BARACK OBAMA AND THE DAILY SHOW'S COMIC CRITIQUE OF WHITENESS: THE INTERSECTION OF POPULAR AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE

by

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Abstract

The 2008 presidential campaign controversy surrounding Rev. Jeremiah Wright's sermons had the potential to derail Barack Obama's candidacy. At the heart of the controversy was race, specifically Whiteness. Obama's speech "A More Perfect Union" is perhaps one of the most significant political speeches addressing race to date, and warrants analysis. However, Barry Brummett's book Rhetorical Dimensions of Popular Culture (1991) argues the critic should not be limited to discrete traditional texts, rather should be able to break outside such traditional speaker-focused boundaries. Brummett's mosaic model allows an exploration of the intersection between popular and political rhetoric of Obama and The Daily Show. I will argue from the intersection we see the emergence of the comic frame as a homology that links the disparate texts of Obama and TDS. I will argue the reason the comic frame emerges from the texts is because there is a societal mandate for the comic frame. Thus, I will ultimately argue the mandate for the comic frame can be better understood as a social movement. However, it is a movement comprised of numerous individual movements, and warrants a new term: meta-movement. Obama and TDS are not *leaders* of this meta-movement, but instead should be seen as *contributors*. Brummett urges the critic to consider "the political or ideological interests served by ordering a rhetorical transaction in a certain way" (1991, p. 98). I will argue constructing the rhetoric of Obama and TDS with the comic frame serves the ideological interests of those who are fighting for social justice and working to subvert Whiteness. Thus, I have named the meta-movement to which Obama and TDS contribute a *critical optimist movement*, because the comic frame provides the tools to be critical of hegemony while ultimately reinforcing the optimistic assumption of the comic frame: all humans are ultimately both flawed and good.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this massive, and often times overwhelming project to Ms. Jacqueline Smith. We met in the hot Memphis sun, and she thanked me for the cold water. However, her warm words of encouragement and excitement for this project were all I needed on that 100 degree day. She told me she could not give me a hug: she did not want to delegitimize her message as White tourists passed by. I completely understood, there would be rhetorical dimensions to that hug, and Ms. Smith is an expert in protest rhetoric. Her cool expression in our picture reinforces her message, but in contrast with my own face, betrays my lack of control over my own excitement in meeting her. While I look like an obnoxious tourist, I swear that grin is the result of speaking with Ms. Smith in the flesh. I first heard about her in my Rhetoric of Social Movements course, and her daily struggle against hegemony these past 20 years continues to inspire and motivate me. Most importantly, her fight helps me to put my own struggles with this project in perspective. In this sense, she helps me reject the tragic frame for the comic frame when reflecting upon my own life and the state of the Movement. I look forward to visiting her soon, but in the mean time want to encourage everyone to visit her site fulfillthedream.net for more information about her fight against hegemony.

CHAPTER 1 - Introduction

"And so, at 11am on a Tuesday, a prominent politician spoke to Americans about race as though they were adults." -Jon Stewart March 18th, 2008

This master's thesis is from the gut. When I first encountered Barack Obama's "race speech" and The Daily Show with Jon Stewart's (TDS) reaction to the speech, I knew intuitively I had just witnessed a significant rhetorical transaction, which Barry Brummett defines as "the perception of an extended happening, entity, or event with rhetorical relevance" (1991, pp. 70-71). The Reverend Jeremiah Wright controversy was an extended happening with rhetorical relevance to race relations in America today. "The most damaging controversy involving race to erupt during Obama's quest for the Democratic presidential nomination involved… the media's rebroadcasting of provocative statements by the candidate's former minister, the Reverend Jeremiah Wright" (Marable, 2009, p. 8). The Rev. Wright controversy had the potential to derail Obama's campaign, and Obama's response to the controversy, "A More Perfect Union" delivered on March 15, 2008, "was a masterful address" (Marable, 2009, p. 9). Having already favored Obama, the speech reinforced my trust in his ability to manage the complexities of race as the potential "first Black president of the United States." As a novice rhetorical scholar, I could appreciate the brilliance of Obama's speech, yet it did not occur to me to analyze the text for my master's thesis. However, when I witnessed TDS's reactions to Obama's speech on March 18, 2008, I experienced a visceral gut reaction that told me something significant and worthy of analysis had just taken place. When Jon Stewart turned to the audience and said, "And so, at 11am on a Tuesday, a prominent politician spoke to Americans about race as though they were adults," I was blown away. I had never heard Stewart make such a positive appraisal of a politician's rhetoric, and as a fan of TDS, this comment reinforced my perceptions of Obama's speech as significant. The March 18th episode also had a segment titled "Open Dialogue" in which Stewart and TDS's "Senior Black Correspondent" Larry Wilmore are inspired by Obama's speech and attempt to heed Obama's call for racial dialogue in America. The segment was both hilarious and poignant in its performance of Obama's message of unity and his critique on race in America. I was inspired by the rhetorical transaction more than I was by the individual

texts of Obama or TDS. The interaction between the brilliant political rhetoric of Obama and the poignant popular rhetoric of TDS intrigued me, and I knew instinctually I had to explore these texts to better understand my gut reaction.

This rhetorical transaction inspired me to drop the artifacts I had originally intended to study; I had to follow my gut instinct. I began by reading previous scholarship on TDS, and it appeared most scholars were focused on TDS's attacks on mainstream media and politicians for their shortcomings. However, the transaction I witnessed was not one in which TDS attacked Obama for a fault, but instead TDS reinforced Obama's message. Then I read Hart and Hartelius' (2007) critique of TDS, where they claimed the show encouraged cynicism in its viewers, which is harmful for democracy. The study was antithetical to what I witnessed in the rhetorical transaction of Obama and TDS, because my gut reaction was one of hopefulness for the future of American democracy and race relations. Instinctually I knew Hart and Hartelius were completely out of touch with the power of TDS. I was unable to find scholarship that could begin to explain my gut reaction, and I had to figure out an alternative point of entry into these artifacts. Barry Brummett in his book Rhetorical Dimensions of Popular Culture (1991) argues the audience of rhetoric can be better understood as agents who construct the meaning of the texts for themselves. According to Brummett, the critic cannot know how people did construct the texts in that moment, rather the critic can only argue for ways the agents may have constructed the texts (1991). I realized I was an agent, and I would have to retrace my experiences in rhetorical scholarship that led me to recognize these texts as significant in their ability to address race in America. The trope of a journey is one Obama skillfully uses in his speech "A More Perfect Union," and is a trope that is fundamental across cultures (Darsey, 2009). I realized it was a trope that could help verbalize this project, because I believe this thesis has been a process of me reflecting upon my personal journey that led me to recognize the rhetorical transaction as significant. The power of the "journey" metaphor results in many clichés, but I embrace them in their ability to conveniently communicate this project. My use of this journey trope functions as a means by which this scholar can attempt to disclose her personal biases and perspective that limits this project. I cannot claim to speak for a perspective other than my own, and I hope by explicating my personal journey I offer context for this study.

I was raised in a predominantly White[i] community and attended a conservative religious school. While my hometown was popular because of its proximity to a major metropolitan area

and "White flight," my mother's family had lived in the area for at least five generations. My mother sent me to the school because it was tradition; however she did not reinforce the ideologies and values they preached, thus I was raised to stand against the dominant culture. Such a perspective, I believe, predisposed me to questioning hegemony and the study of Whiteness, which I began my sophomore year of my bachelors degree. Thus, without any real conception of the larger field of rhetoric, I embarked on my journey into the forest of rhetorical scholarship. Whiteness studies would serve as my point of entry into this forest. Whiteness studies are a continuation of communication scholarship's attempt to study the ways in which race is constructed rhetorically. Whiteness is "a communicatively driven entity translated, shaped, reified, and concretized by social interaction" (Marty, 1999, p. 52). Those who study Whiteness use the "terms Whiteness and White identity to emphasize the social construction of both racial and ethnic categories and to focus on the pan-ethnic experience of Whites born in the United States" (Martin et al., 1999, p. 29). The hierarchy Whiteness enforces is not a "natural" phenomenon (nor is it "inevitable") in human society. Instead, Whiteness is constructed and maintained through rhetoric and in turn, the hierarchy can be dismantled with rhetoric. Where previous cultural studies focused on the perspectives of the marginalized and their construction of identity, other scholars have asked what social structures and power structures must be fought to end inequality. To focus on Whiteness is not at the expense of the marginalized; rather, it is an attempt at identifying the ideologies of Whiteness that oppress the marginalized. The goal is to understand the larger experience of Whiteness and how people are designated White and granted the corresponding privileged position.

The problem Whiteness studies have consistently found is that Whites do not see their life as racialized; a luxury is afforded to them by their White privilege (Krizek & Nakayama, 1999). One of the most significant features of Whiteness is its invisible power as an unmarked cultural space. While racism is largely seen as wrong in American society, the ideology of colorblindness has emerged as the new means of reinforcing inequality and marginalizing nonWhite groups. Colorblindness attempts to ignore difference among cultures that are the result of socially constructed categories of race, presumably solving for the problem of discrimination (Crenshaw, 1997). However, such an ideology ultimately results in the universalization of Whiteness, which is when a White perspective is assumed to be "normal" and universally held rather than as limited to a particular culture. Thus, colorblindness may have good intentions, they

actually serve to marginalize nonWhite perspectives and reinforce an invisible place of privilege for White culture (Crenshaw, 1997). The universalization of Whiteness makes it difficult for many Whites to understand how their identity functions to marginalize others, which can be daunting and upsetting to discover. For a White individual to recognize their life as culturally marked requires the recognition of fundamental ideologies that influence their identity may be reinforcing hegemony. Projansky and Ono (1999) state, "This subtle maneuvering to reinforce the power of Whiteness, conducted in the name of antiracism, illustrates an underlying assumption of this chapter—that no representational strategy is immune from the potential recuperation of White power" (Projansky & Ono, 1999, p. 152). While they make a legitimate point that the critic cannot assume any rhetoric is incapable of reinforcing hegemony, I synthesized it pessimistically. I felt hopeless, and I began to see myself in a tragic frame, fated to reinforce inequality despite my best intentions. My life's journey was led into the forest of rhetorical scholarship by way of Whiteness, which proved to be invaluable, for it helped me to begin a process of self-reflection upon my own identity and position within the dominant American culture. I will always be grateful for my early exposure to the critical scholarship because it has made me a better scholar and a better human. Unfortunately, I lacked the ability to put such studies within the larger context of rhetorical scholarship and became overwhelmed by the ubiquity of hegemonic domination. I found myself lost within the forest of rhetorical scholarship, and dense foliage blocked out the sunlight, limiting my vision.

My journey had entered a period of darkness, a period of pessimism. The more I learned about Whiteness, the more helpless I felt in the post 9-11 political climate with the rhetoric of the Bush administration. After all, if at the age of twenty I could see how bad the whole situation was, how come the rest of America seemed so blind to it? My progressive friends and I became exceedingly pessimistic, it seemed as if no one in our government was willing to voice our perspective, especially Democrats. I cynically viewed voting as merely a vain attempt to get Bush out of office, but certainly not an action that would combat hegemony. Voting seemed about as socially significant as hanging the American flag on the 4th of July: a symbolic gesture of patriotism, but ultimately just a self-gratifying act based on tradition with little to no effect on society, followed by getting really drunk with friends. At that point, it seemed all I could do was embrace my pessimism. I had little reason to struggle against pessimism when there appeared to be no real solutions for fighting hegemonic domination.

After wandering around, lost in the darkness of pessimism, I would soon reach another important milestone in my journey. I became a fan of The Daily Show with Jon Stewart (TDS), and I was empowered by Stewart's attack against mainstream media when he appeared on CNN. "Not long after Stewart visited Crossfire and accused its hosts of 'hurting democracy,' CNN president Jonathan Klein canceled it, saying, 'I agree wholeheartedly with Jon Stewart's overall premise'" (Brewer and Marqardt, 2007, p. 250). Suddenly, I was given a reason to believe change was possible. TDS's meteoric rise comforted me and showed me I was not alone, and I felt no need to be ashamed of my reliance on TDS's perspective to shape my own. Surveys and polls from various sources, including the Pew Research Foundation continues to suggest many in my generation turn to TDS as a "news source" (Brewer & Marquardt, 2007; Baym, 2005). Despite these polls, TDS has insisted they are just fake news and their only goal is to make people laugh (Baym, 2005). This seeming contradiction has led many scholars, like Fox, Koloen, and Sahin (2007) to ask, "What are the implications of this new trend in information seeking, given the presumption that a successful democracy depends on an informed electorate?" and "Can a humorous news source possibly be as informative as traditional political news sources?" (p. 213). However, these questions strike me as unnecessary, because for me TDS was not about information, it was about empowerment. It seems problematic for scholarship to dwell on the label fake news because such a label "necessitates assumptions about some kind of authentic or legitimate set of news practices; ideals that one rarely hears articulated today, nor necessarily sees as evident today" (Baym, 2005, p. 261). Watching Stewart stand up to CNN was empowering for those of us who questioned their legitimacy as a "news source" to begin with.

Considering survey respondents are willing to call TDS "news" does not mean much when the more obvious question is what constitutes "news" to begin with? As Baym (2004) explains, "News is defined and constrained by a set of cultural practices, informal and often implicit agreements about proper conduct, style, and form" (p. 4). To me, it is obvious why people are willing to call TDS "news" when contemporary television "news" consists of mere commercialized ghosts of "an earlier time, when broadcast journalists saw their profession as a mission, one which played a central role in the democratic process" (Baym, 2004, p. 2).

As I progressed through my journey, TDS empowered people like me who were overwhelmed by the darkness of pessimism. We were given hope that if someone like Stewart understood us and was willing to fight, perhaps we would find the light some day. However, I

still was unable to distinguish the forest from the trees. I found it difficult to communicate my perspective to others within the same forest. My journey through the dark forest continued to graduate school, where I was given a copy of Barry Brummett's Rhetorical Dimensions of Popular Culture (1991). Brummett unlocks the secrets of the rhetorical forest and map making when he argues that rhetoric should not be defined as simply a discrete text, expositional discourse such as a speech, but rather rhetoric "is the dimension of experience that manages meaning" (1991, p. 197). Rhetoric is the aspect of an experience that is learned socially, the part that tells us how we should perceive the experience and how we should react to that experience. Rhetoric is comprised of forms we have learned socially and in turn, apply to future texts. Essentially, forms guide us to construct certain meanings at the expense of others. Individuals have repertoires of forms they refer to when approaching new experiences, and individuals can expand their repertoires of forms as they progress throughout life lived socially. The interaction between the source and the individual constructing the new text is the site of hegemonic struggle over meaning. The work of the rhetorical critic is "to show people the ways in which they have made, do make, or can make the world meaningful" (Brummett, 1991, p. 198). Brummett uses the metaphor of a mosaic to describe how rhetorical texts are constructed by individuals, who then construct the texts into a larger mosaic of meaning. The forms and patterns the individual uses to organize stimulus into meaning are learned socially, shared forms comprise ones culture. The mosaic houses the totality of a person's perceptions of the past, present, and their expectations for the future. This mosaic is the individual's subject position from which they perceive the rhetoric they continue to encounter. Brummett's mosaic model allows the critic to map the management of meaning between agents using culturally available forms.

Everyone embarks their own life journey, but Brummett allowed me to map that journey. Reading Brummett taught me it was okay to trust TDS, and Brummett's insistence in the agency of the individual to construct texts made me more optimistic. Gradually, as I developed my cartography skills, I began to see the forest from the trees. With Brummett's mosaic model and masters level courses in rhetorical theory; I was finally able to see the bigger picture. Brummett allowed me to view myself within the comic frame by giving the precious gift of context. Such context helped me see myself outside of the tragic frame, instead of it being my fate to reinforce hegemony, I could view myself as a clown who may make mistakes, yet is still ultimately a moral person who will choose the right way if made aware of my faults. For Brummett, the

impetus for change lies in the ability of agents to be educated about how and why they construct meaning so that they may expand their repertories for making reality. Change lies in teaching others about the rhetoric of everyday lives, which Brummett says is the inherently a subversive act. Through education, we can choose to reject the forms promoted by the dominant culture, and can instead chose for ourselves what meanings we want to create. I learned from Brummett that Projansky and Ono's study was not necessarily pessimistic, because simply educating us about the reinforcement of power by seemingly progressive movies expands our repertoires for critiquing future presumably progressive texts. Instead of making the tragic assumption I was fated to reinforce hegemony, Brummett gave me the tools to view myself comically, which "requires the maximum of forensic complexity" (Burke, 1937, p. 42).

