear benefits already accrued through his father’s influence and wealth. Elided is the Harvard Law School background, the gated community, the governor’s mansion, the inherited wealth and opportunity provided to Mitt Romney before his personal narrative even begins. Romney’s vision of the American Dream relies on individualism, but masks many of the advantages secured before the need to strike out into the world and make a name for oneself.

Romney personifies his version of the dream through the four biographies presented in his speech. Immediately following his initial articulation of the American Dream, Romney lauds the accomplishments of a recently deceased Neil Armstrong and the famous moon landings. American exceptionalism, for Romney, is a “unique blend of optimism, humility, and the utter confidence that, when the world needs someone to do that, you need an American” (p. 24).

Immediately after his section on Armstrong, Romney relates the story of the immigrant coming to America to start their own business, escape religious persecution, and succeed in fulfilling his destiny.

My dad had been born in Mexico. And his family had to leave during the Mexican revolution. I grew up with stories of his family being fed by the U.S. government as war refugees. My dad never made it through college, and he apprenticed as a lath and plaster carpenter. He had big dreams. He convinced my mom, a beautiful young actress, to give up Hollywood to marry him. And moved to Detroit. He led a great automobile company and became governor of the great state of Michigan. (pp. 25-26)

Each of the individualistic elements of his father's biography is elevated, the dreamer, the romantic, the worker, and the articulation of a dream fulfilled is accomplished through the accomplishments of the individual.

The third person invoked in the speech to articulate the American Dream is Romney's mother. Romney recounts her unsuccessful bid for the Senate and immediately begins to draw connections to other successful Republican women, each of whom spoke at the convention in Tampa in prime time. Speaking directly to his mother, Romney asks, "Don't you wish you could have been here at this convention and heard leaders like Governor Mary Falin, Governor Nikki Haley, Governor Susana Martinez, Senator Kelly Ayotte, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice?" (p. 34). Romney espouses his own credentials as a gender warrior, noting his own selection of women for positions of power, drawing a line directly from his mother, through the token women speaking on his behalf, to the type of gender-sensitive administration he promises to run. Ann Romney rounds out the American Dream personified arguments, her role as housekeeper and stay-home mother articulating the actual role of women in Romney's America. Ann Romney's heroism directly contradicts the role Romney's own mother played, and ignores many of the economic and societal challenges that mothers face every day in this country (p. 38). The elevated status of women in power in the previous section immediately takes a back seat to the subservient and loyal wife-mother, "Ann would have succeeded at anything she wanted to do," he says, ignoring the fact that she did not need to take a second job just to put food on the table, or a night shift just to make mortgage payments (p. 39).

Mitt Romney constructs a particular vision of the "town" in his acceptance speech delivered in Tampa. The American Dream composes an essential element of any nomination acceptance, and orients several argumentative elements of the speech around its deployment

(Medhurst, 2010). Romney's vision for America follows after the long biographical section wherein he deploys his own family structure as an ideal (pp. 25-40). The vision constructs community, faith, and localism at the heart of the American Dream:

That's the bedrock of what makes America America. In our best days, we can feel the vibrancy of America's communities, large and small. It's when we see that new business opening up downtown. It's when we go to work in the morning and see everybody else in the block doing the same thing to read when our son or daughter calls from college to talk about which job offer they should take, and you try not to choke up when you hear that the one they like best is not too far from home. (p. 42)

The small business, the family, college, home all function as orienting markers for the ideology of the town space. Towns are only successful when businesses are "opening up downtown." The workday is normalized "when we go to work in the morning" and Romney actively ignores those who go to work in the evening to work the night-shift in his vision for the town. Life activities are normalized by this vision to the point of banality, "everybody else in the block doing the same thing." Emotions are called into being to anchor the vision within familial relations "when your son or daughter calls" and "you try not to choke up" when the family unit remains structurally sound.

Romney's argument from authority relies mainly on the articulation of his personal experience as business leader and manager of the venture capital firm Bain Capital. He begins the section by criticizing Obama's lack of business experience as the cause of his administration's failures to adequately recover the economy (pp. 45-54). Romney then portrays the company as the model of American capitalism and success. Highlighting the success stories of Staples, Sports Authority, and Steel Dynamics, Romney's narrative of Bain Capital features

prominently the message of “I learned the real lessons from how American works from experience” (p. 46).

The domestic policy argument section of the speech (pp. 58-67) relies on a five point refutation of Obama’s successes and a five-point plan for “restoring” America. After citing the economic troubles facing the nation, Romney attacks the Obama recovery plan:

His plan to put taxes on small businesses won’t add jobs. It will eliminate them. His assault on coal and gas and oil will send energy and manufacturing jobs to China. His trillion dollar cuts to our military will eliminate hundreds of thousands of jobs and also put our security at greater risk. His \$716 billion cut to Medicare to finance Obamacare will hurt today’s seniors and depress innovation in jobs and medicines. And his trillion dollar deficits, they slow our economy, restrain employment, and causes wages to stall. (pp. 58-61)

Romney then outlines his five-step plan to correct the failures of the Obama administration:

Paul Ryan and I have five steps. First, by 2020, North America will be energy independent by taking advantage of our oil, our coal, our gas, our nuclear, and renewables. Second, we will give our fellow citizens the skills they need for the jobs of today and the careers of tomorrow. When it comes to the school your child will attend, every parent should have a choice, and every child should have a chance. Third, we will make trade work for America by forging new trade agreements, and when nations cheat in trade, there will be unmistakable consequences. And fourth, to assure every entrepreneur and every job creator that their investments in America will not vanish, as have those in Greece. We will cut the deficit and put America on track to a balanced budget. And fifth, we will champion small businesses, America's engine of job growth.

That means reducing taxes on business, not raising them. It means simplifying and modernizing the regulations that hurt small businesses the most, and it means we must rein in skyrocketing cost of health care by repealing and replacing Obamacare. (pp. 63-67)

Each of the five steps is crafted as a rhetorical response to the status quo policies Romney criticizes the Obama administration on. The refutative strategy is parallel and simplistic, but claims to articulate specific differences from the current president. Romney makes a series of promises to the American people in the next segment, promises that include freezing taxes on the middle class, respecting the sanctity of life, honoring the institution of marriage, guaranteeing the freedom of religion, and finally “to help you and your family” (pp. 68-72). The five promises parallel the five criticisms of the status quo and the five steps to restoring America and provide a transition into the penultimate section on foreign policy.