Suddenly, after years lost in the darkest, most pessimistic parts of the forest, my journey took a turn from pessimism towards optimism. My personal journey, from when I began learning about Whiteness and feeling overwhelmed with pessimism, to the hope I gained from becoming a fan of TDS, to the optimistic insights I learned from Brummett's mosaic model, led me to the moment I perceived the texts of Obama and TDS as significant. My life journey brings me to this very moment in time. This whole project has been a process of retracing my personal journey that is at the core of my gut reaction. I realize adopting this grandiose and obviously hyperbolic tone may be a bit over the top; but the only way I know how to communicate this project is through the trope of the journey. I am fundamentally a product of my upbringing. I am the product of Whiteness studies, such as Krizek and Nakayama, who argue for "the concept of the nomadic scholar who is not constrained by methodology, but driven by perspective" (1999, p. 92). I am a product of Brummett, who explains that we choose certain forms because we have used them to construct our own subject positions from which we understand everything we encounter (1991). I am a product of my times, a post 9-11 America, a turbulent period of changes, politically, socially, technologically, a period lacking in stability. Kenneth Burke was also influenced by his times:

> This book, Permanence and Change, was written in the early days of the Great Depression, at a time when there was a general feeling that our traditional ways were headed for a tremendous change, maybe even a permanent collapse. It is such a book as authors in those days sometimes put together, to keep themselves from falling apart. (1984, p. xlvii)

Like Burke, I write the only thing I know how to write: a documentation of this nomadic scholar's journey. My position within the throws of these changes do not afford me the safe distance from which I can reflect upon these artifacts and their historical exigency, distance only time can provide. However, I do not believe we can afford to wait. Now is the time for rhetorical scholarship to explore how meaning is being managed during these times of change. Brummett made the same arguments back in 1991: "In the late twentieth century, the world is undergoing changes politically and culturally, changes that may be quick in the context of history but that still occur slowly enough to disguise their revolutionary nature from the observer" (1991, p. 199). Brummett's predictions come from a time before the internet: long before Twitters from Iran would circumvent government censorship of mass demonstrations, long before an employer could judge the qualifications of an applicant by the content of their MySpace, long before Obama's campaign would use the Facebook to disrupts "the top-down, command-and-control, broadcast-TV model that has dominated American politics since the early 1960's" (Dickinson, 2008, p. 37). The mosaic model makes more sense today than it must have in the early 1990's. While I find it absolutely adorable Brummett's 1991 work predicts "laser holograms" but does not even hint at the internet, his limited perspective only reaffirms his significance in contemporary culture (p. 200). We cannot wait for history to reflect upon this time period, we must tackle these changes as they happen.

I share my personal narrative, not because I have delusions of grandeur, as if my journey must be documented for the benefit of all humanity. But after many long hours trying to figure out how my project could be manipulated to fit the mold of traditional rhetorical scholarship, I realized my life's journey is impossible to divorce from this project. The order in which I conducted this project is far from the traditional approach: I conducted a literature review in Whiteness over the course of six years, discovered my method, Brummett's mosaic model, two years ago, which ultimately culminated in a gut reaction about the artifacts I would not have had without my journey. All of these milestones in my personal journey bring me to this moment in time, to this project that is. It is my gut reaction to the texts of Obama and TDS I believe justifies this project. I explain my journey because I must be forthcoming of my subject position, I must acknowledge the bias that colors this project, as well as the inherent limitations of my perspective. Every argument I make is limited in scope and must be understood for what it is: my argument for the way meaning may have been managed during the rhetorical transaction of

Obama's speech and TDS's reactions. Ultimately, I will argue for a mosaic ordered by the homology of the comic frame, which may be the result of my own personal journey from a tragic frame to a comic frame.

Brummett's mosaic model allows an exploration of the intersection between popular and political rhetoric of Obama and TDS. I will argue from the intersection we see the emergence of the comic frame as a homology that links the disparate texts of Obama and TDS. Brummett says, "The critic is not a mere jigsaw puzzle worker who is satisfied once a coherence is identified, but must ask why a certain homology would have obtained in a situation" (1991, p. 98). I will argue the reason the comic frame emerges from the texts is because there is a societal mandate for the comic frame. I believe the comic frame is why many have argued Obama's speech was brilliant, and the comic frame is why TDS is so popular and culturally significant today. I believe Obama and TDS were influenced by a contemporary need for the comic frame, but also that Obama and TDS fuel the demand for the comic frame in contemporary discourse. Thus, I will ultimately argue the mandate for the comic frame can be better understood as a social movement. However, it is a movement comprised of numerous individual movements, and warrants a new term: meta-movement. Obama and TDS are not leaders of this meta-movement, but instead should be seen as contributors. Brummett urges the critic to consider "the political or ideological interests served by ordering a rhetorical transaction in a certain way" (1991, p. 98). I will argue constructing the rhetoric of Obama and TDS with the comic frame serves the ideological interests of those who are fighting for social justice and working to subvert Whiteness. Thus, I have named the meta-movement to which Obama and TDS contribute a critical optimist movement, because the comic frame provides the tools to be critical of hegemony while ultimately reinforcing the optimistic assumption of the comic frame: all humans are ultimately both flawed and good.

Preview of Chapters

Chapter two will review the scholarly research on Whiteness, hegemony, and popular culture that provides the theoretical background for my analysis of Obama's speech "A More Perfect Union" and TDS's reactions to Obama's speech and the Wright controversy. By examining the sociohistorical history of race, specifically between Blacks and Whites in the United States of America, we will gain insight into the Rev. Jeremiah Wright controversy that functioned as the exigency of Obama's speech and TDS's reactions. With this understanding of

Whiteness, we can then explore the concept of hegemony and how popular culture rhetoric is a significant site of hegemonic struggle.

Chapter three will first reconceptualize the concept of rhetoric according to Brummett's *Rhetorical Dimensions of Popular Culture* (1991), which is imperative to understand when using Brummett's mosaic model of meaning. Then I will describe the mosaic model of meaning, and finally I will explicate Burke's comic frame, which is the homology I will argue emerges from my analysis.

Chapter four will then analyze the context of the Rev. Jeremiah Wright controversy with the concepts of Whiteness studies, and this context will shed light on the exigency of Obama's March 15th, 2008 speech "A More Perfect Union." The next section will analyze Obama's speech with consideration for the context of the controversy as well as the homology of the comic frame. The final section will then analyze TDS's reactions to Obama's speech and the Wright controversy in general, where we will again see the comic frame emerge. Specifically, I will address TDS's segments from March 18th, 2008, titled "Barack's Wright Response" and "Open Dialogue." I will then analyze two specific segments that reflect upon the controversy after some time had past. The first of which is a segment titled "Spiritual Advisor" with resident expert John Hodgman on April 30th, 2008, who provides a fictional/critical historical report about presidential spiritual advisors. The second segment is an interview with Bill Moyers on May 13th, 2008.

Chapter five will reflect upon the homology of the comic frame that emerges from the analysis of the Wright controversy, Obama's speech, and TDS's reactions to the context and speech. Finally, I will ask why the homology of the comic frame emerged, and the potential implications that result.

CHAPTER 2 - Whiteness, Popular Culture, and Hegemony

Larry Adelman, in the *San Francisco Chronicle* of June 29th, 2003, describes the personal journeys of two men who have worked together for 20 years with identical salaries. Yet, one of these men has a net worth much greater than the other man. Despite the similar circumstances, their journeys do not lead to similar ends. The wealthier man, Adelman, is White, and less wealthy man, Cornelius (Adelman's colleague), is Black. The discrepancy between the two individual's net worth exceeds $300,000, which Adelman says "reveals a microcosm of race in America" (2003, p. D-3). At the time of Adelman's article the Supreme Court has just ruled against the University of Michigan's admission policy mean to promote affirmative action, and Adelman uses the comparison between himself and Cornelius to illustrate the generational impacts of racism affirmative action proponents aim to combat with such programs (2003).

Institutional racism that oppressed Cornelius' parents and previous generations continue to impact future generations. While Adelman's parents benefited from postwar government policies and subsidies that reduced down payments for many White families, Cornelius' family was not offered these benefits. "Between 1934 and 1962, the federal government backed $120 billion of home loans; more than 98 percent went to whites. Of the 350,000 new homes built with federal support in Northern California between 1946 and 1960, fewer than 100 went to African Americans" (Adelman, 2003, p. D-3). Adelman's parents benefited from these policies, and when they sold the home for around $300,000. The financial stability of Adelman's parents helped prepare his parents for retirement without their children's help, provide Adelman with a private college education, and even allowed Adelman's parents to help him with a down payment on his first home (2003).

However, Cornelius' parent's situation differs drastically. The federal government's policy resulted in the evaluation of neighborhoods with any Black family as "ipso facto financial risks ineligible for low cost home loans" (Adelman, 2003, p. D-3). Cornelius' neighborhood was burdened with higher taxes and their community continued to deteriorate. The house eventually sold for a fraction of Adelman's parent's home. "Cornelius attended college on scholarship, but worked his way through school. Today, rather than look to his mother for financial help,

Cornelius helps support her" (Adelman, 2003, p. D-3). Needless to say, Cornelius' parents were unable to help him make a down payment on a home. The negative implications of government policies during Cornelius' parent's generation persist due to the lack of financial security afforded subsequent generations. Thus, despite earning equal salaries, the White privilege of Adelman's parents has resulted in his net worth greatly exceeding Cornelius'. Adelman and Cornelius did not start at the same proverbial starting line. Adelman's White privilege afforded him a head start.

Cornelius is obviously not an isolated case; many Blacks across America are forced behind their White peers at the starting line of life. As previously mentioned, the disproportionate number of Blacks living in poverty is offered as evidence of racism in contemporary American society (Wander et al., 1999; Asante, 2005). Adelman elaborates upon the issue of poverty in the Black community, "Today, according to New York University economist Edward Wolff, the typical white family has eight times the net worth of the typical black family. Even when they make the same income, white families have over twice the wealth—much of that gap due to home equity and family inheritance" (2003, p. D-3). While many Whites argue they achieved their status by merit alone, this denies the very real generational barriers that stand in the way of the success of millions of Blacks today. Many Whites are often completely ignorant, or in denial of, their privilege over nonWhites. This denial is at heart of the Supreme Court ruling in 2003 over the University Michigan's affirmative action admissions policy.

Mainstream culture tends to focus on individual acts of racism and the intent of the "racist" individual. But as Adelman explains, "Racism doesn't just come dressed in white sheets or voiced by skinheads, but lies in institutions that, like the [Federal Housing Administration from the New Deal programs], have quietly and often invisibly channeled America's wealth, power, and status disproportionately to white people, giving us a head start in life" (2003, p. D-3). When racism is understood in this context, attacking individuals as racist does not begin to address the real problems with race relations in America. Adelman continues, "As Ohio State University law professor John A. Powell observes: 'The slick thing about whiteness is that whites are getting the spoils of a racist system without themselves being personally racist'" (2003, p. D-3). Racism is far more complicated than the use of a racial slur in public; it is a

complex system of oppression with ramifications that persist long after the specific government policies are changed and people no longer use racial slurs in "polite company."

While Whites today may not be directly participating in the oppression of their nonWhite peers, they still continue to benefit from their place at the starting line (Adelman, 2003, p. D-3). It is this invisible, deniable privilege Whites experience today that is the focus of scholars studying Whiteness. Through communication Whiteness is able to effectively deny this privilege, and scholars attempt to uncover this communication so society may begin to undo the unfair privilege afforded to some people and not others. This narrative is exemplar of a Wander, Martin, and Nakayama's truncated definition of Whiteness as "*a historical systemic structural race-based superiority*" (1999, p. 15). This literature review begins by providing the sociohistorical background of race and Whiteness, which will lay the foundations for understanding contemporary racism and Whiteness as exemplified in Adelman's article. I will then link Whiteness to popular culture studies by finding the common thread of Gramsci and hegemony. Finally, I conclude the chapter by bringing together both Whiteness studies and popular culture studies to develop a clear picture of the project ahead.

Whiteness Studies

To truly understand why these inequalities Adelman's narrative described continue, we must first understand the history of the concept of race, beginning before the concept even existed. It is this journey that provides a context for Obama's speech on race and TDS's reactions to the speech. Wander et al. begin their history of racism in the 18th and 19th centuries. During this time, European scientists attempted to further classify humans beyond the genus and species: Homo sapiens. However, the characteristics they used to establish categories were superficial, such as skin color and cranial capacity, which contemporary genetic research has proven are not adequate indicators of distinct "races" (Wander et al., 1999). "These studies reflected a naturalist tradition—an assumption that the physical world had an intrinsically hierarchical order in which Whites were the last and most developed link in 'the great chain of being'" (Wander et al., 1999, p. 15). A hierarchy of races did not exist until it was created and justified by Europeans. Humans, according to Burke, are "goaded by hierarchy" and feel an impulse to show piety towards the socially established structure. To break from the hierarchy creates guilt in the person, and the individual must deal with this guilt by either scapegoating

someone else or mortifying themselves by being pious to the hierarchy (Burke, 1937). The "science" that *imagined* this racial hierarchy supported "a period of global expansion of European powers and of westward expansion in the United States" (Wander et al., 1999, p. 15). The research was not a legitimate exercise of the scientific method, rather it was political propaganda used to legitimize European global conquests. Europeans wanted to exploit Africans as slave labor, thus people were the goods being traded. "The slave owners, in proclaiming ownership of the bodies of slaves, detached the body from the self and then reduced this self to subhuman status (justified by the racial categorization system)" (Wander et al., 1999, p. 16). The hierarchy allowed for Europeans to dehumanize Africans, but it was justified by false claims of inherent inferiority of Africans. Asante explains, "That Whites were separate and different, no one doubted, but Africans struggled mightily from the beginning against the corrupt notion that difference meant that Whites were better" (2005, p. 27). The acknowledgement of differences between groups of people is not inherently wrong; rather it was the assumption of a hierarchy, which allowed the Europeans to establish a wall that inhibited any shared identity between Europeans and Africans.

The "scientific" research and subsequent racial categorization led to race theory. This theory claimed the racial hierarchy was "natural" and that this theory was "scientific fact." Race theory argued colonialism was actually, "a blessing to Africans—who by their biological inferiority were incapable of taking the first steps to civilization. This civilizing mission often included armed intervention and the establishment of empires, like Great Britain, that stretched around the world" (Wander et al., 1999, p. 16). Europeans argued they were saving Negros by converting them to Christianity. Slavery was not automatically associated with the "Negro" race until race theory led to a "move from racial classification to racialization—as slave and *black* become synonymous" (Wander et al., 1999, p. 16). This racialization can be attributed to two idiosyncrasies of slavery in the United States. The first idiosyncratic feature was the European value of the betterment of an individual through hard work and property acquisition, "and property began and ended with possession of ones body" (Wander et al., 1999, p. 16). This value is in conflict with slavery, and the resulting cognitive dissonance led to the establishment/enforcement of a racial hierarchy dehumanizing the proposed slaves. The second feature was the "institutionalizing of slavery in the formation of the nation" (Wander et al., 1999, p. 17). In order to write slavery into our constitution, which was greatly influenced by the above

European value, it had to be established which groups, "are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights" as specified in the Declaration of Independence. How to differentiate American citizens from the slaves who lacked those rights would be a complicated task both rhetorically and legally. "Thus, the paradox of U.S. history: that the ideal of freedom is historically rooted in the institution of slavery and the two inextricably racialized" (Wander et al., 1999, p. 17). Americans will always have to juggle the ideals of their Founding Fathers with the blunt and unpleasant reality Blacks were legally equivalent to 3/5th a person (person = White) at the nation's inception.

In fact, the concept of the racial categories of "Black" or "White" did not exist until the Americas were colonized and the slave trade was underway. Asante explains, "with the meshing of the different ethnicities into a common situation vis-a-vis the productive and expressive energies of the American society, these groups became one group: Black people" (2005, p. 27). The term's necessity was derived from establishing the Europeans in opposition to those who were slaves. Keating explains,

> "Significantly, then the 'White race' evolved in opposition to but simultaneously with the 'Black race.' As peoples whose specific ethnic identities were Yoruban, Ashanti, Fon and Dahomean were forcibly removed from their homes in African and taken to the North American colonies, the English adopted the terms 'white' and 'black' –with their already existing implications of purity and evil—and developed the concept of a superior 'White race' and an inferior 'Black race' to justify slavery. It's important to note that the Europeans did not originally label the people who lived in Africa 'Black'; nor did they see them as evil savages." (1995, p. 912)

The development of "black" and "white" as racial markers indicates the rhetorical nature of such racial categories, yet these categories have since been considered "permanent, transhistorical racial markers indicating distinct groups of people (Keating, 1995, p. 912). The use of these categories by the U.S. government for the census and other documents indicates they are using simplistic and superficial features such as hair and skin to oversimplify a diverse group of people (Keating, 1995), ultimately reinforcing the oppressive racial categories of colonialism. Keating's (1995) point about the

development of the terms White and Black corresponds with scholars who explain that Whiteness manages its power, in part, by defining itself in opposition to the Other.

Once slavery ended, "Poor European immigrants and the many Southern ex-slaves represented a serious potential threat to the existing cultural and political dominance of Whites" (Wander et al., 1999, p. 19), because they greatly outnumbered the elite Whites. Had former slaves and Whites decided to join forces they could have had the power to overcome the elite Whites. These under privileged groups comprised the majority Americans, and if empowered could have forced a change or resisted the elitist system. Thus, "The answer was racism" (Wander et al., 1999, p. 19). The fluidity of White as a racial category was demonstrated in the ability of previously marginalized European immigrants to assimilate into American culture and gain the privileged position of White (Wander et al., 1999). The threat to the existing powers was neutralized by fostering racism in nonelite Whites, thus detracting attention from their oppressive means at gaining wealth and focusing the hatred towards Blacks. The ability of previously oppressed groups, in Burkean terms, to transcend minority status and become White is evidence of how race is not a concrete concept; rather race is constructed and managed through communication (Martin, Krizek & Nakayama, 1999). Race is rhetorical. The threat of shared identity between poor Whites and Blacks posed a threat to racist ideologies that were premised upon an inherent difference between the two races that prohibited transcendence. Division was the ultimate strategy that marginalized both nonWhites and poor Whites.

This journey of the socially constructed concept of race brings us to present day. Today explicit racism is no longer socially acceptable. However, as Adelman's comparison illustrates (2003), oppression persists in hidden ways. Contemporary inequality is perpetuated by the assumption race can be transcended by ignoring difference. bell hooks explains, "Even though legal racial apartheid no longer is a norm in the United States, the habits that uphold and maintain institutionalized White supremacy linger" (1992, p. 168). It has become unacceptable to make an, "explicit assertion of superiority, which, in the United States, was broken spiritually (though not materially) in civil rights victories in the 1960's and 1970's" (Wander et al., 1999, pp. 14-15). Crenshaw explains the prevailing understanding of racism in the U.S. believes the problem with racism is noticing differences, and if we do not see races and difference, then racism goes away (1998). This is the shift from racism to Whiteness. The power of Whiteness is reiterated innocuously through rhetoric because "'color-blind' alternatives ignore our historical

locations, circumscribed by the very existence of racism itself, and pretends that 'transcendence' of racism is an alternative that is immediately available to us" (Crenshaw, 1998, p. 272). Ignoring racism does not make it disappear, and it serves to hold individuals responsible for their situation that was heavily determined by racial power dynamics, more so than individual choices.

While the values of equality are verbalized in American rhetoric and "colorblindness" promoted as the solution, colorblindness in reality serves to universalize the White experience as objective and that of every person. Elites dominate media content, and White values and realities are offered as universal realities. In a study of the ways White students conceptualize their ethnicity, Martin, Krizek, and Nakayama (1999) found Whites have a choice as to whether they recognize their ethnicity or not. Minorities, because they are in conflict with the dominant culture, are constantly made aware of their ethnicity and position outside of the mainstream. However, Whites are not confronted with their ethnicity because they are the privileged group whose identity is assumed to be "natural" and goes unquestioned by most rhetoric. The study found some Whites were not only reluctant to identify their ethnicity, but they reacted with anger or irritation when pressed to discuss their identity (Martin, et al., 1999). The scholars concluded, "Self-labeling for them may be an intrusion on choice and, as such, engender negative associations; whereas self-labeling for other groups (e.g., African Americans) is an expression of choice and, in contrast, connotes empowerment" (Martin et al.,1999, p. 45). Recognizing White ethnicity conflicts with the colorblind values that universalize Whiteness in American culture.

The universalization of Whiteness, the ability of Whiteness to remain invisible in American culture is its most salient feature. While American culture often focuses on specific instances of racism, the invisibility of Whiteness is far more problematic.

> Whiteness is a state of being that carries with it many attendant privileges and yet is also cloaked in a discourse of normalcy such that attitudes, behaviors, experiences, cultural norms, and taboos that are more reflective of the experience of European Americans become generalized and accepted as normal, natural, right, and just. Critical race theorists have called this the ordinariness of racism in an attempt to challenge the notion that racism exists only in blatant and overt acts of hatred, intolerance, or injustice. This simultaneous pervasiveness and invisibility makes it difficult for many people who enjoy White skin privilege to recognize their experience as a racialized experience. (Simpson, 2008, p. 150)

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Whiteness creates a society that teaches White privilege as normal, thus Whites are trained to not recognize the problem or begin to address it (Marty, 1999). McKerrow explains eloquently, "One can't put too fine an edge on the power or process of naming, when potentially illegal actions are justified by linguistic sleights of hand" (1989, p. 128). The power of Whiteness to name what is normal gives it power.

The label of "racist" is one of the most socially stigmatized labels in contemporary American culture. There are clear issues of social desirability that would lead a person to feel pressured to defend themselves against the title of "racist," which often leads to refusing to recognize their role in perpetuating oppressive social structures. If being labeled racist leads to the person being ostracized, and the person did not consciously participate in racism, this leads to the person becoming incredibly frustrated and defensive. The person is not motivated to recognize their privilege, rather motivated to avoid the stigmatized label of racist (Keating, 1995). It is easier for a person to refuse the idea they are benefiting from racism or participating in racism, therefore, the person can deny such racism exists all together, so as to avoid the label of racist. Doing so ultimately is dismissive of legitimate claims of oppression by marginalized groups, even if the White person is only driven to deny such claims so as to "save face."

Ultimately, well intentioned Whites attempt to fight racism without understanding the reality of the problem (Crenshaw, 1998). "Absent this awareness, White children who become adults of goodwill... organize their social justice efforts around an ignorance of the racially based privileges they possess that reinforce racist disadvantage for others" (Marty, 1999, p. 52). Attempting to fight racism without truly recognizing the ordinariness of racism is futile, thus Whiteness' invisibility is severely problematic (Drzewiecka & Wong, 1999). If the individual cannot recognize their privilege, they are not recognizing the "current social relations of power," and their actions may just serve to reinforce White privilege unwittingly (Crenshaw, 1998). When we focus on the actions of individuals as "racist" we are focusing on a small instance with typically small consequences. This directs our attention away from the larger societal issues that subjugate whole groups of people. Marilyn Frye explains in her book *The Poetics of Reality* that hegemonic groups do not necessarily dominate a group; they can also limit the group's ability to act or be. It is like a birdcage, if you are only looking at each individual bar alone, you cannot see the whole of the cage. Therefore you cannot grasp the limitations that rule your existence

(Frye, 1983, p. 5). Studying Whiteness is an attempt to study the cage as a whole, not just the individual bars.

Dreama Moon argues that Whiteness maintains a contradictory, assumed, invisible privileged position in society through ideological means. There are two conflicting ideologies working together to reinforce White privilege, "the White enculturation process simultaneously depends on both the embracement and denial of 'Whiteness.' Thus, the 'trick' of White enculturation is racially to produce and reproduce White people through the creation of the illusion of a 'White' world, while simultaneously draining that 'Whiteness' of any elements that would mark it as a specific structural and cultural location" (Moon, 1999, p. 179). Such a complicated task as dealing with the contradictory nature of Whiteness is done through the subconscious layers of communication. As McKerrow explains, power naturalizes specific social positions, and all discourse that supports this naturalized position is seen as the norm to which all other positions are held (1989). A qualitative study of White's self-identification communicative patterns illustrates Moon's point when they found many students could not explain their White identity beyond simplistic assumptions. "Many of the definitions (e.g., 'White means White') are circular in a manner that suggests their ideographic functioning. That is, the beliefs and notions that are the most powerful (e.g., Freedom) are often those that are simply not questioned" (Martin et al., 1999, p. 44). These subconscious assumptions are at the heart of Whiteness.

This Sociohistorical lesson helps provides the context necessary to understand Whiteness, but also to allow us to fully understand the dynamics of race relations in America. Without understanding such a history, it would be difficult to truly grasp the power dynamics Obama was addressing in his speech, let alone analyze his speech. However, understanding Whiteness and how it perpetuates its power in subconscious and often invisible ways requires further explanation of the concept of hegemony.

Hegemony, Colorblindness, and Popular Culture

To understand how Whiteness can manage power invisibly in our culture, and how subconscious assumptions could be at the heart of Whiteness, the important concept to understand is hegemony. The concept of hegemony was developed by Gramsci in reaction to the two branches of Marxist philosophy that initially emerged as Marxism was applied to culture:

structuralism and culturalism (Bennett, 1986). Structuralism views popular culture as an ideological machine that enforces dominant ideology on the masses. Many scholars have been critical of this position because it strips the audience of any agency against the dominant ideologies of the elites. Structuralism views the audience as passive, helpless victims of the elite's ideological steamroller. Culturalism, on the other hand, took the polar opposite position and "was often uncritically romantic of its celebration of popular culture as expressing the authentic interests and values of subordinate social groups and classes" (Bennett, 1986, p. 95). Culturalism has been criticized as unreasonable in its approach to popular culture as untouched by the dominant ideologies, as if the rhetoric occurs in a vacuum. Also, culturalism has a tendency to make essentialist assumptions about whole groups of people by assuming popular culture is "authentic" communication by the nonelites, thus overlooking the diversity of perspectives not represented within the popular culture (Bennett, 1986; Brummett, 1991). According to Gramsci, the binary between structuralists and culturalists was unreasonable. It was clear to Gramsci one ideology does not prevail over another ideology; rather, there is a constant struggle between the dominant and the marginalized group's ideologies. Gramsci developed the concept of hegemony to explain this complex struggle between the elites/nonelites and to bridge the binary of structuralism/culturalism. Hegemony understands the influences of the dominant group cannot be confused with force or causality (Bennett, 1986). This is an important distinction: "the notion of 'influence' rejects the twin claims that nothing is connected to anything else (culturalism) and that everything is determined by something (structuralism)" (McKerrow, 1989, p. 129). Hegemony is a more realistic and reasonable explanation of the power dynamics in a society.

The struggle for hegemony is more subtle, therefore more complicated than straight domination. The working class begins accepting ruling ideology as their own through the processes of hegemony "through which the ruling class seeks to negotiate opposing class cultures on to a cultural and ideological terrain which wins for [the ruling class] a position of leadership, it is also true that what is thereby consented to is a negotiated version of ruling-class culture and ideology" (Bennett, 1986, p. 94). For Gramsci the taken-for-granted assumptions of a culture were the battle ground of hegemonic conflicts. bell hooks explains how consent can be negotiated when she says, "Systems of domination, imperialism, colonialism, and racism actively coerce Black folks to internalize negative perceptions of Blackness, to be self-hating"

(1992, p. 166). Diane Simon illustrates such internalized negative perceptions of Blackness when she describes the stigma surrounding "Black" or nonWhite hair types. Some of these nonWhite hair types are distinctly different from typical White hair, and do not fit the White standard of beauty. Many cosmetology schools will only teach how to deal with White hair types, leaving many hair stylists completely ignorant about how to style nonWhite hair. Many Black women will go to great lengths to straighten or relax their hair so they may style it according to the White standard of beauty (Simon, 1992). The trendy, popular hair styles are typically assuming White hair is beautiful hair, and thus styles that accommodate African hair types are not included in what is seen as "beautiful" in the culture (Simon, 1992).

While one may be conscious of the ideology present in a specific text or ideograph, it is at the subconscious level ideology is the most powerful. "Power is expressed anonymously, in nondeliberate ways, at a 'deep structure' level and may have its origins in the remoteness of our past (carried forward through a particularizing discursive formation)" (McKerrow, 1989, p. 122). Barry Brummett in the introduction to the book *Uncovering Hidden Rhetorics: Social Issues in Disguise* explains rhetoric will often deal with a variety of important social issues indirectly via subconscious and ideological means. Social issues, according to Brummett, are "those conflicts, hopes, fears, and possibilities that have to do with how power is managed, how people live together or in opposition, how people construct their identities, communities, and lives" (2008, p. 1). These social issues have very important implications for individuals, especially material implications, such as the generational impact of racism Adelman describes at the beginning of this chapter (2003).

Brummett explains hegemony simply: "If an empowered group perpetuates the idea that their empowerment is natural, acceptable, and preferable—especially if such ideas are accepted by the disempowered—we would say that such a group has hegemony" (2008, p. 50). The hegemonic group is able to persuade the marginalized group through the rhetoric of the "normal." This concept is exemplified by Whiteness, which we can see in how it perpetuates the ordinariness of racism, and Whiteness' most salient feature is its invisible privileged position in society (Simpson, 2008). "Hegemony is created and perpetuated by a rhetoric of common sense, a rhetoric of the natural" (Brummett, 2008, p. 50). What is assumed to be natural or normal is the result of struggle between the hegemonic group and nonelites' cultures, and the means by which each group asserts their power is ideology. Ideology is what guides our perceptions of reality,

and is the tool of hegemony. Some scholars describe ideology working as a type of filter, or as Burke described it, terministic screens. According to Cloud terministic screens are "filters that foreground some features of reality and obscure others, and that produce conventional ideological narratives out of complex experience" (1994, p. 543). This screen is what guides the prioritization of some information over others, which also serves to make it difficult sometimes to identify what is relegated as low priority.

Ideologies do not literally limit what an individual may say or do; rather they dictate the vocabulary and tools used by the individual to make sense of reality. No one is necessarily restricted or controlled by an ideology, because there is no ideology that is objectively true or 'natural.' Rather, "social control in its essence is control over consciousness, the a priori influence that learned predispositions hold over human agents" (McGee, 1980, p. 455). Ideology is never "True," rather can be considered "true" contextually because it is the product of rhetoric and is used by those in the community to construct reality through social interactions. What is only contextually "true" can be understood as "false" when considered in another context.

To be accepted as a member of the culture or community, one must accept these ideologies learned through socialization (McGee, 1980).

> An analysis of ideographic usages in political rhetoric... reveals interpenetrating systems or 'structures' of public motives… patterns of political consciousness which have the capacity both to control 'power' and to influence (if not determine) the shape and texture of each individual's 'reality.' (McGee, 1980, p. 454)

As Marilyn Frye (1983) might say: the hegemonic ideology is the cage, and the manifestations of that ideology in specific discrete texts or an individual ideograph that is a building bock of the ideology are comparable to the individual bars of the ideological cage. However, the elite are typically just as trapped by their own ideologies as the nonelites, if not more so (McGee, 1980). To be trapped in an ideology is to be unable to break outside the ideological cage so as to understand how it influences or controls the person's way of perceiving reality. If the person does not see the cage, and cannot critique it, they are only able to think within the confines of that ideological cage. Members of the hegemonic group are not "freer" than the marginalized group, rather they are beneficiaries of the privilege established by the hegemonic ideology that oppresses other groups.

Recognizing hegemony can be difficult, especially if one cannot know if one is truly able to think outside of the hegemonic ideology. McKerrow explains, "a critical rhetoric seeks to unmask or demystify the discourse of power" (1989, p. 115). This functions to shed light on the power dynamics in society, but also "what possibilities for change the integration invites or inhibits and what intervention strategies might be considered appropriate to effect social change" (McKerrow, 1989, p. 115). By utilizing a critical rhetoric, we can begin to understand how the hegemonic structure such as Whiteness is perpetuated. "Whiteness functions ideologically when people employ it, consciously or unconsciously, as a framework to categorize people and understand their social locations" (Crenshaw, 1997, p. 255). Whiteness teaches people how to understand reality by teaching patterns with which to organize information. White people typically think "of themselves as average, morally neutral non-racists. They do not see racism as an ideology that protects the interests of White people" (Crenshaw, 1997, p. 255). Yet, this ideology they ignore does not go away, and it has very significant implications, as was illustrated in Adelman's narrative (2003).