On the question of foreign relations, Romney develops a similar parallel structure to the previous segment, but embeds those parallelisms within each of the statements. Beginning with the question of unapologetic strength tied to economic weakness, the section moves quickly from larger questions of foreign policy outlook into specific complaints about Iran, Israel, Cuba, Poland, and Russia.

I will begin my presidency with the jobs tour. President Obama began his with an apology tour. America he said had dictated to other nations. No, Mr. President America has freed other nations from dictators. Every American was relieved the day President Obama gave the order and SEAL Team 6 took out Osama Bin Laden. On another front, every American is less secure today because he has failed to slow Iran's nuclear threat. In his first TV interview as president, he said we should talk to Iran. We are still talking, and

Iran's centrifuges are still spinning. President Obama has thrown allies like Israel under the bus even as he has relaxed sanctions on Castro's Cuba. He abandoned our friends in Poland by walking away from missile defense commitments. But he's eager to give Russia's president Putin the flexibility he desires after the election. Under my presidency our friends will see more loyalty and Mr. Putin will see a little less flexibility and more backbone. We will honor America's Democratic ideals because a free world is a more peaceful world. This is the bipartisan foreign legacy of Truman and Reagan, and under presidency we will return to it once again. (pp. 73-79)

Once again the theme of renewal and return closes the section and offers the audience a clear historical (and bipartisan) precedent for the path forward, the foreign policies of Truman and Reagan. Iraq and Afghanistan are notably absent from the section, the focus instead remains on the latent threat from Iran, and the non-existent one from Castro's Cuba. Relying on "Democratic ideals" the closing statement of the section reiterates the commitment to exceptionalism as the guiding principle of foreign policy, a principle espoused most strongly by the most significant of modern Republican figures, Ronald Reagan.

Romney concludes the speech with a restatement of his vision of America. He describes those who "lived and died" for a "united America" that led the world with "innovation and productivity" and will again in the future (pp. 85-86). Romney's vision includes the restoration of "every father and mother's confidence" that the "future is brighter even than the past" and a "military that's so strong no nation will ever dare to test it" (p. 86). The restored nation "will uphold the consolation of rights" "care for the poor and sick" "honor and respect the elderly" and "give a helping hand to those in need" (pp. 87-88). For Romney each of these principles is crucial to his vision of America and its future, namely because it "is our destiny" and "is out

there...waiting for us” (p. 89). The exceptional nature of the people and nation can be assured because our future is assured as long as we adhere to the fundamental principles enshrined in the Constitution and the examples provided us by the character of people like Romney’s mother, father and wife, and American figures like Armstrong, Truman, and Reagan.

The most notable strategies developed by Romney in his speech revolve around the development of his vision for America and the exceptional nature of its people. Romney’s vision of America centers around a conception of the town-space described through an almost Disney-like artificiality and sameness, echoing Main Street, but only through an ideal configuration of that space, not a description of the lived reality of the people who experience it on a daily basis. The American personas evoked throughout the speech present analogues for different aspects of the character of the people and the vision for the future can only be assured when each of those aspects is present within the nominee himself.

IV – Tautology, Synecdoche, Scapegoats

This chapter will synthesize the rhetoric described in chapters two and three into a thematic examination of the evolution of the political arguments advanced by Romney from the primary debates through the political convention. The descriptive evaluation of the primary debates and the convention rhetoric reveals a pattern of discourse in which ideology acts as a constraining influence on the argumentative potential of Romney's political positions. The relationship between ideological constraints and rhetorical excess is examined through the central issues that emerge in the early stages of the Romney campaign as manifest in three overriding campaign themes that emerged in both the primary debates and the Republican convention: taxation, the role of government, and the constitution.

Taxation

The rise of Tea Party discourse in 2010 marked a decided shift away from George Bush's compassionate conservatism of 2000 or the neo-conservative dogma of the 2004 and 2008 elections. Small-government libertarians joined with anti-tax Reagan purists and Constitutional originalists to form a sizeable cadre of active conservatives willing to place pressure on their party from the ideological fringe. Vertically integrated by astroturfing organizations funded by Dick Armey, the Koch family, and others, promoted nationally by the media wing of the party, and dispersed across most rural counties in America, the Tea Party represented a substantial upwelling of conservative activism. Current and prospective politicians joined to form a bloc of interests large enough to put pressure on the internal leadership of the Republican Party during the ensuing years of their existence.

Exemplified by the debt ceiling crisis in 2011, the Tea Party's strength derived not from a shared ideological position amongst its members, but by the perceived strength of its ideological radicalism in Washington. John Boehner and Eric Cantor acceded to Tea Party demands when a deal was on the table to resolve the crisis. In 2011 and 2012, Mitt Romney faced a similar rhetorical challenge when confronted discursively by Tea Party demands. How does a seemingly moderate Republican convince ideological radicals of his sincerity to pure ideological markers and win an election by presenting a viable policy alternative to the status quo administration at the same time? In this section, I will examine the ways in which ideological purity demands on tax policy shape the arguments of Republican candidates for president, specifically, how the ideological orientation of an anti-taxation wing of the party demands a whole swath of radical policy arguments from its candidate and undermines their ability to make substantive arguments in favor of policy. Taxation connects the free-market ideology with the two other concepts addressed later in the study: government and constitution. Taxes represent the point of the spear of government intervention for libertarians and the reverence displayed toward constitutional and national originalism harkens back to a time when taxation without representation was the calling card of a revolutionary generation.

Much of the discourse surrounding anti-tax arguments in conservative ideology today stem from an understanding of the Reagan presidency inconsistent with the historical reality of the Reagan administration. Two different rhetorical tropes have emerged in the discourse of the Grover Norquist tax pledge and its use of Reagan's image in the debate over taxation. The first trope connects Reagan-era tax policy with an utter refusal to raise taxes without corresponding spending offsets – the famous Norquist pledge. The second trope relates to the demand for loyalty within the party and its attendant demands on the ideological purity of its members. Both

tropes contain essential truths about Reagan but convert them into stringent ideological tests of conservatism. Taxes also played a central role in the construction of Mitt Romney as a Cayman Island tax-dodger by the Democrats and helped to establish several perceived inconsistencies between the ideology and policy of the 2012 Republican nominee.