> Our notions of the past are guided by these ideological blinders that allow us to reflect upon some of the horrors of the past that have shaped the world today, but not upon others. The patterns that emerge in what we remember and what we do not remember belie any randomness; the patterns expose a pattern of Whiteness at work. Our words and our ways of thinking unwittingly reproduce these patterns of Whiteness. (Wander et al., 1999, p. 24)

It is not the individual acts of racism that perpetuates inequality so much as the ideological structures of Whiteness that continue to be reinforced in society (Johnson, 1999). This structure is reinforced more by indirect and hidden means than a person spitting ethnic slurs at a bar. If a person is trying to fight racism, instead of focusing on the obviously racist slur, one must look for the ideologies that the slur is symptomatic of. But we can recognize such an obviously racist ideology easily, what is more important is searching for and uncovering the ways racist ideologies are manifested in ways we have not recognized. To end racism, work must be done to make connections between texts and ideology we have not previously made so as to shed light on systematic oppression. Because of the colorblind approach to race, race is an issue that remains hidden in American rhetoric, which protects Whiteness from critique. This inability to openly

discuss the issue has just served to reinforce White hegemony in American society, thus it is imperative to uncover such hidden rhetoric.

McKerrow focuses on the need for critics to pose alternative meanings individuals may construct. Brummett views the audience as *agents* in the construction of meaning because the audience is not a passive consumer of meaning, thus the term agents emphasizes the audiences active engagement with rhetoric to create meaning (1991). According to Brummett, examining everyday rhetoric reveals ideology, "Language and images are unruly, sending tentacles out beyond their immediate locations, connecting to wide ranges of issues beyond the conscious intentions of creators and users of messages" (Brummett, 2008, p. 3). While the agent may not be aware of an ideology guiding their perceptions of a text, humans are naturally "ordering creatures." Humans are naturally applying their previous understanding of reality to make sense of new situations. However, the patterns humans use to "order" or understand reality are not "natural," or inherent in "reality," rather are developed through socialization. Despite any intended meaning of the speaker, there are a variety of ways in which the rhetoric will carry meanings from beyond the text, and we, as the audience, construct the meaning by relating it to previous rhetoric we have encountered. The culture, through its rhetoric, gives agents the cognitive "tools" to perceive the world with "psychological unity."

McKerrow says we must reconceptualize rhetoric so accommodate the importance of the agent in constructing meaning, because the speaker focused analysis does not allow for critical rhetoric (1989). A text does not have a preordained objective meaning, and the speaker cannot control how the agent perceives the text. In order to accommodate how the audience acts as agents and McKerrow's call for a conceptualization of rhetoric that promotes critical rhetoric, Brummett answers McKerrow's call by arguing rhetoric should be understood as a dimension of culture. In order to begin looking for the ideologically informed patterns that emerge when we view many texts together, and in order to truly examine popular culture texts, we must conceptualize rhetoric as a dimension of culture. If we only view rhetoric as discrete texts defined by the speaker, such as a presidential address or a protest sign, it will hard to identify the larger ideologies that can emerge when we view rhetoric as not limited to a discrete text. Brummett (1991) rhetoric, "is essentially a complex, multilevel social function that is carried out through correspondingly complex manifestations" (p. 37). Rhetoric is a social function and is manifested in texts that carry out the social function. Discrete texts are important, but to only

recognize such texts without viewing rhetoric as including messages that emerge from many texts, one maintains too narrow of a perspective to truly grasp the totality of the rhetoric (Brummett, 1991).

The function of rhetoric is to manage shared meanings between people (Brummett, 1991). A culture is developed through rhetoric, but not any single discrete text, rather the culmination of many discrete texts and the ideology those texts support and promote. Brummett defines culture:

> Culture is the vast set of artifacts that nurture and influence the development and growth of people. It is the social groups for which the artifacts stand as vicars. It is the socially generated symbolic strategies for manifesting artifacts as 'real' objects, actions, and events with ranges of meaning (1991, p. xix).

From this perspective, culture and ideology are inextricably linked. Culture must be managed through rhetoric that makes artifacts symbolically relevant for a group and provides the strategies for identification that delineate the culture from other cultures. Ideologies serve to manage shared meanings and culture. Rhetoric is a dimension of every life lived socially, "rhetoric is that part of an act or object that influences how social meanings are created, maintained, or opposed" (Brummett, 1991, p. 38). The dimension of any text, behavior, item, that is rhetorical is the part that in some way promotes certain ways to make social meaning at the expense of other ways. The rhetorical dimension of a text is the dimensions that tells us how we "ought to live" (Brummett, 1991). These social meanings define a culture, and it is this socially constructed meaning that is the rhetorical dimension of any text, item, etc. The dimension of culture that is considered rhetorical is conceptualized as a rhetorical manifestation, which is,

> an act or object that is created by people through the perceptual process of relating certain things in the environment and endowing those perceptions with psychological unity. People may be focally aware of a manifestation, or a manifestation may be just at or below the level of conscious awareness. (Brummett, 1991, p. 38)

A text is rhetorical when it is perceived, consciously or unconsciously, by the agent to promote certain patterns and tools for perceiving reality as "right" or "good." The agent's perceptions are derived from socialization into a particular culture, family, and context (Brummett, 1991).

Popular culture is most influential at the ideological level, the level at which hegemony secures its power. Popular culture "is the arena of consent and resistance. It is partly where

hegemony arises, and where it is secured" (Hall, 1981, p. 487). Hegemony is often fought over in what is considered "popular" culture, because what is more "taken for granted" or "everyday" than rhetorical meaning popular culture? Thus, ideology is ever present in popular culture.

> Popular culture is a significant vehicle for propagating discrimination by exploiting our human, symbol-using tendency to build patterns and categories in our consciousness. These discursive patterns of Othering perpetuate hierarchal distinctions, functioning as a significant stratifying force in the United States. (Perks et al., 2008, p. 44)

This ideology maintains Whiteness' hidden power. The common images and ideas we see repeatedly represented in popular culture will impact how we organize future information and understand reality. Popular culture is the site of, "uneven and unequal struggle, by the dominant culture, constantly to disorganize and reorganize popular culture; to enclose and confine its definitions and forms within a more inclusive range of dominant forms" (Hall, 1981, p. 482). The hegemonic ideology hopes to secure a certain cage around the marginalized groups' rhetoric to limit what may be said or done. If the hegemonic ideology can maintain control of popular culture, they can ensure the unexamined place of privilege.

Gunn and Brummett explain how the rhetoric of popular culture works, "Texts circulate in popular communication as a noisy buzz of fragments. The paradigm for popular communication today is channel surfing, and that may be applied anywhere as a metaphor for how such texts are distributed and consumed" (2004, p. 717). It is imperative for understanding both the hegemonic ideologies of Whiteness and the means by which popular culture has rhetorical dimensions, thus the scholar reaches for a variety of texts as evidence for their claim. The more evidence the scholar can offer to support their argument, the more texts that can be identified as implicating the same form, the stronger the scholar's argument becomes. A traditional discrete text should not be analyzed by, "means of a simple speaker-audience interaction, but also by means of 'pulling together' of disparate scraps of discourse which, when constructed as an argument, serve to illuminate otherwise hidden or taken for granted social practices" (McKerrow, 1989, p. 124).

The importance of an audience-focused method is illustrated in rhetorical scholarship, such as Hart and Hartelius's and Bennett's 2007 debate over the political implications of TDS. Hart and Hartelius argue Stewart promotes cynicism to his young viewers, which harms democracy by undoing the very values our society is founded upon (2007). Bennett, on the other

hand, argues Hart and Hartelius take Stewart out of context, thus miss the true rhetorical power of TDS (2007). These two perspectives ultimately exemplify the conflict between a traditional rhetorical framework and Brummett's conceptualization of rhetoric as a dimension of culture.

> Hart and Hartelius claim Stewart professes to value democracy, but in reality,
> Jon Stewart is a multi-mediated reincarnation of the classical Cynic. Just as the Cynics'
> agenda was to ridicule social and political norms by violating them in the most physically
> grotesque ways, Stewart foregrounds and mocks the generic conventions of his times.
> (Hart & Hartelius, 2007, p. 265)

They argue both TDS and the classic Cynic use the same two rhetorical tropes: diatribe and chreia, which Hart and Hartelius claim shows TDS is harmful for political discourse and allegedly promotes cynicism towards democracy, ultimately resulting in disengagement from the political system the citizen (Hart & Hartelius, 2007). Political disengagement is detrimental to democracy, which requires the participation of its citizens so that the government can truly be "by the people and for the people." According to Hart and Hartelius, "Politics, of course, depends on more than mere attention. It depends on serious beliefs seriously pursued. Cynicism, in contrast, promotes only itself... Cynicism rarely fosters social change" (2007 p. 268). This cynicism seduces young viewers into the attractive style of cynicism and nonparticipation, ultimately rejecting conventional society because it is promoted as "cool" (2007).

Hart and Hartelius' arguments perpetuate a traditional framework for analyzing rhetoric, which many scholars, like McKerrow, have warned can perpetuate hegemony more often than exposing it. One indication of this framework is the structuralist tone of their arguments, which claim one ideology can dominate over the audience. For example, the scholars say TDS' use of cynicism illustrates how "Jon Stewart & Co. are bullies who force us into one and only one way of imagining the world" (Hart & Hartelius, 2007, p. 268). Yet, such a claim does not recognize how a speaker cannot force an ideology on an audience, rather can influence the audience to accept their ideology via a struggle for hegemony. In addition to this structuralist tone, Hart and Hartelius attribute to the medium of television powers of control across all content. They claim television "has become our emotional tutor, teaching us which of our feelings are proper and which passe´… Indeed, the medium consistently underestimates its importance ('It's only TV, after all')" (2007, p. 271). Here the scholars seem to say television has negative implications across all content, which places the rhetoric's power to manage meaning in the source, not the

agents/audience. Ascribing such power to the medium does not view the audience as agents in constructing the meaning of the text and the potential for alternative readings that arise from a variety of contexts.

Focusing too much on the source is the major pitfall of classical Greek rhetoric according to Nakayama and Krizek (1999), a pitfall Hart and Hartelius seem to exemplify. Hart and Hartelius' traditional framework assumes a privileged center, and the analysis does not recognize how TDS is potentially speaking from outside a privileged position, or how TDS may actually be critiquing hegemonic ideologies within which the scholars are analyzing TDS. Nakayama and Krizek claim there is an important distinction between rhetoric that is strategic versus that which is tactical. Strategic rhetoric is enacted from a position of power, whereas a tactic is enacted by those in a position that is being oppressed by the hegemonic group (1999). Traditional rhetoric was performed as strategic, from the position of the hegemonic group. The focus on the source with classical Greek methods makes it difficult for the scholar to recognize the distinction between strategic and tactical. Such a distinction is important if one wants to discover the subversive functions of TDS' rhetoric. Bennett argues they needed to examine "the context in which this alleged heretical comedy is being practiced" and they needed to consider "who consumes it and whether they are indeed doomed to ignorance and self-satisfied dismissal of politics as a result" (Bennett, 2007, p. 279). Recognition of the context and audience are imperative for seeing the bigger picture of TDS' rhetoric and identifying import ideological patterns that may only emerge when the text is considered among many texts. As previously mentioned, "Ideological influence in our society is anything but open and discursive, it is larded throughout the meat of everyday living," (Brummett, 2008, p. 60). Nakayama and Krizek explain it is the "everyday-ness of Whiteness" that makes it difficult to recognize. Scholars who use models with a speaker-focus, like Hart and Hartelius, will focus on rhetorical tropes without considering how the audience would understand such tropes differently depending upon the context. As a result, such scholars could be missing important ideological meaning, such as Whiteness.

There is little reason we should assume cynicism is understood by agents today as it was during Aristotle's day. Bennett argues we must understand "the nature of cynicism-in-context may have changed a bit in the past two millennia" (2007, p. 283). When considered within a contemporary context, comedy like TDS "can offer the freedom to make associations that fall

outside the bounds of ideologies and other preordained truths" (Bennett, 2007, p. 280). TDS provides an entertaining venue to critique the hegemonic ideology in ways typical journalists are not permitted because they are expected to maintain an "objective" point of view. "Stewart does not offer us cynicism for its own sake, but as a playful way to offer the kinds of insights that are not permitted in more serious news formats that slavishly cling to official accounts of events" (Bennett, 2007, p. 280). For TDS, cynical tropes become tools used to shed light on problems in the political system. "When the public is being deceived or misled, is it, in fact, cynical to expose the deception or distortion or is it simply being realistic?" (Bennett, 2007, p. 280). Cynicism may be necessary to use in conjunction "with other tools for building independent perspective," and "for maintaining independence of thought and action" (Bennett, 2007, p. 283). TDS uses cynicism to urge the audience to be critical of the traditional news media that often have an invested interest in maintaining the status quo. Essentially, Bennett is arguing TDS promotes the values of McKerrow's critical rhetoric by working to shed light on the hegemonic ideologies in our society.

Bennett critiques Hart and Hartelius for limiting their perspective by not considering the context, and Bennett argues their perspective comes with many limitations that do not allow for an accurate analysis of TDS. Hart and Hartelius' analysis only indicates the importance of viewing rhetoric in a way that does not prematurely limit an understanding of the rhetorical functions of such a text. Brummett would argue the critic should analyze TDS using a method that conceptualizes rhetoric as a dimension of culture. Brummett said,

> The characteristics of the dimension will vary not from one act or object to another, but with how sources and receivers of rhetorical influence use the act or object and place it in a context. What an action or object is, but more specifically, what it is doing rhetorically, is something that must be constituted by how it is perceived and used by people. (1991, p. 47)

A text can be interpreted in a way that reinforces hegemony or disrupts it, which depends on the audience constructing the meaning. Thus, scholars like Hart and Hartelius, who assume a medium, such as television, automatically means the discourse will be harmful, are limiting themselves to one way of constructing the text that cannot recognize alternative perspectives. These alternative perspectives are the ultimate aim of a critical rhetoric (McKerrow, 1989).

Brummett argues that just because rhetoric is entertaining does not mean it is less valuable than traditional political rhetoric. For example, novels such as *The Jungle* were entertaining and politically significant. Brummett argues Postman has not provided evidence to suggest entertainment is detrimental to political discourse. While extended expositional political discourse produced the founding documents of this nation, it also institutionalized slavery as previously mentioned while discussing Whiteness (1991). Television may have made politics more entertaining, but that cannot be automatically equated with trivial. While television may have furthered the arms race, it also promoted images of the civil rights battles in the South to Whites isolated from the conflict in mostly White areas, allowing for those far from the conflict to empathize with the civil rights movement. "In other words, for whatever reason, Jim Crow fell apart within a twenty-year span of the public's preoccupation with television, while exploitation of Africans, American Indians, and Asians proceeded full tilt during centuries of expositional discussion over what to do" (Brummett, 1991, p. 21). While not every decision made since television has been perfect, such improvements in society should be considered if one is going to argue television is detrimental is harming society. It seems one could argue the pros and cons of each type of rhetoric.

Brummett explains, "it is more realistic to argue that changes in media and discourse are both caused by and are causes of widespread social and cultural changes" (1991, p. 22). The increase in technology has been accompanied by an incredible influx of information available for everyone, but not an influx in venues for the public to participate. The internet has potential for political engagement, but it may be too early to make specific claims about its success here. Based on the pre-internet observations of Brummett, as social issues become more and more complicated, the efficacy of the general public has consistently decreased. "In a practical sense, the proliferation of specialties and the realms of knowledge that they oligopolize has exhausted the public's ability to stay abreast of the information language game explosion" (Brummett, 1991, p. 25). It is unreasonable to expect the average person to make time to understand the complexity of many social issues, and without people to simplify the issues for the community they may never understand, let alone participate.

Typically, popular culture artifacts have been defined by elitist conceptions of "high culture" and "low culture" binaries. Such scholars like Postman may not want to recognize the validity of McKerrow's position: "'Facts of Life' may… have more influence on a teenager's

conception of social reality than all the great speeches by long-dead great speakers" (1989, p. 124). However, today the proliferation and evolution of popular culture studies has resulted in a rejection of the "high" and "low" binary, thus defining popular culture rhetoric more by the size of the popular exposure to the text and its relationship to the power dynamics of the society (Gunn & Brummett, 2004). Specifically, the focus of this scholarship is to uncover the power dynamics of gaining consent from the nonelite group for the dominant group's ideologies. The study of popular culture has also adopted the specific political agenda of identifying these societal power dynamics so as to understand how consent is attained and how alternative, nonelite ideologies can be expressed (Gunn & Brummett, 2004).