Mitt Romney reacted to the presence of ideologically radical candidates in part by maintaining the semblance of a moderate policy agenda without providing depth or explanation to that agenda. This section will argue that the Romney policy platform functioned enthymematically for the far right, allowing them to fill-in the specifics of the Romney platform in the 2012 GOP Convention platform. Presented with a blank slate or an etch-a-sketch, the newly constrained Republican party responded by filling in the gaps with anti-tax policy positions. The resulting combination of surface policy promises and underlying extreme policy specifics created the conditions for a hollow argument that relied solely on a negative ideological construction of taxation. Fundamentally a rhetorical problem, the presentation of policy positions whose substance was inconsistent with the content of the Party platform presented the electorate with a contradiction of ideology and policy, which they resolved by voting to maintain the status quo by six points.

Mitt Romney's response in the primary debates reveals the constraining elements of the anti-tax demands of the Tea Party ideologues. Romney's policy rhetoric on taxation revolves around three arguments – he will cut taxes, he will cut spending, he will reduce the deficit and eventually the national debt. Each argument provides the required evidence of Romney's ideological orientation, but when viewed together as a policy, provides no specifics or substance as to the taxes or spending to be cut aside from the ACA. Without a clear conception of what their nominee prefers, the GOP platform committee will provide their own policy specifics,

undermining the apparent centrism of the Romney candidacy. Romney's acceptance speech in Tampa continued the pattern of the primary debates, all surface and no substance. The resulting dissonance between the rhetoric of the candidate and the policy of the party forecasts the difficulty Romney had convincing voters that his move to the middle in the first debate at Denver was authentic.

The immediate response indicates the policy stance: repeal. Lacking in complexity and replete with ideological markers, the following series of responses proceeds along the "reduce federal control, cut spending, cut taxes, government intrusion, and state's rights" line of argumentation. The figure "one trillion dollars" both misleads the audience by presenting the spending as a lump sum, not projected out over time, as are all budgetary figures. The reasoning behind the argument is reduced to the simple blanket ideological claim, "we can't afford more federal spending" provided without any complexity or nuance. The next argument "it raises 500 billion in taxes" is similarly ideological and reductive of the policy reality. The third move refers to the money that Romney accuses Obama of taking out of Medicare. By implicating a policy held dear by many Republican constituents in the oldest demographics, Romney poses the ACA as an immediate threat to health care. Moving from the more abstract (government spending) to the more particular (your Medicare coverage), the anti-tax argument has a consistent and circular logic. Romney repeats the exact same argument in his next response: "It's a huge power grab by the federal government. It's going to be massively expensive, raising taxes, cutting Medicare. It's wrong for America. And that's why there's an outpouring across the nation to say no to Obamacare" (CNN, 2011). Tied together throughout his policy arguments, the spending-taxing-taking argument is repeated again later in this and other debates.

Romney also frames the health reforms to distance himself from his own record on healthcare, one of the primary conservative complaints about Romney's pragmatism. The dual distancing, both from the status quo policy and his own record, reveals one reason why argumentative simplicity provides Romney an easy explanation for one major concern about his commitment to the ideology. In both debates, Tim Pawlenty is given the opportunity to repeat the conservative complaint against Romney, that his policies in Massachusetts were the model for the Affordable Care Act, and thus indict his credentials as a leader of the party. Romney responds both times with distancing arguments about taxation and the federal/state divide.

On the topic of the auto bailout for the American car industry, Romney uses the same argumentative structure while substituting the topical specifics for the content. Every program seems to have the same three problems and reduces the possibility of argument to a simple three part formulaic response. The auto bailout spends too much money, uses taxpayer revenue, and represents a theft from the free workings and benefits of the market.

The argument again implies a nefarious motive, "the scales of justice" being directly placed in opposition to the United Auto Workers, a reference to the whole of the pro-labor elements of the Democratic Party. The current administration spends money on both policies, uses tax revenue to fund both policies, and disrupts the "natural" or "just" workings of the system by taking/cheating to fix the game in favor of one side. Spending money through federal programs inherently subsidizes particular behaviors which are anathema to free-market ideologies. Once the Affordable Care Act has been placed at the entry point of the argument chain as "Obamacare," the synecdochal operations of its significance within the 2012 Republican ideological field can be seen transposed tautologically in every other policy prescription. The list of suspect policies would surely include such programs as welfare, unemployment insurance,

food stamps, subsidies to uncompetitive businesses, and any form of government intervention in the marketplace. Every single response to these policy questions follows the same formula for Romney—cut the program, cut more taxes, and the repealed policy returns the money/company to its rightful place within the market. Even in the context of disaster relief, Romney is unrelenting in his dogmatism: “[Peter] KING: Including disaster relief, though? ROMNEY: We cannot -- we cannot afford to do those things without jeopardizing the future for our kids. It is simply immoral, in my view, for us to continue to rack up larger and larger debts and pass them on to our kids, knowing full well that we'll all be dead and gone before it's paid off. It makes no sense at all” (CNN, 2011).

Each of the three policy positions represents an aspect of the ideological influence on Romney’s rhetoric during the debates. On the issue of health care, the framing of the individual mandate as a tax allows Romney to distance himself rhetorically from the President and from his own policies in Massachusetts. Romney states his position on taxes in the shape of a belief, rather than as an outcome of careful thought and contemplation on the issue. Finally, Romney takes the pledge against tax increases on stage with every other candidate, ensuring that every donor, media pundit, or voter receives visual confirmation of his adherence to party dogma. The accession to ideological demands leaves open the door for a very aggressive policy agenda of tax reductions as outlined by the convention platform writers in Tampa. The two modes of argument, spend/tax/steal and the extreme purity test on stage reveal the repetitive logic and tautological logic behind any argument against government programs. The former appears again in the party platform and the acceptance speech, while the purity test remains a unique feature of the primary debates. The televised medium of the primary debate creates some necessity for starker and more immediate purity tests. Hearing from ten candidates on every issue in ninety minutes temporally

magnifies both the need for an instantaneous litmus test on every contender and the visual impact of the hand raising process itself as a symbolic representation of loyalty, honesty, and purity.

Romney's failure to make substantive policy arguments in his acceptance speech represents a missed opportunity to propose moderate or pragmatic policy options to the status quo. The search for ideological purity within the Republican Party places demands upon presidential candidates that will constrain them from meeting the demands of a moderate and increasingly independent electorate. By not balancing the demands for ideological purity with policy demands from the larger electorate in his acceptance address, he relied on excessively vague policy statements and failed to access argumentative content that would have appealed to moderate voters. The scope and range of policy arguments in the 2012 platform is very restricted in relation to the question of taxes. The purity demands from Norquist types provide candidates with strict guidance; little leeway is given beyond the choice of which taxes to cut. The 2012 platform articulates a political vision oriented primarily around the elimination of a series of taxes. The tautology sets up a logical relation between every part of the economic system: economic growth derives from lower taxes, smaller government begins with fewer taxes, and taxes are an anathema to freedom.