Critical rhetoric is political, and it directly aligns itself with the social movements that attempt to critique the hegemonic status quo. While critical rhetoric may be critical of the movement as well, it still aims to benefit the undermining of hegemony. "Whether the critique established a social judgment about 'what to do' as a result of the analysis, it must nonetheless serve to identify the possibilities of future action available to the participants" (McKerrow, 1989, p. 115). The point is to open the door for alternatives to the hegemonic status quo, if not provide alternatives. Critical rhetoric is aimed to provide "politically-oriented analyses that have as their motive the 'demystification of ideologically distorted belief systems'" (McKerrow, 1989, p. 120). Critiquing ideology is imperative for combating socially oppressive systems like Whiteness. "An ideological turn in modern criticism reflects the existence of crisis, acknowledges the influence of established interests and the reality of alternative worldviews, and commends rhetorical analysis not only for the actions implied but also of the interests represented," (Wander, p. 111). Therefore it is imperative for critics to, "do the critical ideological work necessary to make Whiteness visible and overturn its silences for the purpose of resisting racism" (Crenshaw, 1997, p. 254). The issues of hegemony and ideology make Whiteness and popular culture important to be considered together so as to identify the patterns that emerge and indicate ideological influences in pattern creation. Such a goal is a politically charged aim that must be embraced when studying Whiteness, popular culture, and hegemony.

Conclusion

The sociohistorical evolution of race, racism, and ultimately Whiteness, illustrates a specific history of power dynamics and oppression crucial for approaching Obama's speech on

race. Such a history allows us to recognize how hegemony works to secure power and privilege in contemporary America, despite the advances and aims of the civil rights movement. With this context and an understanding of hegemony, it becomes apparent Whiteness is precisely the ideology that would be managed in popular culture. Thus a study of contemporary Whiteness constructed by Obama's rhetoric would be complimented, if not incomplete without, an examination of popular culture rhetoric. The controversy surrounding TDS indicate it is precisely the popular culture a scholar would want to consider. TDS is immensely popular, but also influential. The critical question is: can metonymy result in political discourse that allows for challenging hegemonic oppression? TDS has been heralded as rhetoric that offers critical public discourse lacking in contemporary society, others have claimed it is harmful for public discourse. Obama's speech on race and the reactions from TDS offer the opportunity to examine the cross section of traditional political discourse and popular culture. If the role of the media is to offer a metonym of contemporary issues, such as race, in a manageable size for the public, does TDS offer such a metonym of Obama's rhetoric?

An appropriate method for this project must be derived from the critical rhetoric perspective, and cannot reflect the bias inherent in traditional rhetoric and a speaker focused method. This method must be able to accommodate both traditional political texts and popular culture, and it must be able to pull together disparate texts as evidence of a larger pattern or ideology. Ultimately, it must be possible to critique hegemonic structures, but also discover possibilities for challenging such power dynamics. Barry Brummett's mosaic model of meaning offers the critic ways to discover rhetorical homologies among many texts, such homologies can be indicative of ideologies and the struggle for hegemony (1991). Ultimately "the business of rhetorical scholars is to teach people how to expand their repertoires for making experience and to show that the awareness that expanded repertoires must entail is subversive" (Brummett, 1991, p. xxiii). Using this method will open the possibility for a critique that accomplishes the fundamental political aims of scholarship on Whiteness, popular culture, and hegemony.

CHAPTER 3 - Constructing Mosaics

Before we can analyze these texts we must reconceptualize rhetoric for popular culture so we can understand Brummett's mosaic model of meaning. Then I will explain how I plan on tackling the texts of Barack Obama and TDS. Finally, I will explicate the comic frame homology that I will uncover in analysis of Obama and TDS.

Reconceptualizing Rhetoric for Popular Culture

Brummett (1991) explains rhetoric is not just a speech or a discrete text. Rather, rhetoric "is essentially a complex, multilevel social function that is carried out through correspondingly complex manifestations" (p. 37). A traditional conception of rhetoric would only recognize rhetoric that is clearly defined by the source, but this does not recognize how audiences can construct the same source's text to have different meanings. Instead of such a limited view of rhetoric, Brummett sees rhetoric as a social function that is manifested in texts that carries out the management of shared meanings between people. Rhetoric is a dimension of every life lived socially, and "is that part of an act or object that influences how social meanings are created, maintained, or opposed" (Brummett, 1991, p. 38). This conception allows us to view audiences as agents, because rhetoric is not the speech constructed by the speaker. "Rhetoric is *not* a kind of act or object," rather rhetoric is a function. These functions of rhetoric are "managing meaning within social arrangements, and is thus a dimension of the countless acts and objects comprising a cultural environment" (Brummett, 1991, p. 38). A rhetorical dimension is comprised of functions, manifestations, and texts. The function of rhetoric is what the rhetoric is addressing or trying to accomplish, "the creation, management, and alteration or opposition of shared meanings" (Brummett, 1991, p. 38). Previous definitions of rhetoric as persuasion are broadened by reframing persuasion as the management of meaning.

There are various levels of rhetorical functions, which may or may not be obviously rhetorical to the agent, but social life is not possible without the management of shared meanings and must be accomplished despite our awareness. The more conscious an agent is of the function of rhetoric, the more the agent can control the construction of the rhetoric. If the speaker is unaware of the function, they defer uncritically to subconscious ways to organize meaning. Such

a conception of rhetoric allows us to see how members of a culture can share certain perspectives in that they share common ways of constructing meaning. However, rhetoric is not deterministic, and this conceptualization also recognizes how individuals within that culture may differ in their constructions, because no two individuals share the exact same experience and socialization. The common ways to construct meaning shared by a group, and the ways these meanings differ from other groups defines a culture. Individuals in the culture will still differ in how each constructs meaning, and one may be influenced by many cultures. In the same way individuals will identify with many different and sometimes conflicting cultures, so too will individuals share ways to manage meaning with different groups. These meanings may conflict at times, and the agents manage these conflicts as needed. The Catholic who also takes birth control must manage the conflict between the church doctrine, contemporary American culture, and her personal faith. A media determinist might argue popular culture won out over the religious ideology, yet the woman still identifies with both cultures. She still belongs to both cultures, because she was able to manage the conflict and choose to construct birth control in a rhetorical pattern she found acceptable.

There are various levels at which a person will be consciously aware of the function of rhetoric, and the levels are on a continuum, not discrete categories where a text is definitively at one level or another. The three levels, exigent, quotidian and implicative, are defined by the degree to which the agent is aware a text is rhetorical. Each function has a corresponding type of manifestation, which is "an act or object that is created by people through the perceptual process of relating certain things in the environment and endowing those perceptions with psychological unity" (Brummett, 1991, p. 38). These manifestations are at varying levels of abstraction. "People may be focally aware of a manifestation, or a manifestation may be just at or below the level of conscious awareness" (Brummett, 1991, p. 38). Rhetorical functions are accomplished through manifestations, resulting in a text with perceived boundaries. The permeability of the text's boundaries defines the type of text. Multiple texts may overlap with other texts, and the textual boundaries are not always clearly delineated.

The most obvious is the exigent function. Influenced by Bitzer's conception of the rhetorical exigency, Brummett said, "Any time a pressing need arises that implicates the management of meaning, rhetoric then functions at the exigent level" (1991, p. 39). This rhetoric is manifested at the interventionist level, and the speaker and audience/agents recognize the

attempt to persuade. This is the manifestation that accommodates traditional conceptions of rhetoric as discrete texts with speaker-defined boundaries, such as presidential addresses or a television commercial. Both the audience and speaker are aware of the speaker's intent to persuade the agents with a specific text, thus the textual boundaries established by the speaker are uncritically accepted (Brummett, 1991). Even if the speaker's intended boundaries are not clear, the agents still attribute source defined boundaries to the text. Other factors may define the boundaries, such as the medium. "All expositional texts are discrete texts, but not all discrete texts are expositional" (Brummett, 1991, p. 41). A commercial urging you to buy something is working at the exigent level because you are aware the speaker is trying to persuade you to buy their product. The source-defined boundaries are clear for a 30 second commercial, and the audience defers to those boundaries to understand the meaning of the text. However, the commercial may be understood at other dimensions outside of the awareness of the agents, thus those meanings are not exigent. Also, not all discrete texts are not rhetorical, such as a person scratching their back in response to a physical stimulus, which would not be persuasive or promoting how we "ought to live." The scratch would become rhetorical and function at the exigent level if the speaker designated that gesture to mean something more, like a sign to a friend that they want to leave a party. The scratch is communicating how we "ought to live," as in "we ought to not live at this party!"

If a 30 second commercial, in addition to claiming their bathroom cleaner is the best, sends a message that reinforces it is the mom's job to keep her bathroom clean for her family, that commercial is managing meaning at the quotidian level. The middle of the continuum is the quotidian function of rhetoric, which is the rhetoric we are relatively less aware of. Such management of meaning fills our everyday lives, yet we are unaware of it unless it is brought to our attention. This rhetoric functions to manage

> "the public and personal meanings that affect everyday, even minute-to-minute decisions. This level of rhetoric is where decisions are guided that do not take the form of peak crises (as in the exigent function) but do involve long-term concerns as well as the momentary choices that people must make to get through the day. (Brummett, 1991, p. 41)

We are constantly bombarded by texts in our everyday lives, which we do not always consciously acknowledge as rhetorical. Yet agents are influenced by these texts in important

ways, such as reinforcing the gender role of women as domestic servants (Brummett, 1991). Most popular culture is functioning on the quotidian level, where the agent does not consciously think about how they are guided to construct mosaics at that time.

The quotidian function of rhetoric is the "common sense" of the culture, the meanings we readily accept as appropriate, thus do not think about often. This function is manifested at the appropriational level, which is when "people appropriate phrases, slogans, actions, nonverbal signs, etc., that are already available in the society or organization within which one is acting" (Brummett, 1991, p. 42). When the agent is not guided by source-defined boundaries of a discrete text, the agent appropriates texts from past experience to make sense of a new experience. "We manifest rhetoric as appropriational when we as sources of the rhetoric present to others texts of everyday life that manage what the ongoing actions of everyday life mean, and when we as receivers construct from the signs all around us the meanings that we need to get through the day" (Brummett, 1991, p. 42). Appropriational manifestations result in diffuse texts, groupings of discrete texts that the agent uses to construct a more abstract text unconsciously. The text is used by the agent to understand future experiences and guide actions. An agent approaches the commercial with memories of previous commercials and other texts reinforcing gender roles, and the agent constructs the meaning of the commercial accordingly. One agent may construct a text that reinforces the role of women as domesticators. However, the meaning can be brought to the exigent level if challenged, such as a feminist who challenges the assumption women are supposed to be homemakers. The quotidian level, "is the battle ground of meaning because the quotidian level is unstable, for what is everyday and just at or below the level of awareness, is constantly threatening to become either more problematic or even more foundational and unexamined" (Brummett, 1991, p. 43). When a common sense idea becomes more problematic, it is dealt with at the exigent level. However, if a common sense idea becomes an even more unexamined assumption, the rhetoric moves to the implicative level.

The final level of rhetorical functions is the implicative function, which "includes the management of meanings that are unproblematic and taken for granted" (Brummett, 1991, p. 41). As we move on the continuum from the exigent level, towards the interventionist, and then the implicative, "the more sedimented and unquestioned are the meanings" (Brummett, 1991, p. 41). The meaning at the exigent level is easily challenged, but implicative meanings are the least likely to be consciously considered by the agent. Such meanings are built into the culture, and

these meanings are the foundation on which the other functions create meaning. This function corresponds with conditional manifestations, which "is embodied in the basic values, grammatical categories, fundamental assumptions, and rules of thought and language that are conditions for, and are implied by, rhetoric's other manifestations" (Brummett, 1999, p. 45). The conditional manifestations provide the foundation for more explicit manifestations. Such manifestations are incredibly important because they are at the heart of our society and are critiqued the least. A feminist critique of gendered pronouns would argue such language reinforces the male-female binary as inherent to humans. Important meaning that is managed at this level, like gender, race, and individualism, are the meanings that perpetuate oppression, yet they remain unquestioned in our society (Brummett, 1991). Conditional rhetoric has shadow texts. Brummett explains

> …people have no sense of a text at all in the conditional manifestation of rhetoric… it seems like a ghost haunting the houses of 'real' texts, faintly seen assumptions and conditions hovering just beyond the clear and concrete signs and utterances of speeches and everyday life. Conditional rhetoric is always what props up or grounds the meanings of interventionist and appropriational manifestations. (1991, p. 45)

The shadow text is the hardest to recognize, because such texts are reinforced and reiterated by discrete and diffuse texts. To challenge a shadow text is often daunting and overwhelming because it means challenging the innumerable discrete and diffuse texts the shadow text haunts.

To illustrate the different functions, levels, and manifestations, we can consider the simple act of putting on underwear when getting dressed in the morning. As a child we learn to get dressed, which typically involves underwear. An adult functions at the exigent level when they see they must explicitly tell the child to wear underwear. There was a discrete text, an adult telling a child what is underwear and how do we wear it. Such a text is among many messages about underwear this child encounters as they mature into adulthood. Thus, as an adult, when getting dressed in the morning, this person grabs a pair of clean underwear without much thought as to why or alternative options. This person is making a decision to get through their everyday life, thus the meaning is managed subconsciously at the quotidian level. To make this decision, this person had to appropriate texts from his past experience to this new situation, the appropriational manifestation. This person was guided to put on clean underwear by appropriating the lessons past, and the choice of clean underwear is posited as the proper choice

compared to wearing dirty underwear, and all without a conscious recognition of this hierarchy. The construction of this underwear hierarchy is learned through the process of socialization, which includes diffuse texts like the culture's standards of hygiene, but also includes discrete texts, such as the many times the agent's parents reminded the agent to "always wear clean underwear, just in case you are in an accident." Appropriational manifestations are always at risk of becoming either problematic or unquestioned. If the choice is questioned by their partner, perhaps arguing one way we can save energy is by not washing our clothes as frequently, the choice is pushed from the quotidian level into our awareness at the exigent level. This person is surprised by having to consider the subconscious way they define clean and dirty underwear, and thus considers where they learned to define underwear as too dirty to wear. This challenge reminds the person of a discrete text from an adult that said to "always wear clean underwear, because you never know when are going to get into an accident," which is one of many discrete texts that informed the diffuse text of wearing clean underwear as how one "ought to live."

This person could react to their partner by pushing back towards the appropriational and conditional level, or allowing the appropriational meaning to be questioned at the interventionist level. Perhaps the person reacts by strongly defending their original decision and standard definitions of clean underwear, further reinforcing for this person initial view and pushing towards the conditional. However, this person could be open to challenging the appropriational manifestation, recognizing the legitimacy of his partner's argument. Then the partner could further challenge the person's conditional assumption of the necessity or purpose of wearing underwear. The partner could argue underwear is unnecessary for hygiene, and the practice is just a manifestation of Puritan values of modesty that are deeply rooted in America's history. Without a challenge from his partner, our friend would not have thought twice about the appropriational manifestation that is: The Underwear Hierarchy. Perhaps the shadow texts of our Puritan past are not what haunts the American culture's preoccupation with underwear, but exemplifies a challenge to the deep conditional meanings that uphold our everyday lives. Without a challenge to the manifestation, or if the partner sees the choice of clean underwear and does not react, the appropriational is reinforced and moves just a little closer towards the conditional on the continuum. The complex interactions between the different functions, manifestations and texts are thus never realized, and the person moves on to manage the rest of their everyday meanings.

Even something as benign as our choice of underwear will betray rhetorical manifestations at varying levels on the continuum of rhetorical functions and manifestations. The above example illustrates how "a given thing or action may perform the rhetorical function at more than one level and may be a rhetorical manifestation in more than one way" (1991, p. 46). There is flexibility where a text can take on different manifestations or functions depending on the person constructing the text, because ultimately a text does not have any one "Truth."

> The characteristics of the dimension will vary not from one act or object to another, but with how sources and receivers of rhetorical influence use the act or object and place it in a context. What an action or object is, but more specifically, what it is doing rhetorically, is something that must be constituted by how it is perceived and used by people.
> (Brummett, 1991, p. 47)

There is no inherent or objective meaning a text, the meaning is constructed by the agent. Meaning cannot be divorced from context, the agent's context specifically. Thus, rhetoric is a dimension of every cultural experience, which can change contextually.