The taxation element of the Affordable Care Act serves as one of many entry points in the platform for attacking and advocating the repeal of "Obamacare." On page 3, the committee calls the act a "fiscal nightmare" "with over \$1 trillion in new taxes." The program is characterized as a "poverty trap" that would "ensnare even more Americans" if implemented (p. 31). The taxation element of the ACA always presides over other arguments when they are presented by either Romney or the platform committee, and directs the argumentative content towards an ideological opposition to the policy. Used as a controlling trope for other social

programs, the ACA represents arguments against “a maze of approximately 80 programs that are neither coordinated nor effective in solving poverty and lifting up families.” Opposition to “Obamacare” stands in for opposition to a whole host of other programs which constitute the social safety net. The ACA is all three forms of unnecessary policy, a redistributive system, an imbalance between spending and taxes, and a bureaucratic “nightmare.” Programs which share any negative characteristics with “Obamacare” can be synecdochally replaced by referencing the healthcare topic and performing a quick substitution of one substantive detail with another.

The “taxation restricts freedom” principle is applied to many different policy arguments throughout the document and tautologically informs their valuation within the ideological field. The arguments are directed by an internal logic established at the outset of the document. Constructed in multiple ways when deployed as an argument, the idea of taxation operates as one of the fundamental axes in republican ideology. The platform committee posits tax reform (read reduction or elimination) as the solution to almost every economic woe. Taxes are the fundamental barrier to individual freedom. The taxation element of the Affordable Care Act represents the primary objection to the program. Every other micro- and macro-economic policy is tied to taxation either through the arguments of “it spends too much” “it taxes too much” or “it wastes or misappropriates tax dollars.” Each of these elements are crucial to understanding the limitations this places on argumentative choice for Mitt Romney in Tampa. Romney can transpose the “taxes/freedom” theme onto policy topics across the spectrum and he can chain out a series of economic consequences to the status quo policy, but the argument remains devoid of substance or nuance. The shallow ideological structure is best revealed in the short policy section toward the end.

Romney provides no specifics, no evidence, and no nuance or substance that would appeal to undecided moderates. Repeal Obamacare is the last element in the policy section, and functions to tie together the previous five elements by virtue of its substance. Romney delivers every other policy promise (energy independence, career building, free trade, investment, and lower taxes) without specifics or policy analogies, and relies almost entirely on ideological statements of opposition or support. “Repealing Obamacare” remains the only specific element of the entire policy section, and rhetorically asked to represent the valuation of every other policy argument in the mix. Despite the simplicity of the strategy, it seems problematic when attempting to identify with moderate voters. First, the entire series of arguments about the Affordable Care Act relies on two underlying assumptions about the nature of the swing voter: that they care about repealing “Obamacare” more than they care about other economic policies and that they think that “Obamacare” is an accurate representation of their views on healthcare. If either of these two characteristics does not conform to the targeted voter, the strategy is ill suited to the task. Second, Romney’s reliance on taxation as a central operating principle for policy arguments across the spectrum constrains him to a single formula of arguments that makes the repetition apparent and leaves the corresponding policy recommendations devoid of nuance. The focus on ideological argument demands too much from a moderate or independent swing voter who is looking for alternatives to the status quo economic troubles.

Government

Taxation points toward a larger, more dominant set of ideological beliefs within the Republican worldview in 2012. The connection between freedom and taxation outlined in Part II extends beyond that single rhetorical practice to connect with libertarian voices emerging within the Republican Party as a result of the Tea Party's rise. Taxation functions only as a single element within the entire ideological field of anti-government sentiment expressed throughout the rhetoric. The larger question of the role of government within civil society forms the fundamental political argument articulated by the right in recent years. Here I examine the three modes of argument that are activated by Republican ideology in the 2012 election and how the invocations of "Obamacare" serve to represent an entire field of libertarian and anti-government sentiment throughout the rhetoric of Mitt Romney and the platform committee at the 2012 RNC. I will argue that Romney relies on three main rhetorical strategies related to the topic of government as policy maker and that each of those three controls the arguments made about the Affordable Care Act during the election. Finally, I will show a few contradictions exposed by the government trope that are further investigated in the final section on constitution.

Romney's arguments about the size and role of government rely on three primary operations to criticize the policies of the status quo. First, the arguments that "devolve authority to the states" perform two important tasks for Romney in relation to the Republican Party. Differentiating between the federal and state level helps him to differentiate between "Obamacare" and his own health care record. The strategy also aids Romney in appealing to the growing influence of the Tea Party within the Republican Party. The second argument Romney uses is a "privatize it" response to many policies. Every program that costs the federal government money but does not conform to the core Republican vision of government should be

privatized. Romney also uses the concepts of “regulation”, “bureaucracy”, “taxation”, and “redistribution” as stand-ins for “inefficiency”, “economic stagnation”, “job losses,” but most importantly “freedom” of the marketplace. Taxation’s relationship to freedom can be expanded to include any of the government’s regular functions and transposed onto the concept that those operations “inhibit maximum economic freedom”. Governments regulate, tax, redistribute, and are full of bureaucracy, yet the ideological attachment to an unrealistic ideal of freedom rooted in its relationship to taxation undermines the adaptability of the argument in practice. Finally, “Obamacare” functions as a scapegoat-like synecdoche within the larger ideology because it can easily access all three modes of the argument by being simply repealed. In addition, its representative status as the signature achievement of the Obama administration provides it with much more flexibility and appeal than do other policy arguments.

Mitt Romney deploys this argumentative strategy in several ways during the primary debates. He organizes his arguments about government much in the same way one can imagine he suggests outsourcing opportunities. The primary ideological foundation is almost dogmatic in its tone: “Every time you have an occasion to take something from the federal government and send it back to the states, that's the right direction” (CNN, 2011). Rather than drawing a fine line on certain arguments, Romney uses the broadest terms possible and his rhetoric leaves wide policy areas available to him within this ideological frame. The litmus test for federal programs also resembles very closely the argument made in the party platform for re-evaluating every government program through the Tenth Amendment. Arguments against card check, cap-and-trade, the auto bailout, disaster relief, debt ceiling, entitlement payouts, and anti-poverty programs are all contextualized by Romney during the early primary debates within the framework of federal/state balance of power. The line of argument helps to distance the state

level endorsement of health care reform while rejecting the federal mandate, a move used to satisfy uncertainty on the right. He characterizes the Affordable Care Act as a “power grab” by the federal government, and says he would replace it with a “state-centric” approach.