Brummett emphasizes the need for critics of popular culture rhetoric, and rhetoric in general, to expand their definition to accommodate the different functions and manifestations of rhetoric. To limit rhetoric to discrete texts and focus on the speaker is to overlook most of the rhetoric that manages meaning today. Considering the invisibility of Whiteness, it becomes apparent the rhetorical power of Whiteness must lie beyond the discrete texts and speakers alone. Power dynamics are being managed through appropriational and conditional manifestations that are imperative to critique. The complexity of our everyday choices requires a method like Brummett's mosaic model, which attempts to develop theory that would allow for critics to analyze these functions and manifestations. The goal of mosaic examinations of popular culture is to examine how the continuum of functions and manifestations is managed in the culture by means of discrete, diffuse, and shadow texts. "Such a perspective will explore the conditions under which the management of meaning takes place between people and their appropriation of signs rather than between sources who direct discrete messages and their receivers" (Brummett, 1991, p. 63). We cannot continue to examine popular culture as discrete texts only, because we may miss the true rhetorical nature of the text. The method needs to allow the critic to examine how texts from speakers are reappropriated by audiences and "might be woven into the everyday flow of signification that constitutes popular culture or into the deeper conditional meanings that

shore up whole ways of life" (Brummett, 1991, p. 51). To truly understand how popular culture influences an audience, we must understand how the audience participates in constructing the text.

This does not mean this project's attempts to examine the discrete texts of Obama and TDS is limited, because this model allows us to make connections to the diffuse and shadow texts beyond the source-defined boundaries of the chosen texts. Using the mosaic model is a process of making connections to outside texts and break discrete text boundaries. It is not wrong in and of itself to study discrete texts, "The problem arises when the characteristics of discrete texts are assumed to apply to all rhetorical functions and manifestations; we will simply be missing much of what is going on if we cling to traditional assumptions" (Brummett, 1991, p. 53). Hart and Hartelius could not recognize how the alternative ways agents can construct the text, in ways Bennett argued were actually subversive, because they were assuming the speaker's choice (TDS) to use the tropes of cynicism would influence contemporary audiences as it did back in Plato's day. Thus, they were not recognizing how the audience could be taking TDS' text and reappropriating it to fit their context and socialization. Their perspective was limited, and they missed much of the real rhetorical importance of TDS in today's society.

The site of hegemonic struggle is the logic the agent is influenced to use when constructing what they recognize as reality. People who work to reinforce the hegemonic ideology are often doing so because subconsciously the subject position is in their favor. From the marginalized perspective, "Oppositional ordering can thus be seen as the use of a socially available logic to construct a perceptibly more favorable subjective position in opposition to a dominant placement" (Brummett, 1991, p. 84). If a person is privileged by the status conferred by the hegemonic ideology, the person is motivated to believe the ideology is fair. However, if a person realizes they are marginalized by this ideology, the agent has the potential to challenge the oppression by rejecting the hegemonic ideology and working to construct a more favorable position. Additionally, a member of the hegemonic ideology, if made aware of their privilege, can also reject the ideology and challenge it. The role of the critic is to open the hegemonic ideology to critique, but also to create knowledge that benefits the marginalized group's attempts to challenge the hegemonic ideology and ways for alternative voices to be heard. "From a rhetorical perspective," the potential for the marginalized to construct alternative rhetoric indicates the power dynamics are not insurmountable, but that "the impetus for change has not

yet been articulated—the necessary symbolic act bridging the ideological and the social position has not yet been related" (McKerrow, 1989, p. 129). Critical rhetoric, especially the mosaic model, works to articulate the rhetoric necessary to create equitable power dynamics in society.

The Mosaic Model of Meaning

The critic can map the management of meaning with Brummett's adaptation of Becker's mosaic model, which uses the spatial metaphor of a mosaic to describe how agents construct meaning out of the barrage of stimulus the agent is exposed to. This metaphor also describes how the agent is guided to construct mosaics by the knowledge acquired through socialization. Brummett argues,

> The metaphor works well, a mosaic is a coherent picture assembled from bits that
> have uncertain, unformed meaning in and of themselves, and the mosaic must be
> seen from a certain perspective (not too closely, for instance) for it to make any
> sense at all. (Brummett, 1991, p. 64)

This model is significant because it represents well the complexity in function and manifestation of the rhetorical experience by metaphorically describing ways agents construct texts into pictures with meaning.

To make use of this conceptualization of rhetoric as a dimension of culture, Brummett explicates the vocabulary of the model, which allows us to relate the complexities of rhetoric as a dimension to the spatial metaphor of an agent constructed mosaic. The mosaic allows for an understanding of abstraction as having rhetorical space agents not only construct, but occupy. Brummett uses the terms, "structures, forms, patterns, or logics" as the tools, learned through socialization, that allow people to organize stimulus into meaningful rhetoric (Brummett, 1991, p. 70). We use such tools "to order a chaos of bits into mosaics" (Brummett, 1991, p. 70). Brummett establishes a hierarchy of terms. Mosaics are the larger construction that is comprised of multiple texts, and texts are comprised of many bits. Texts are the discrete, diffuse, or shadow texts. A bit is, "any experience of sensations that we perceive as a unit, a package, an entity, because we have been socially influenced to so perceive them" (Brummett, 1991, p. 77). Bits are the signs the agent organizes into meaningful texts, such as recognizing the stimulus of the president giving a speech on television, which requires the use of many logics, such as those that

teach us to recognize the medium of television or that the person speaking is the president, and even recognizing the president is giving a speech.

To recognize the meaning of the president's speech as a discrete piece of rhetoric "is to carve certain bits out of the environment and using certain logic" (Brummett, 1991, p. 72). The physical stimulus we perceive can be arranged in any infinite arrangement, but infinity is not available to the agent. Logics guide the agent's recognition of bits and their placement of those bits into larger texts. Logics help agents to organize the stimulus, but are also limiting the infinite possibilities into a manageable few. These texts carry bigger meanings beyond the basic recognition of a speech on TV. The agent can order the bits into a meaningful text that understands the president's speech as addressing the economy or the war in Iraq. The agent then constructs this text into a larger mosaic, which the agent occupies as a subject position from which the agent approach future experiences. This subject position includes the person's understanding of the past and expectations for the future. As the agent constructs the text of the president speaking about the economic downturn, they are approaching that rhetoric from their preconceived mosaics. The agent uses the text of the president's speech, and the agent constructs their perceptions of the reality of the country's economic situation. The agent then must place themselves within this conception of America and the economy. In this way, the agent constructs their subject positions in life, which are used by the agent to place themselves in relation to the perceived reality and the text they are constructing of the presidential speech. The agent must constantly alter their subject position to accommodate the experiences as the agent moves through time. The culmination of texts, subject positions, and contexts into a perception of reality in that moment is the person's mosaic.

The overall logic the agent uses to construct bits, texts, and mosaics into a coherent perception of reality is the homology (Brummett, 1991). The homology is like the cement in a mosaic, what holds all the bits and texts in order to culminate in a mosaic. It is important to recognize a speech, or any traditionally understood rhetorical text, is not understood in a vacuum, rather it is the combination of multiple discrete, diffuse, and shadow texts that culminate in our understanding of one event. Whatever formally holds all of these parts together into a unified mosaic is the homology. Hart and Hartelius may identify classic rhetorical tropes of cynicism as a formal link between classic texts and TDS, but without consideration for the

mosaic that is contingent upon context and subject position, Hart and Hartelius are unable to grasp the rhetorical transaction.

Mosaic construction is the complex production of a reality the person inhabits. Brummett explains,

> People themselves are extensions of the field of bits, texts, and cultural artifacts which is ordered into mosaics. Furthermore, each individual is a series of subjectivities that are dimensions of the mosaics. Who and what I am, my subjectivity, my sense of self, is no more an ontological given than are ordered mosaics in experience; they must be continually made, upheld, or changed through the structuring and management of meaning. We are thus continuous with the bits and comprising the potential or popular culture, and each individual as a series of subject positions continually comes into and out of being in the form of mosaics constructed through cultural patterns. (Brummett, 1991, p. 80)

When the rhetorical critic explicates the socially held forms, patterns, and homologies, the critic is offering a glimpse into the reality that may have been constructed by an individual, but never the exact idiosyncratic construction. Each individual constructs a unique mosaic, but certain forms are shared by the people in a culture. These patterns are responsible for how we construct reality, including our own identity. We should focus on the human as a cultural being, because the meanings and subject positions that comprise our lives are culturally and socially constructed in our mosaics (Brummett, 1991). Brummett argues, "texts and subjects are created as continuous with one another, with each having an integral and reciprocal place in an ordering of meaning, and with each created simultaneously by invoking culturally available forms" (1991, p. 81). According to Brummett, "we like certain patterns not only because we are used to them but also because we are them; they have called us into being before" (1991, p. 82). The logic agents use to construct texts is privileged by the agent because the agent's identity uses the same logic. Brummett works to prove texts do not have an objective meaning, which collapses the difference between text and experience. Texts do not have meaning outside a person's experiences of that text. Yet, there remains a distinction between text and context. Agents approach rhetoric with a mosaic, which stands as the context to which all new texts are held.

A mosaic comprised of glass in concrete, is the culmination of a pattern used to organize pieces of glass into an attractive picture. The glass bit alone does not have meaning the way a

mosaic is meaningful. One bit does not have much meaning until it is placed in relation to many glass pieces, and such placement is guided by patterns. These patterns are learned by the agent through socialization, and the agent may not be conscious of the patterns guiding their construction. If a mosaic artist uses a pattern book, picks out a pattern, then repeats exactly that pattern, they are conscious of the pattern that guides the creation of the mosaic. However, if the artist is making a mosaic without a predetermined pattern and they believe it to be their own creation, they are still subconsciously guided by the mosaics they have seen in the past, the artists they admire, the artistic movements they like, and the previous mosaics the artist made. The mosaic can communicate meaning differently depending upon the perspective. A close-up on a handful of glass pieces does not mean the same thing as a picture of the whole mosaic where the pattern emerges from the many glass bits together. However, in this metaphor, the mosaic cannot be made by accident, like an artist accidentally dumping over a container of glass bits on wet cement. We do not accidentally construct mosaics, because the way the bits take shape into larger meanings is guided by our knowledge and socialization into a particular culture. Our brains do not accidentally process information into a pattern; the brain uses what it knows to make sense of reality. The pattern that we use to construct our mosaic is always telling of our culture and socialization into that culture.

However, Becker's original model does not address what guides people to constructs certain patterns in their mosaics, which does not recognize the influence of socialization (Brummett, 1991). To recognize the struggle for hegemony, we must look for the ways ideology influences our construction of mosaics. There needs to be some kind of way to understand what motivates people to constructs mosaics in specific ways, and what makes certain patterns dominant over others (Brummett, 1991). If rhetoric tells us how we "ought to live," rhetoric is teaching us how we "ought to construct mosaics." This analysis must be able to recognize the struggle for hegemony so as to examine Whiteness, thus what guides us to create mosaics will be imperative to understand. Brummett provides a corrective to Becker's model so as to clarify what constitutes a bit and aims to find how "agents use culturally available patterns, or 'logics,' to order their experiences and to construct subject positions for themselves within experience" (Brummett, 1991, p. xxiii). By extending Becker's model, Brummett helps to create a richer understanding of how we experience rhetoric everyday, but also how public discourse is managed in popular culture.

The Role of the Critic

The critic is searching for diffuse texts, which can never be fully explicated because they are, in fact, diffuse. The boundaries of these texts are permeable and constantly shifting. "So the critic suggests *some* bits that might have been assembled into a diffuse text in order to show the *logic* guiding the assembling" (Brummett, 1991, p. 100). The critic's discovery of this homology sheds light on the ways in which individuals are socially influenced to construct reality, but also why agents prefer certain patters and logics over others. According to Brummett, "we like certain patterns not only because we are used to them but also because we are them; they have called us into being before" (1991, p. 82). The logic agents use to construct texts is privileged by the agent because the agent's identity uses the same logic. While we can never know the way an individual used patterns to construct their idiosyncratic mosaic, the critic creates significant knowledge when they can explicate common ideological patterns shared among individuals in a culture. Even if it were possible to describe the idiosyncratic mosaic that would not be the goal of the critic, we want to generate knowledge about socially constructed patterns shared among many people in a culture. The critic should be uncovering a larger structure, the homology that "sees text, context, and subject as structurally one" (Brummett, 1991, p. 95). It is important to envision the rhetoric as one larger mosaic.

Homologies are powerful in that they can expose the vulnerabilities of the texts to the influences of homologous texts. "Vulnerability is but another way of saying that one experience may have rhetorical effects on how people perceive and order another experience or group of experiences if they are formally linked" (Brummett, 2004, p. 41). To discover a rhetorical homology is to expose the vulnerabilities of the texts, thus open the homology to critique. These formal vulnerabilities can result in direct rhetorical effects, such as how the agent constructs that text, but also how the agent constructs that text into their mosaic that guides their motivations towards future texts. A woman who has had her heart broken by men in the past may say "I'm swearing off men!" This means her future experiences with men are vulnerable to her past experiences with men. Vulnerabilities are the connections made between formally that guides the agent's perceptions of an experience as well as their reactions those experiences (Brummett, 2004).

For the critic to begin to uncover rhetorical homologies, they must first begin explicating the features of the homology that are shared among disparate texts. Identifying these shared

features exposes the vulnerabilities, how an agent is guided to construct the text by the homology and what rhetorical effects may that homology have on the agent's future experiences. With this map the critic can begin searching for a variety of texts that can be understood with such a homology. The map of features must be broad enough to include the disparate texts that make the homology interesting to examine. The more specific the features, the more narrow the homology becomes. Brummett explains there are two ways in which a critic can search for homologies: deductively or inductively. To approach finding forms deductively, one must have, "a desire to illustrate a particular theory of how people experience, and arraying the bits to match the theory" (Brummett, 1991, p. 100). But the critic can also approach the search inductively, "by arguing that the available bits could be organized in some novel and interesting way that we have not noticed before but that seems to be a pattern that a society does indeed use in a number of instances" (Brummett, 1991, p. 100). A study may also utilize both approaches. One can find these features in rhetorical constructions such as narratives, tropes, patterns of exigencies, and any number of places. Previous theories of any kind may be understood as rhetorical homologies assuming they are capable of accommodating the mosaic metaphor.

> Any theoretical observation that explains some pattern or regularity in experience can be employed in this perspective as long as the critic redirects the theory (if necessary), changing it from a description of an objective, necessary or given pattern of experience to a description of how people socially and psychologically *impose* patterns in making meaningful experience. (Brummett, 1991, p. 96)

The previously mentioned exchange theory and looking glass theory are examples of theories outside of the traditional discipline of rhetoric, yet are perfectly able to be manipulated to accommodate the mosaic metaphor.

The critique of a homology requires the critic to not prematurely limit themselves by delineating theories or texts that can and/or cannot be used in the mosaic model. Brummett explains, this approach is centered on the functions and manifestations of rhetoric, and

> Should obviously lead the critic to consider as rhetorical, cultural artifacts that are not often understood to be so. But the approach may also lead the critic to consider ways in which traditional, expositional, discrete texts connect with diffuse or shadow manifestations of rhetoric, ways in which a speech might become deconstructed and taken up into the fabric of popular culture. (Brummett, 1991, p. 95)

While the mosaic model allows for me to examine TDS, it also allows for me to examine how traditional political rhetoric, like Obama's speech, can be combined with popular culture to result in a new meaning. My project, by comparing TDS and Obama's speech, is examining how the texts interact together to tell us how we "ought to live."

The analysis is not complete once the critic has uncovered the ways the texts tell us how we "ought to live." It is imperative the critic consider "whose interests are served and what the implications are of people ordering experience into a pattern of the traditional, discrete, expositional text" (Brummett, 1991, p. 96). The critic must search for the common forms "to show how the forms serve as 'equipment for living,'" (Brummett, 1991, p. 97). Understanding how forms are our equipment for living allows us to question the hegemony/dominant ideology represented and supported by the form. "The critic is not a mere jigsaw puzzle worker who is satisfied once a coherence is identified, but must ask why a certain homology could have obtained in a situation" (Brummett, 1991, p. 98). The critic should not just uncover a hidden rhetoric, it must be critical of its potential support of hegemonic ideologies. This fulfills the political nature inherent in popular culture studies, Whiteness studies, and most of all, critical rhetoric. Thus, my project is not just examining how both Obama's speech and TDS tell us how we "ought to live," I am examining whose interests are served by those lessons.

Part of the difficulty in an analysis with the mosaic model lies in disclaimers the critic must clearly establish about the goals and limitations of their project. Perhaps the most important disclaimer Brummett makes is that the critic is looking for the more general knowledge about how a culture influences the construction of meaning. The critic does not aim to argue how someone *did* construct a mosaic, rather the critic attempts to produce knowledge about how people *may* construct mosaics. An idiosyncratic model does not produce general knowledge useful for the study of the broader culture; the critic aims to know more about culturally shared meaning and asking how individuals are *influenced* to construct mosaics by culture. Thus, the study of popular culture is the attempt to study the cultural influence that attempts to appeal to the broadest audiences.

Because the idiosyncratic mosaic is never available to the critic, shared forms are what define a culture; they are all that is available for the critic to analyze. For the agents, forms allow them to use heuristics when processing the texts. These forms both also function to limit the potential meanings the agents construct. A speaker can influence the audience to construct

mosaics in certain ways by appealing to the common shared forms the agents will have in their repertoire for constructing mosaics. The agents will use the common form from a culture to manage meaning, and an effective speaker will have produced stimulus that the agent is inclined to organize into a certain text with certain formal characteristics. But the critic is not supposed to make claims about the intentions of a speaker when using forms, only claims about the functions of certain forms in a discourse. When two texts are connected formally, they become *formally vulnerable* to the management of meaning by the other text. We can look at form as having varying degrees of specificity, varying degrees of abstraction. Brummett says, "To abstract is to assert a resemblance that cuts across specific local experiences; those resemblances across experiences constitute form" (Brummett, 2004, p. 6). To abstract a pattern used to organize stimulus into a specific text is to strip the pattern of certain details so as to allow the form to connect with other disparate texts. The more details, the more specific the form, the fewer texts the form can be used to organize.

I must make it clear that my aim as a critic is not to propose an ultimate meaning that was constructed at any moment; rather, it is to map out meanings throughout the texts. I aim to make connections among disparate texts so as to map out the bigger picture, to make the connections from point A to B to C, etc. I want to take the perspectives throughout the media event and offer insight that is only possible with exposure to a vast and varied amount of diffuse texts. Ultimately I am working to link ideas from other academic works about race politics, TDS, etc, so as to map out the bigger picture. I link together a variety of ideas and diffuse texts to form a coherent vision of the larger rhetorical event that was the Jeremiah Wright controversy. As Brummett would want, I have worked to include as much perspective in the map as possible, even though it has proved overwhelming at times. This means that any point I make will be contestable on some level. I want every statement I make to be understood as limited, and not so much contestable on the grounds of being wrong. Everything I say will be both accurate and inaccurate on some level, but it is my cartography that is the focus of this analysis.

When I talk about these subject positions I am not trying to assume anything about any individual, nor do I aim to over generalize about some monolithic perspective. I begin with the assumption that there is no monolithic perspective for any race. However, as a critic I must explicate general subject positions available to the public to identify with.

There are certain groups in which we willingly choose membership and other groups in which we, by virtue of our birth, are said to belong. In this sense, racial group membership can be seen as a resource if it reflects a voluntary self-designation where an individual identifies with other members of this group. Alternatively, racial group membership may be seen as a burden or constraint if a person only identifies as an African American because there is no choice. (Davis & Gandy, 1999, pp. 369-70)

With the complexity of race in America, I can only generalize about the formal features of subject positions.

This project aims to examine the intersection of traditional political rhetoric and popular culture, thus the artifacts I have selected to analyze with the mosaic model center around Obama's speech delivered March 15th, 2008 titled "A More Perfect Union" and *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart's* reaction to Obama's speech and the Wright controversy in general. Specifically, I will address TDS's segments from March 18th, 2008, titled "Barack's Wright Response" and "Open Dialogue." I will then analyze two specific segments that reflect upon the controversy after some time had past. The first of which is a segment titled "Spiritual Advisor" with resident expert John Hodgman on April 30th, 2008, who provides a fictional/critical historical report about presidential spiritual advisors. The second segment is an interview with Bill Moyers on May 13th, 2008. To examine Obama and TDS' rhetoric fully, I must also examine the context to which the rhetoric is reacting. However, if I were to simply recount the context as the reality I see, we would have little reason to believe I am describing the context as the general public may have experienced it. The point of this project is not for me to recount a rhetorical event from my perspective, rather to make statements about how agents experiencing the Wright controversy *may* have constructed the rhetorical event in their own mosaics. Therefore, I have chosen to utilize *Wikipedia* as a source that reflects the bias of contemporary American popular culture. I will analyze the Wikipedia entry titled "Jeremiah Wright controversy" retrieved March 16, 2009.

Wikipedia is an especially useful means of identifying a popular culture perspective about a topic because the site is extremely popular and well known, often one of the first sites listed on a Google search. Wikipedia experiences about a million hits on any given day (Rosenzwig, 2006). Wikipedia's user-generated content has become an enormous body of work. "In a few short years, it has become perhaps the largest work of online historical writing, the

most widely read work of digital history, and the most important free historical resource on the World Wide Web" (Rosenzweig, 2006, p. 118). Of course, Wikipedia, like any source, is biased. Yet this bias benefits this project because it can reflect the conventional wisdom of popular culture. "*Wikipedia's* authors do not come from a cross-section of the world's population. They are more likely to be English-speaking, males, and denizens of the Internet" (Rosenzweig, 2006, p. 127). *Wikipedia* favors "Western culture (and English-speaking nations)" (Rosenzweig, 2006, p. 128). Additionally, *Wikipedia* functions like traditional journalism to provide "a first draft of history, but unlike journalism's draft, that history is subject to continuous revision" (Rosenzweig, 2006, p. 136). The ability to edit the entries makes the site a more democratic source, and is amendable to bias more so than other media. "*Wikipedia's* ease of revision not only makes itself more up-to-date than a traditional encyclopedia, it also gives it (like the Web itself) a self-healing quality since defects that are criticized can be quickly remedied and alternative perspectives can be instantly added" (Rosenzweig, 2006, p. 136). Because *Wikipedia* is a collaborative effort and has a "Neutral Point-of-View" policy the webmasters monitor for, the articles tends to avoid "sensationalist interpretations" of events, but encourages discussions about the controversies surrounding such interpretations (Rosenzweig, 2006).[ii]

The Comic Frame: Homology of Obama and *The Daily Show*

The homology I will look for among the texts of Obama and TDS is the comic frame. According to Brummett, "Burke's *Attitudes toward History*… explores the intersection between politics and art, which is in and of itself suggestive of homologies linking disparate orders of experience" (2004, p. 21). Such an intersection is precisely what I am exploring, and Kenneth Burke's comic frame is the homology I will argue emerges from Obama and TDS's rhetoric. Burke says common poetic categories are also found in non-literary discourse, and humans use these forms as a "code of names by which they simplify or interpret reality. These names shape our relations with our fellows. They prepare us *for* some functions and *against* others, *for* or *against* the persons representing these functions" (1937, p. 4). Furthermore, such names function to tell us "*how* you shall be for or against" something (Burke, 1937, p. 4). Each frame influences the motivations and attitudes we adopt toward certain events, people, etc, "as each of the great poetic forms stresses its own peculiar way of building the mental equipment (meanings, attitudes, character) by which one handles the significant factors of his time," (Burke, 1937, p.

34). Each frame provides different tools through which we can make sense of the world, thus by understanding the different frames, we will be able better understand the discourse and the fundamental assumptions it guides us to make. Thus, these literary forms guide us as we work to understand a text, and its formal characteristics are clues as to how the text wants you to read it and what assumptions to make.

The tragic and comic frames need not differ in subject matter, rather they differ by their "depiction of the human role in affecting social outcomes" (Christiansen & Hansen, 1996, p. 159). The tragic frame emphasizes "the *cosmic man,*" which focuses on man's limitations (Burke, 1937, p. 42). However, the comic frame is more cognitively complex because of "deals with *man in society*" (Burke, 1937, p. 42). This is one of the most significant features of the comic frame: spirituality.

> For Burke, rhetoric in the comic frame is both humane and rational because the rhetor who speaks from the comic frame assumes that humans eventually will recognize their shared social idenifications and will respond in a moral manner. Such a rhetor has greater faith in the bonds of human connection and reconciliation than in the victimage and mystification that tragedy requires. (Christiansen & Hansen, 1996, p. 160)

The comic frame views humans as inherently good, making it easier for people to feel connected with each other and willing to work together for the greater good. "Spirituality in a comic frame operates under the belief that all individuals are moral beings who can be led to the 'right' way" without having to scapegoat and sacrifice the impious (Powell, 1995, p. 89). This is because the comic frame does not want to undo the whole system, rather fix problems resulting from human fallibility. The comic frame is optimistic: it assumes all humans are fallible but inherently good.

Spirituality facilitates identification. Identification requires all parties share some identity or interest, some kind of shared humanity. Burke says we can identify together because "people are necessarily mistaken, *all* people are exposed to situations in which they must act as fools, *every* insight contains its own special kind of blindness" (1937, p. 42). When someone breaks from the social order and must be punished by society, but society has to care enough to punish that person in the first place. If society did not care, they would just cast the person aside as a scapegoat. However, with an identification with that person, they are instead taught "what ought to be" and brought back into the group, which is called clowning.

The comic frame uses perspective by incongruity as a method of critique, this is when the rhetor intentionally uses uncommon associations to disrupt normal patterns or orders, and by doing so, misnames the issue according to the language of the hierarchy. "This action problematizes or "de-naturalizes" meanings for the audience, forcing them to think further about the issue" (Toker, 2002, p. 69). The actions can "destabilize piety" towards the status quo and forces one to make drastic new meanings. Burke says perspective by incongruity is "a method for gauging situations by verbal 'atom cracking.' That is, a word belongs by custom to a certain category—and by rational planning you wrench it loose and metaphorically apply it to a different category" (1937, p. 308). Such incongruity exposes agents to new meaning that transcends the limitations of the current situation.

The aims of ending oppression and fighting Whiteness, it would seem, would benefit from the humane framework to highlight our common humanity. Burke says, "[the comic frame] provides the *charitable* attitude towards people that is required for purposes of persuasion and co-operation" (1937, p. 166). If the order cannot be accommodating, then it must be over thrown, then that would not be part of the comic frame. According to Carlson, "A successful comic movement, then, challenges the audience and constantly prods its consciousness until it awakens. A rhetoric of moral idealism goes hand in hand with the rhetoric of unity" (1986, p. 453). Burke argues the comic frame is the most "civilized" frame because it "requires the maximum of forensic complexity" (1937, p. 42). It requires agents to consider the complexity of the situation by placing it in the larger context. "Humor is the opposite of the heroic. The heroic promotes acceptance by *magnification*, making the hero's character as great as the situation he confronts" (Burke, 1937, p. 43). The hero is constructed as a god-like figure, whereas the comic frame recognizes that all humans are fallible. The comic frame, Burke argues, is more realistic than the epic or tragic frames because "it takes up the slack between the momentousness of the situation and the feebleness of those in the situation by *dwarfing the situation*" (1937, p. 43). The comic frame emphasizes context, which I believe is the frame's most powerful feature.

The comic frame emphasizes unity, yet provides the tools necessary for changing the social order. Carlson said, "Social orders develop problems no matter how good the intentions that idealize them. But these problems do not make social orders so evil in themselves that they must be completely tossed aside" (1986, p. 447). The comic frame is an effective means of altering the system as long as the order is "presented as capable of accommodating the needs of

the out group" (Carlson, 1988, p. 319). Burke says, "In sum, the comic frame should enable people *to be observers of themselves, while acting*. Its ultimate would not be *passiveness,* but *maximum consciousness.* One would 'transcend' himself by noting his own foibles" (1937, p 171). The comic frame has the potential to be critical of the social order, critical rhetoric, while also being optimistic about the nature of man as inherently moral and good.

CHAPTER 4 - Analysis

In order to understand how agents may have constructed the text of Obama's speech "A More Perfect Union" and subsequently TDS, I must understand the con-text to which agent may have constructed those texts. With an analysis of the Wikipedia entry "Jeremiah Wright controversy" retrieved March, 16, 2009, we can begin to understand a general rhetorical environment that functioned to make Obama's speech and TDS's reactions exigent. After the context, I will then analyze Barack Obama's speech "A More Perfect Union," and finally, four segments of TDS.

The Con-text of the Rev. Jeremiah Wright Controversy

The Rev. Jeremiah Wright controversy was a significant moment in the 2008 presidential race. As Obama's campaign manager David Plouffe explained, "That was the episode that could have destroyed our campaign," it was, "a direct torpedo to the hull" (Kirk, Gilmore, Stekler, & Wiser, 2009). Thomas Dumm wrote in *Communication and Critical/Social Studies,* "Sometimes there are unscripted moments in American presidential races that condense important themes of the campaign," such as the Kennedy-Nixon debates "when image first trumped substance" (2008, p. 317). Yet the Wright controversy is distinctly different, "the video clip... shows no candidate blunder, dissembling, or dramatically revealing an otherwise hidden aspect of their 'character.' Instead, a video clip culled from many hours of sermons… has had the greatest impact on the shape of this race" (Dumm, 2008, p. 317). The controversy is unique in that it is not about the actions of a candidate; instead it was centered on Wright's sermons and Wright's relationship with Obama. But what made Wright's sermons controversial and newsworthy? The answer is Whiteness. "The clips… highlighted the black-white breach in public opinion. A poll taken by the Pew Research Center showed that 58 percent of white Americans were personally offended by Wright's sermons, compared with 29 percent of black Americans" (Fraser, 2009, p. 31). The controversy was about much more than a presidential candidate, it was about the state of race relations in America. The controversy is a complex site of hegemonic struggle, one where we can observe Whiteness in contemporary discourse.

An analysis of the Wikipedia entry titled "Jeremiah Wright controversy" will shed light on this con-text. As in most Wikipedia pages, there is first a summary of the entry, which provides a meaningful distillation of the controversy:

> The Jeremiah Wright controversy is an American political issue, which gained national attention in March 2008 when ABC News, after reviewing dozens of U.S. 2008 Presidential Election candidate Barack Obama's pastor Jeremiah Wright's sermons,[1] excerpted parts which were subject to intense media scrutiny.[2][3] Wright is a retired senior pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago and former pastor of President of the United States Barack Obama.[4] Obama denounced the statements in question, but after critics continued to press the issue of his relationship with Wright he gave a speech titled "A More Perfect Union", in which he sought to place Dr. Wright's comments in a historical and sociological context.

The above summary emphasizes certain components of the controversy over others. First, it identifies the controversy as an "American political issue" and provides the timeframe of the event. Second, it identifies the source of the controversy being ABC News and that these sermons were reported by many news outlets. Finally, it explains that this controversy is the exigency for Obama's speech "A More Perfect Union," the goal of the speech being to put Wright's sermons in "historical and sociological context." Each of these components is technically true, but the summary fails to acknowledge the controversy surrounding the media coverage of Wright's sermons as "news." Wright's sermons were available online prior to the controversy, they were not newly released, nor were the sermons uncharacteristic of Wright's rhetoric. Thus, the Wikipedia entry indicates what made these sermons "newsworthy" was the connection between Obama, the presidential candidate, and Wright.

After the summary, the next section is *Background*, presumably the background information necessary for understanding the following section titled "Controversial sermon excerpts" and laying the foundation for the rest of the entry. However, the background section is limited to details regarding Obama and Wright's relationship, such as how Wright "officiated at the wedding ceremony of Barack and Michelle Obama, as well as their children's baptisms," and that Obama's 2006 memoir was "inspired" by one of Wright's sermons. The summary and background do not begin to address why the sermons were newsworthy, rather places the relationship as the heart of the controversy.

Immediately after the background section is "Controversial sermon excerpts," which says,

> Most of the controversial excerpts that gained national attention in March 2008 were taken from two sermons: one titled "The Day of Jerusalem's Fall" delivered on September 16, 2001 and another, titled "Confusing God and Government", delivered on April 13, 2003.

The entry then breaks the section into two subsections, one for each sermon. Instead of the Wikipedia entry transcribing the sound bites that circulated throughout the media the most, the section provides broad summaries of the two sermons the sound bites were taken from. Presumably Wikipedia provides general summaries, elaborating upon the sound bites, so as to adhere to their "Neutral Point of View" policy. However, it functions to downplay the role the media had in generating and fueling the controversy by selecting specific sound bites over others. Furthermore, the entry reports the dates of the sermons, yet fails to mention the audience to which Wright was addressing. Audience analysis is a significant part of any public address, one which influences the stylistic choices of the speaker. This lack of detail implies such information is apparently insignificant. The freedom for a speaker to design a presentation with one audience in mind, where they may say things in a way that offends those not in the audience, is a freedom robbed of public speakers whose words are condensed into sound bites. It promotes the idea these brief clips of Wright's words have the same objective meaning regardless of the context from which those statements were made or the agents who constructed the texts.