Romney also uses the federalism argument to imply that federal programs are “inches away” from undermining economic freedom. “I signed a pledge saying I would not raise the debt ceiling unless we had ‘cut, cap and balance,’” he states, and says he would have held that position “all the way to the very end” (FOX News, 2011). The argument contains a reference to the purity test, a pledge he signed against raising the debt ceiling, implying to the audience that his commitment is more than just political dissimulation, but an ideological commitment. In addition to the explicit reference to ideological purity, the formula here echoes much of the “starve the beast” rhetoric of fiscal conservatism. Spending cuts are warranted throughout his primary appearances by repeated references to job creation and the scale of government. The ideology restricts Romney’s arguments to a particular understanding of federal program spending, and demands the candidate defend cuts for everything from food stamps to PBS. Romney includes deficit reduction as a major plank of his “five-steps” to correcting the economy in his acceptance address. Romney says that “this is when our nation was supposed to start paying down the national debt, and rolling back massive deficits. This was the hope and change America voted for. It is not just what we wanted, it is not just what we expected, it is what Americans deserved” (ABC News, 2012, p. 13). Future debt hampers future growth, and the very survival of our economic system is endangered by excessive government spending. Deficit reduction arguments rely on examples of excessive government spending, lackluster job growth, and harm to the economic performance of the country.

In the first instance, the federal/state relationship is established by Romney to create ideological sameness with the state-centered policy focus of the party. By differentiating his health care policies as a state-based approach to the problem, he can simultaneously deflect criticism about his own moderation while reflecting the federalist value system idealized by party faithful. The argument in this does not contain elements that are useful for persuading moderate audiences. No fine distinctions are drawn between the state and federal health care policies; the appeal relies solely on the audience's opposition to federal government programs. The second iteration of the federalism argument utilizes ideas about the deficit to justify repealing legislation and reducing the size of government programs. The union between arguments about fiscal conservatism and libertarian ideals satisfies two core constituencies of the Republican Party. Moderate and independent voters that rely on many of those federal programs might easily be dissuaded by a candidate willing to reduce any and all national assistance programs to rubble.

The platform committee and Mitt Romney make arguments along a second trajectory related to the government. Situating private business against the federal government, this argument picks up the "starve the beast" thematic, and ties it to several characteristics of private business that justify a program of repeal and restructure across all federal policies. Free market principles are presented ideologically opposite to government spending throughout the platform by the committee. Privatization of the home mortgage industry is presented as the solution to stagnant inventory and sales numbers (p. 5). Government bailouts of the housing sector and the auto industry are to blame for depressing free market impulses in the economy (p. 5-6). Private property forms the foundation of the free market system within this framework, and the platform heaps praise upon the Fifth Amendment for its protection of property ownership (p.13). Private

companies should burn more coal (p. 15) and environmental protection should be the purview of private polluters (p.18). The core of the ideological argument is contained within a few short sentences in the platform:

We look to government— local, State, and federal— for the things government must do ... For all other activities, we look to the private sector; for the American people’s resourcefulness, productivity, innovation, fiscal responsibility, and citizen leadership have always been the true foundation of our national greatness ... we have witnessed the expansion, centralization, and bureaucracy in an entitlement society. Government has lumbered on, stifling innovation, with no incentive for fundamental change, through antiquated programs begun generations ago and now ill-suited to present needs and future requirements. (p. 21)

The privatization argument accesses a key rhetorical advantage for Romney. The line of reasoning draws a direct connection between Romney and his personal background for the general electorate. Predictably, the acceptance address in Tampa is replete with examples of this strategy. Romney’s first direct attack on President Obama places the question of business experience in the forefront. He says Obama “took office without the basic qualification that most Americans have, and one that was essential to the task at hand. He had almost no experience working in a business. Jobs to him are about government” (ABC News, 2012, p. 45). After establishing his qualifications in an analogic relationship to the overall ideological principle of privatization, Romney describes a series of businesses that were successful due to the market processes of creative destruction (pp. 47-51). Individual freedom, business success, and free market economics shape the ideas that make Romney’s economic proposals more credible for audiences than other argument choices.

The third main mode of the government argument draws connections between the level of the program (federal/state/local/private) and its economic success. The justification for the economic success argument functions a little bit differently than the privatization and federalism arguments. The primary function of the argument is to define each program in terms of key characteristics across the board. The platform committee describes the Affordable Care Act as an “expansion, centralization, and bureaucracy in an entitlement society,” “a euro-style bureaucracy to manage all aspects of their lives” (p. 22, 32). The platform characterizes Medicaid as an “inflexible bureaucracy ... a budgetary black hole, growing faster ... and devouring funding for many other essential governmental functions” (p. 21-22). The Transportation Security Administration is labeled as “a massive bureaucracy” “accountable to no one” (p. 25).

Two ideological operations are at work here. The first function of this argument enables candidates to access the taxation/freedom equation described above. Bureaucracy describes the entelechial extension of the government power of taxation by dint of a simple tautology. Bureaucracy involves the imposition of government decisionmaking at the level of the citizen. Just as taxation is felt by individual voters, so is bureaucracy felt by the average, middle-class citizen. From the line at the DPS to the elevator music on the other end of the phone, bureaucracy is a directly translatable experience for the audience. If bureaucracy can be characterized as anathema to freedom, the chosen government program can be pilloried for restricting freedom. In listing his policy priorities during the primary debates, Romney states that “Number two is to make sure that our regulations and bureaucracy works not just for the bureaucrats in Washington, but for the businesses that are trying to grow.” (FOX News, 2011) Bureaucracy works well, but only when run by private interests or in benefit of those interests.

The strategy is specific to a particular concept, but transposes onto the arguments about taxation, privatization, and federalism without much trouble.

Romney uses this to his advantage in his acceptance address through several of the arguments described above. “It means simplifying and modernizing the regulations that hurt small businesses the most,” he says, “and it means we must rein in skyrocketing cost of health care by repealing and replacing Obamacare” (p.67). Once again, “Obamacare” represents an ideological marker within the overall argumentative framework: the bureaucratic restraints on private sector freedom. Inevitably for the base audience, all governmental programs are laden with bureaucratic inefficiencies, and despite the relative simplicity of the argumentative strategy, it operates smoothly between both the government and constitution arguments for the audiences on the right. For those audiences in the middle, it seems to access more limited conceptual relationships between a general dislike of government and the idea of bureaucracy.

The bureaucratization argument also functions to implicate policies that restrict individual freedom conceptualized as social control, rather than economic control. The reference to the ACA as “euro-style” is clearly one variation of this argument. Health care reform that threatens to “manage all aspects of their lives” represents another interpellation of the same thematic. More work will be done in the following section on the relationship between the role of government and the constitution of social audiences, and it should be enough to say for now that there is a definite correlation between many of the policies characterized as bureaucratic, the connection they have to the freedom themes, and their utilization as political scapegoats within the ideological identification schemes. Romney rhetorically constructs “Obamacare” through each of these different argumentative forms, using a scapegoating process that simultaneously acts as an ideological purity test to satisfy primary voters and operates to diffuse the utility of

other ideologically constrained arguments. The repeated use of the term “Obamacare” immediately attaches an entire field of ideological beliefs about the policy understood as “Obamacare” and not the actual policy passed by the administration known as the Affordable Care Act. The tax/spend/steal argument is used throughout the primaries by Romney when he is debating health care. Romney also places the ACA in opposition to federalist principles, and offers a solution to the “imbalance” in the system described in the party platform. Repeal “Obamacare” and devolve the power to the states, and both demands are satisfied.

Romney constructs the rhetorical function of “Obamacare” as scapegoat during the final step of his “five steps” to economic recovery. Every policy aspect is devoid of specifics except the explicit promise to repeal the legislation. Economic recovery “means reducing taxes on business, not raising them. It means simplifying and modernizing the regulations that hurt small businesses the most, and it means we must rein in skyrocketing cost of health care by repealing and replacing Obamacare” (ABC News, 2012, p. 67). “Obamacare” has previously been characterized in primary debates by Romney as taxation, regulation, costly, bureaucratic, unconstitutional, and government “power grab.” Status quo harms are alleviated by the promise to repeal the health care legislation, and the base voters can tap into an entire unspoken enthymematic understanding of the ideological relationship between them and the candidate.

“Obamacare” operates as a synecdoche for each element of the Republican ideology related to government, creating argumentative tools and tautological relationships to other policy arguments within the Republican field of political knowledge. Romney can transfer the structure of the argument onto other policies like the auto bailout, scale the implications up to the macro-economic level, or scale them down to the level of individual liberty. “Obamacare” can be applied many different elements of the Republican base rather broadly with enthymematic

references to the policy. It can also be targeted at limited groups of moderate or independent voters whose preferences about government can be tied to dislike for the concept of “Obamacare.” However, for the rhetorical construction “Obamacare” its content remains essentially ideological, not substantive.

One policy area stands out among as a contradiction within the rest of the ideological frame of government: the issue of marriage equality. When asked in Ames about the role of the federal government, Romney argued for an increase in control at the federal level by defining marriage. “I believe we should have a federal amendment in the constitution that defines marriage as a relationship between a man and woman,” he says, “because I believe the ideal place to raise a child is in a home with a mom and a dad” (FOX News, 2011). The “ideal place to raise a child” articulated as a foundational concept worthy of protection by the interventions of the federal government. In the words of the platform committee:

A blatant example has been the court-ordered redefinition of marriage in several States. This is more than a matter of warring legal concepts and ideals. It is an assault on the foundations of our society, challenging the institution which, for thousands of years in virtually every civilization, has been entrusted with the rearing of children and the transmission of cultural values ... We reaffirm our support for a Constitutional amendment defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman. (Committee on Arrangements, 2012, p. 10)

Two important elements of this argument tie the preceding section on government to the next. First, the concept of constitution determines much of the relationship between the federal government and Republican ideology. Core ideological principles about the “ideal” home must be protected so that families can be “constituted” properly by government control. Also, the call

for a “Constitutional Amendment” in the platform should not be read as meaning only one aspect of the word. The platform fully intends to “constitute” a political body that prevents the “assault” on our “society” and “civilization” by the “transmission of cultural values” to those who would otherwise support marriage equality. In this sense, government and constitution meet in the intersection of marriage rights, and informs many of the arguments about the constitution of our nation, socially and politically.

Constitution

The following section will deal with a concept that seems to permeate the rhetoric in the primary debates and the convention rhetoric, that of constitution. The Oxford English Dictionary defines “constitution” as “1. a. The action of constituting, making, establishing, etc.: To set, place (in a specified state, situation, condition, etc.)” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2013). Republican arguments in 2012 circulated around a series of rhetorical constitutions that took the action of making and establishing ideological constructions as elements within their larger rhetorical strategy. This section argues that in the process of negotiating between purity demands on the right and substantive demands of the general electorate, Mitt Romney rhetorically constructs a series of social structures within his vision for America from elements of Republican ideology. This chapter discusses the political, social, and conceptual elements that constitute this vision for the country.

Initially, the section will examine the concept of constitutional originalism as a prominent rhetorical feature within the 2012 Republican policy arguments. The Constitution (the document) as well as constitution (the noun) serves as an ideological anchor for many of the other arguments during the campaign. The platform constructs ideal conceptions of both the founding

fathers and the Constitution in its arguments. The argument strategy of constitutional originalism constitutes a series of arguments about the American Dream, the development of territorial space for infrastructural development at the municipal level, and the role of the family within the political body. Each part of the ideological argument performs a re-constitution of party identity within the person of Willard “Mitt” Romney. The nominee represents both a return to original ideological precepts embodied within the rhetorical construction of the Constitution, and a re-constitution of the political body that is the party of the conservative, libertarian, and Tea Party movements. Each topic will represent different modes through which the constitution theme articulates ideological arguments about the polis. The construction of the rural/urban opposition is one of four fundamental structures by which “country” is constituted in the rhetoric of the party. The other structures include the previous conceptions of “Constitution,” “life,” and “family.” Each of the four informs the particular contribution of their ideas to the overall ideological constitution of the national and political identity of America in their rhetoric.

The entire second chapter of the platform is dedicated to the “Restoration of a Constitutional Government” with the concept of a return to foundational principles imbued throughout the pages. Here, we have the most obvious example of the Republican ideological tautology and synecdoche at work. “We are the party of the Constitution,” the platform states in the first utterances of Chapter 2—when you think of the Constitution, think of us (p. 9). The synecdotoal relationship between the Constitution and the Republican Party functions as the sign of the party’s commitments to “freedom” as well as a deflection of criticism for complaints of heterogeneity. For the platform committee, because the constitution is flawless, the tautology it sets up appears immediately and consistently throughout the chapter. The Constitution, “defines the purposes and limits of government and is the blueprint for ordered liberty that makes the U.S.

the world's freest, most stable, and most prosperous nation. Its Constitutional ideals have been emulated around the world, and with them has come unprecedented prosperity for billions of people." Again, the Constitution orients the political and moral relationship between the Republican Party, the concept of the "beacon on the hill" as the guidepost for all other political philosophies and systems around the world.

Romney founds his conception of national identity in the founding origins and religious tolerance; "we recognize that the people of all faiths are welcome in this country" he says, "Our nation was founded on a principal of religious tolerance. That's in fact why some of the early patriots came to this country and we treat people with respect regardless of their religious persuasion" (CNN, 2011). The Republican platform also points to our founding as the origin of religious toleration. Despite the rosy prognostications of a harmonious, multi-faith national body, the underside to this strategy carries a much more discriminatory and invasive edge. The direct connection between religion and founding at the heart of the vision informs the move into the other structures of national identity, most importantly, "life" and "family"

Despite the reverence afforded our founding political document, the platform suggests two flaws that must be remedied through Constitutional amendment. Peculiar that such a perfect and sanctified ideological marker should need reform or change. Due to the erosion of the "foundations of our society," we need to shore up the fundamental principles upon which it rests (p. 10). The evidence of decay in our polis tautologically refers to the Constitution and creates a relationship between the social body, the political body, and our political documents. The constitution of "life" and "marriage" through Constitutional amendment form twin ideals of community and the body politic that inform the Republican vision of the American Dream from top to bottom, inside and outside. Beginning with the concept of "life" the ideology posits

visions of “family,” “town,” and “country” that are derived through a tautological relationship to the construction of “Constitution.” This definition establishes the same formula seen later in the party platform and described above: one man + one woman = good family. Romney advocates the Constitutional amendment outlined in the platform in his acceptance again, confirming the ideological alignment with one of the rhetorically constituted ideals at the heart of the Republican ideology.

The family constitutes the second level of the body politic and informs much of the vision of the “town” constructed through Republican ideology, as well as its ideological opposite, the “urban space.” The town and the vision are constituted through fundamental ideological markers, and those concepts create a synecdoche between the family and the town structure. The platform explains the connection between the themes of return and the vision of the town outlined by Romney. Setting aside for a moment the social degradation occurring within the ideology occurring at the level of “life” and “family,” the platform makes a much more material criticism of the status quo development of town. Within the ideological frame, each element of the national body is threatened by status quo policies. The Constitution is under attack by an administration evading, violating, and ignoring the fundamental ideological principles (Committee on Arrangements, 2012, p. 9). The sanctity of life is under attack by health care which “includes abortion coverage” and the “barbaric practice of partial-birth abortion” (p. 14). Activist judges are destroying the foundations of our social body through the “redefinition” of marriage (p. 10). The township suffers from immanent infrastructural and economic collapse (p. 5). Every element of the social and political body decays, the party demands a return. “We must begin anew, with profound changes in the way government operates; the way it budgets, taxes, and regulates. Jefferson’s vision of a ‘wise and frugal

government' must be restored" (p. i). The country was great before and "it will be again, if we return government to its proper role, making it smaller and smarter." Within the Constitution, the return is guaranteed. "We possess an owner's manual" the committee says, "the Constitution of the United States, the greatest political document ever written. That sacred document shows us the path forward" (p. ii). The Constitution stands in for our political health, adherence to those principles enshrined in the document of our founding guarantees that we can protect life, the family, and the town – the site of the home, and thereby heal the polis through a return to the ideal.

"Obamacare" as rhetorical fiction operates at this level similarly to the ways explored in previous sections. The Affordable Care Act once again performs the role of rhetorical scapegoat for the ideology. Here, the scapegoat serves its purpose. By attaching the legislation to a violation of Constitutional principles, repeal of the ACA returns to a state of political affairs with an intact Constitution, a healthy polis, safe and healthy women, and free market principles. Romney performs the sacrifice admirably for the base, he promises in both Goffstown and Ames to repeal the legislation, and closes his five step plan to repair the economy with the rhetoric of repeal. What does the election of Mitt Romney for president mean policy wise? For him, "it means we must rein in skyrocketing cost of health care by repealing and replacing Obamacare" (ABC News, 2012, p. 67).

Constitutive rhetoric involves a process of negotiation between ideological concepts within a certain worldview. Between the conceptual fields of the platform committee and Mitt Romney, a series of rhetorical visions constitute the ideological makeup of Republican notions of "country" and essentially identity. "Constitution" is presented by the party as an affirmation of the ideological purity of our founding fathers and offers simple rhetorical strategies for dealing

with inconsistencies or incongruence within the arguments by a return to more “foundational” or pure documents and ideas. At the heart of founding, constitution, and origin are the religious tolerance arguments that justify the move from “Constitution” to “life” and “family.”

Constitution strategies allow candidates to move from religious freedom to right-to-life and marriage amendments without the public recognizing the inherent inconsistency. The deflection that the Constitution performs allows Republican candidates to make arguments about life and the family without explicitly calling upon religious dogma. The strategy directly isolates reproductive rights and marriage equality as corruptions within the body politic at the level of the social unit. Only federal, constitutional interventions can preserve life and the family, even if their origins are decidedly religious and their effects are inherently exclusionary and oppressive.

Finally, the vision of the country is projected onto the town through an articulation of the ideal city. Small businesses, churches, colleges, lawns, white picket fences, everything you see on television or read about in mid-century fiction. Obama’s “urban vision” threatens the infrastructure through which the family enters into the political sphere and contributes to the political functions of the nation. Without the Jeffersonian ideal, democracy, freedom, and our nation will collapse. Every construction of an ideal constitutes a particular aspect of the Republican ideology in relation to its rhetoric of political existence and the constitution of its body politic.

V: Conclusion

This study argues that ideological constraints as embodied by the 2012 GOP platform “We Believe in America” limited argumentative choice for Mitt Romney. Utilizing the principles of tautology and synecdoche the study examined three different ideological fields into which arguments about policy provide both implicit and explicit cues for the audience. The ideology of the 2012 election oriented arguments around the concepts of taxation, government, and constitution. Ideological criticism provided a ground from which to analyze the operations of argument and constitutive rhetoric within the campaign.

The campaign's treatment of the issue of “Obamacare” functions as both synecdoche and scapegoat within the ideological framework, and the construction of the rhetorical idea of “Obamacare” illustrates several ideological argument types. First, arguments about “Obamacare” are able to relate the Affordable Care Act to the whole of Republican ideology through a series of conceptual associations. The legislation is characterized as raising taxes, increasing the size of the government, violating the constitution, and generally causing social and economic decay. The association between the rhetorical concept “Obamacare” and the ideology also performs an enthymematic function for the ideology. Policies other than healthcare can easily be substituted within this framework to indict their utility. Policies ranging from the auto bailout to anti-poverty assistance can be organized by the rhetors into the same formula as the “Obamacare” associations.

When Romney states that he will “repeal Obamacare,” he can easily slide between each of the three different ideological loci: taxes, government, and constitution. The tautological relationship between “Obamacare” and the rest of the policy arguments runs both ways. Healthcare represents but one example of taxation schemes, government programs, or

constitutional violations that must be remedied by the election of Mitt Romney. The arguments against healthcare can be applied to every other policy that shares a similar characteristic, while simultaneously the ideological opposition to taxes, government intrusion, or constitutional erosion can be fed back into the arguments about “Obamacare” to strengthen their significance as an ideological frame.

Finally, the policy represented by “Obamacare” and the advocacy of its repeal by Romney and Republicans operates as a scapegoat within the electoral process. The arguments made supporting the repeal of the ACA all operate to condemn the legislation of a basic violation of ideological principles, then turns to repeal as the indication of a return or sacrifice for the good of the country. A second, tangential scapegoat relationship occurs as well. The rhetorical construction of “Obamacare” serves to conceptually unify the three ideological frames into an absolute opposition to the status quo policy. Divisive arguments between anti-tax, libertarian, and originalists within the Republican Party can unify to support the nominee against the current administration.

Two severe constraints emerge from the early argumentative choices made by Romney that reveal a relationship between ideology and argument that function to constrain Romney and inhibit the potential usefulness of the strategies described above. First, Romney’s choice to rely on ideology limits him to a trio of thematic variations that dominate the Republican worldview, and prevents him from developing substantive policy arguments about the key issues in the election. The way Romney positioned himself vis-à-vis the Republican ideology filtered any attempts to substantiate his claims through that ideology, and impacted his ability to return the campaign to meaningful and thoughtful debate. The dearth of evidence and specific policy proposals within Romney’s rhetoric allows the platform committee to fill-in the particulars with

ideological rigidity in the shape of absolutes, litmus tests, and hyperbolic objections to the status quo. The argument draws on ideological topoi that avoid rather than pursue identification with moderate and independent voters. The choice to adhere to the traditional triumvirate of Republican ideological markers (taxes, government, constitution) limits candidates to a negative policy approach, and prevents them from finding serious policy arguments in electoral contests.

Romney's second major constraint is his inability to develop nuance between one program and the other, between the rhetorical constructions of "Obamacare" and other policies treated in the rhetoric. Romney may have been persuaded to use this strategy because of the polling data on opposition to healthcare reform as a whole, but he probably underestimated the peripheral role of that particular policy within moderate and independent voting preferences. The moderate sheen that Romney applies to the radical core of his political arguments presents inconsistencies to the public that only conceptually relate to Republican ideological commitments.

This study also examined the ways in which arguments organize around certain concepts internal to the Republican ideology. Proceeding from the particular relationship to government action, to the broader conceptual relationship between ideology and constitution, this examination explored the types of argument strategies deployed by ideology around policies. The descriptive analysis sections provided a base from which to organize the ideological coordinates of different argument types, and from there draw implications about the strategic intent behind particular ways of deploying ideology. Purity tests, argumentative formulae, decentralization of space, re-constitution of a purer body politic—each of these strategies serves to reinforce core principles at the heart of the ideology and limits more substantive arguments to a simpler and more politically appealing negative argument. Purity tests determine the

constitution of the body politic, argument formulas inform that body politic how to express itself, the decentralization of space into rural and small-town visions provide a utopic space within which political action can exist, and finally, the re-constitution of the body through a series of political sacrifices identified within the milieu of the status quo policy agenda.

The preceding study attempts to offer three contributions to rhetorical scholarship, and points to future directions of this general research trajectory. Argument analysis always exists within a certain construct of ideological and rhetorical markers deployed within the rhetoric and experienced from the critic's perspective. Argument analysis at the level of ideology enables the critic to better study the conceptual premises which inform much of today's political rhetoric. This analysis attempted to uncover new ways of exploring the processes of argument and ideology by focusing on the constraints on argument presented by ideology, and their fundamental rhetorical relation to one another. This study also explored the ideological purity demands that ground much of the political argument present in the rhetoric of the 2012 election. This study approached the problem of ideological critique by grounding the analysis in candidate arguments and platform rhetoric. The demands of extreme and radical elements still threaten the constitution of the Republican Party as the "Growth and Opportunity Project" report can attest. Should arguments about policy continue to emerge from a radicalization and purification of the Republican Party, this process of ideological critique will be useful in the context of future electoral cycles. Finally, this study offers a critical explanation of the effect of ideology on the development of policy argument by political candidates. Showing the direction into which arguments are channeled by the ideology reveals the constraints placed on pragmatism and moderation by ideological argument and how rhetorical choices can orient political candidates within the ideological bounds of the party and limit future arguments to a particular set of

previously articulated formulae. The argument relies almost entirely on the three operations of synecdoche, tautology, and scapegoat and limits the candidate to both a predictable and inflexible formula for dealing with contextual and temporal change. Once candidates are locked into the argument from ideology, arguments which deal in small distinctions, nuance, or pragmatic policy making seem far out of reach.

Should the Republican Party continue to suffer at the hands of its own loyalists, the descent into argumentative simplicity and inflexibility may yet be over. The terminal problem with ideological adherence and its influence on argument seems to be symptomatic of the current identity crisis within the Republican Party. This study appears to reveal the problem to lying in the opposite direction. The Republican Party cannot stay whole under the current framework for policy argument. The demands of ideological purity are not congruent across fields, despite the flexibility of the argumentative forms deployed within them. The Republican Party cannot identify with a segment of the voting populace it continually submits to a process of testing, refining, and purifying.

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