The following excerpts were the ones most frequently aired by the news media:

> "No, no, no, not God Bless America. God damn America — that's in the Bible — for killing innocent people. God damn America, for treating our citizens as less than human. God damn America, as long as she tries to act like she is God, and she is supreme. The United States government has failed the vast majority of her citizens of African descent."

And

> "The government lied about inventing the HIV virus as a means of genocide against people of color. Governments lie."

And finally,

> "We bombed Hiroshima, we bombed Nagasaki, and we nuked far more than the thousands in New York and the Pentagon, and we never batted an eye... and now we are

indignant, because the stuff we have done overseas is now brought back into our own

front yards. America's chickens are coming home to roost."

These clips were used by the media as some sort of "hard proof" Wright did make controversial remarks, as if it would be all the evidence one would need. These edits to the sound bites are very important to note, because immediately after Wright makes the argument that the government spread HIV, he mentions that the government lied about the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, which is reported as fact by these same networks. Additionally, part of Obama's appeal to voters was his anti-war stance. To remove the lines immediately following Wright's HIV statement is to ensure voters, especially Obama supporters, would only be exposed to Wright's most alienating statements. The sound bites had the potential to harm Obama's campaign, not Rev. Wright's career. While agents can easily recognize an attack from Obama's opponent as politically motivated, when it was a media network that found the "scoop" it does not inspire the public to adopt the same critical stance towards the Wright clips.

What is particularly important to note is that Wright's words were not far from another civil rights leader contemporary society has "celebrated" and claims to deeply value: "Even Martin Luther King Jr., whose legacy political candidates of all races and parties try to claim, shared Wright's condemnation of American aggression, criticizing 'the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today - my own government'" (Bennett, 2008, para 6). The comparison of Wright's rhetoric to that of King just serves to highlight the power of sound bites to remove context from rhetoric and distort its message. "If YouTube were around when Martin Luther King Jr. preached to black churches, I'm afraid he would be as viciously condemned as Jeremiah Wright, for he said the following to black congregations: 'America was founded on genocide, and a nation that is founded on genocide is destructive'" (Thompson, 2008, #72). While King has holidays and streets named after him, when his rhetoric is echoed in contemporary society it is still considered "controversial" in Wright's case.

Cohen, an editor for celebrity tabloid magazine *Us Weekly* argued it takes a tabloid writer to know one, and she calls out the general media coverage of the Wright controversy as clearly sensationalized. She said,

The true hallmark of sensationalized journalism is ginning up controversy to drive sales, and for the mainstream news media Wright was a tailor-made tabloid icon. With newspaper sales at record lows, network news ratings tanking and 24-hour news channels

desperate to fill up all 24 hours, Wright's outbursts were the mainstream media's

equivalent of Tom Cruise jumping on Oprah's couch - a train wreck no one could turn

away from. And so they milked it, regardless of the impact on the very race they were

supposedly covering objectively. (Cohen, 2008, para 3, #58)

Cohen is right, unlike Tom Cruise's couch situation, the media coverage of the Wright

controversy may have very real implications for America.

What about Wright's sermons made it ripe for sensationalized journalism? What was it

about the sermons that led media outlets to view the event as capable of producing ratings? The

answer is Whiteness. The sound bites were part of the racialization of Obama's candidacy.

Obama's campaign aimed to emphasize he was a highly qualified candidate "who happened to

be Black" (Fraser, 2009). The racialization of Obama's campaign was established through

persistent media focus on race despite Obama's deliberate attempts to avoid the issue, such as the

Bradley Effect and other signs of fearful Whites. This kind of media speculation began early in

the Obama campaign and persisted even after Obama won the Iowa democratic primary in a state

that is 98 percent white (Fraser, 2009; Marable, 2009). The racialization of Obama's campaign

can be distilled into the conflicting accusations that Obama was either "too Black" or "not Black

enough." While presidential candidates always have to position themselves as moderate to

appeal to the general American public, Obama was expected to be a moderate in both policy and

racial identity (Fraser, 2009). This is why Wright's statements were effective as an attack against

Obama, it triggered fears and stereotypes about the angry Black man. Every candidate had to try

and persuade the public they would be a significant change from the Bush administration due to

the general attitudes towards the war and economy, but Obama had to reassure the public he was

both a big change but not such a big change so as to evoke the fears he was "too Black" (Fraser,

2009; Marable, 2009).

The expectations for postracial Black candidates required them to distance themselves

from the race-based politics of the Civil Rights era. Such race-based politics epitomized Wright's

perspective. Thus, many were outraged by Wright's race-based rhetoric and demanded Obama

justify the stark contrast in political styles. One of the most vocal critics of Obama's ties to

Wright, conservative Steyn of The Nation, highlights the demand for Obama to justify the

conflict in political perspectives:

All Senator Obama will say is that 'I don't think my church is actually particularly controversial.' And in that he may be correct. There are many preachers who would be happy to tell their congregations 'God damn America.' But Barack Obama is not supposed to be the candidate of the America-damners: He's not the Reverend Al Sharpton or the Reverend Jesse Jackson or the rest of the racial-grievance mongers. Obama is meant to be the man who transcends the divisions of race, the candidate who doesn't damn America but 'heals' it — if you believe, as many Democrats do, that America needs healing. (Steyn, 2008, para 5, #39).

Both Sharpton and Jackson are very significant figures in the Civil Rights Movement, Jackson was even with Martin Luther King Jr. when he was assassinated. However, the above quotation indicates the extent to which these pioneers of the Civil Rights Movement have been deemed harmful and dangerous.

Obama faced a double standard White candidates did not experience. "White Republican candidates have not faced similar pressures to repudiate views of other politically vocal conservative Christian leaders, such as Pat Robertson and the late Jerry Falwell, (Bennett, 2008, para 12, #71). This double standard was rooted in race, specifically in the struggle over the universalization of Whiteness. "The racial double-standard in America requires a member of a minority group to dissociate him- or herself from fellow 'troublemakers' in ways not expected of whites" (Bennett, 2008, para 10, #71). The focus of the controversy in the mass media and sources such as Wikipedia is the relationship between Obama and Wright, which reinforces a White perspective that views Wright's rhetoric as offensive. By news sources playing the sound bites as evidence of controversy allowed the media to ignore nonWhite perspectives.

The media's universalization of Whiteness is precisely the issue Wright's rhetoric has traditionally fought to disrupt. The sound bites of Wright's sermons were self-evidently offensive to Whites because they shed light on Whiteness by disrupting taken-for-granted, assumed meaning Whites construct. Wright was heavily influenced by James H. Cone, who published the book *Black Theology & Black Power*, who believed Christianity needed to be saved from Whiteness, "the Church—dominated and distorted by generations of white men— could find redemption in the Black Power movement" (Sanneh, 2008, para 9). Black theology is the direct result of racism in our society, "there would be no black church if the white church wasn't political and racist in refusing to worship with us" (Thompson, 2008, # 72). Racism in the

past led to segregated churches, which led to cultural differences between the White and Black religious traditions. Cone "argued that, since African-American suffering was such a powerful metaphor for the suffering of Christ, color-blind Christianity was a contradiction in terms" (Sanneh, 2008, para 9). Black Power was about embracing one's ethnicity so as to reject a false belief in the inherent superiority of Whiteness. "The insistence on race is, in part, an assertion of self-determination, a declaration that no church is culturally neutral" (Sanneh, 2008, para 3). Thus, Wright's style would lead him to assert his Black ethnicity as a badge of honor, which stands against the contemporary standards of colorblindness.

According to Cone, Trinity is "'the best representation' of Black liberation theology. 'It's offensive, because it speaks the truth in harsh, blunt terms'" (Sanneh, 2008, para 15). Wright's sermons include phrasing ideas in ways that would be perceived as controversial, offensive, or blasphemous to the broader American culture. Such phrasing rhetorically functions to disrupt conventional interpretations of issues so as to critique them, because if the speaker tailored their message for the sensibility of White audiences is seen to reinforce White power. "In his sermons, Wright loves to amplify Bible passages by translating them into the black vernacular" (Sanneh, 2008, para 18). Trinity's new reverend that replaced Wright when he retired recently, Otis Moss III, added further context for Wright's style in the New Yorker, "when Wright is in full prophetic mode, he can make it difficult for listeners to separate metaphorical claims from literal ones, visions from explanations, urban legend from history" (Sanneh, 2008, para 29). Wright's style would not only be unfamiliar and confusing for many Whites, it would also be alienating due to White fears of angry Blacks.

Wikipedia represented the Wright controversy as rooted in the relationship of Obama and Wright, which functions to reinforce the universalization of Whiteness. The sound bites that were selected by the media were emblematic of a Black theology style that is rooted in the struggle against hegemony, the struggle against Whiteness. Wright's language was obviously offensive to Whites who traditionally resist viewing their lives as culturally marked (Krizek & Nakayama, 1999). This controversy had the potential to devastate the Obama campaign that was working to portray Obama as a qualified candidate who just happened to be Black (Marable, 2009). Typically, it would behoove the candidate to reject the controversial figure outright and move on with the campaign. However, if Obama were to do that, he would be rejecting Trinity church, "A major center for social justice ministry in Chicago" (Marable, 2009, p. 8). To reject

Trinity would be to reject Black theology, and by extension those who fought in the Civil Rights Movement who made his candidacy possible. Obama, prior to the Wright controversy, had to prove to the Black community he was "Black enough," and to reject Wright would undermine that accomplishment. Ultimately, such a rejection would function to further reinforce the universalization of Whiteness.

Barack Obama's "A More Perfect Union"

Obama's campaign was being threatened by division, and he faced losing the votes necessary to win the election. According to Burke, in the epic, tragic, and comic frames "the element of acceptance is uppermost" (1937, p. 43). Obama needed voters to accept him, and the speech needed to function to persuade voters to adopt a comic frame from which they can understand the controversy and Obama's candidacy. The epic and tragic frames would not suffice, however, because the rhetorical problem was one of scapegoating Wright as evil or racist. The comic frame is particularly effective for dealing with this problem because "it warns against too great reliance upon the conveniences of moral indignation," and instead promotes "forensic complexity" by taking into consideration context (Burke, 1937, p. 174). Obama could neither reject Wright nor those who took offense to Wright's words, thus it was necessary to reframe the situation in a way that could unify such conflicting subject positions. A means by which these perspectives could be unified is through Burke's concept of a bridging device, which is "The symbolic structure whereby one 'transcends' a conflict in one way or another" (Burke, 1937, p. 224). If Obama was going to win the election, he would need to symbolically transcend this conflict so as to gain acceptance from voters. Thus, what bridging techniques does Obama use to transcend the conflict?

James Darsey's analysis of Obama's speech in the *Southern Communication Journal* (2009) argues Obama "crafted a campaign in which his personal journey has coincided with America's journey as a nation, especially as that journey involves race, and in the confluence of these narrative trajectories… lies much of the potency of Obama's rhetoric" (p. 89). By Obama aligning his personal journey with that of America, he posits himself as the epitome of American values. The metaphor of the journey is so vital to the meaning of the speech it is built into the title: A *More* Perfect Union. The journey functions as a bridging technique to unify conflicting perspectives. However, I will argue the use of the journey metaphor is part of Burke's comic

frame, which views humans as fallible and imperfect. The comic frame defines humans by the journey because it "considers human life as a project in 'composition'" (1984, p. 173) and "man as eternal journeyman" (Burke, 1984, p. 170).

Within the first eight paragraphs of the speech, Obama reframes the rhetorical exigency to fit the comic frame, he places the Wright controversy within the larger American context. Obama opens with the famous first line of the preamble to the Constitution: "We the people, in order to form a more perfect union," establishing the theme of the speech. Then Obama continues by taking the audience back 221 years when "a group of men gathered and, with these simple words, launched America's improbable experiment in democracy." He describes the event ideally and sets the scene for the American creation myth. From the very specific moment of the nation's inception, Obama broadens the picture of America's birth and exposes the flaws and imperfections within the new nation:

> The document they produced was eventually signed but ultimately unfinished. It was
> stained by this nation's original sin of slavery, a question that divided the colonies and
> brought the convention to a stalemate until the founders chose to allow the slave trade to
> continue for at least 20 more years, and to leave any final resolution to future generations.

Americans are used to hearing about the founding fathers and Constitution as heroic, but Obama goes beyond the fictitious images of the epic frame to a more realistic image of America's conception within the comic frame. Burke explains,

> The heroic promotes acceptance by *magnification*, making the hero's character as great
> as the situation he confronts… but humor reverses the process: it takes up the slack
> between the momentousness of the situation and the feebleness of those in the situation
> by *dwarfing the situation*. (Burke, 1937, p. 43)

Obama does not magnify the founding fathers as god-like figures, rather portrays them as undeniably flawed. Obama recognizes the "feebleness" of those men to deal with "a question that *divided*… and brought the convention to a *stalemate*." Division and stalemates are the byproduct of imperfect humans.

Despite the seemingly tragic imperfections that plagued the nation and founding fathers, Obama reassures us by establishing a common spirituality: the Constitution.

> Of course, the answer to the slavery question was already embedded within our
> Constitution -- a Constitution that had at its very core the ideal of equal citizenship under

the law; a Constitution that promised its people liberty, and justice, and a union that could

be and should be perfected over time.

From the American creation myth, Obama explicitly identifies the nation's imperfections, and the means of transcendence are built into the constitution. Yet, Obama's fourth paragraph admits the weakness of the constitution, which are just "words on a parchment" that alone is not enough to deliver all individuals their "full rights" as citizens. The Constitutions embodies the values of equality, justice, and liberty, yet they must be enacted by individuals.

Obama's fifth paragraph clarifies the power of the constitution, which lies not in physical words on a page, but in the generations of individuals who "were willing to do their part" to fight for what they knew was right and just. Through acts of "protests and struggles, on the streets and in the courts, through a civil war and civil disobedience, and always at great risk" generations of Americans have worked "to narrow the gap between the promise of our ideals and the reality of their time." At this point Obama has framed the creation of America as well as the nation's ultimate purpose, a journey towards perfection, impossible without the social movements that make such generational changes a reality. This functions to place America's journey within context, avoiding the magnification of America as perfection. "Social orders develop problems no matter how good the intentions that idealize them. But these problems do not make social orders so evil in themselves that they must be completely tossed aside" (Carlson, 1986, p. 447). Thus the comic frame can function to reinforce our faith in our constitution, and it makes it okay for something so cherished to have flaws in the first place. Carlson says, "the social order must be presented as capable of accommodating the needs of the out group" (1988, p. 319). Obama presents the system as capable of facilitating this movement.

Obama establishes important concepts and terms for the audience so that everyone can start from the same page. The rhetorical problem of addressing two conflicting subject positions required Obama to redefine reality, past, present, and future, so that there may be a common perspective from which the agents can construct the meaning of the texts. After Obama establishes historical context for the audience, he places his own campaign within the much larger context:

This was one of the tasks we set forth at the beginning of this campaign -- to continue the

long march of those who came before us, a march for a more just, more equal, more free,

more caring and more prosperous America.

Obama does not magnify his own candidacy as a heroic campaign; rather he positions his campaign as just one leg of the much larger American journey towards "a more perfect union."

Obama provides the audience with a common spirituality based on both the values of the constitution and the journey America must take to fulfill those values. The rhetorical exigency for this speech was the demonization of Wright in morally absolute terms, yet what god terms does Obama establish in his speech? As Darsey (2009) explained, the journey is the archetypical metaphor, it is the god term Obama establishes. This is a fascinating way to deal with the rhetorical problem of moral absolutes, make the god term not the perfection America is moving towards, rather the act of striving for that perfection. The god term is the imperfection that allows all Americans to identify with each other as fallible humans. Obama's speech illustrates why Burke views the comic frame as the most "humane" frame when he says things such as, "my unyielding faith in the decency and generosity of the American people." He claims that at the core of every American and our Constitution is goodness. Obama's "faith" is part of the comic frame, which "assumes that humans eventually will recognize their shared social identifications and will respond in a moral manner" (Christiansen & Hansen, 1996, p. 160). Obama promotes spirituality in his assumption humans are inherently good. "Such a rhetor has greater faith in the bonds of human connection and reconciliation than in the victimage and mystification that tragedy requires" (Christiansen & Hansen, 1996, p. 160). Obama's speech functions to reframe the controversy in a way that rejects the tragic frame that made the speech exigent.

According to Brummett, we perceive bits and order them into meaningful patterns, "a bit has meaning only insofar as it may be combined with other bits into patterns" (1991, p. 78). Words are tiny bits of information that are comprised "of potentialities for combination with other words," but not just any word. Ideology is what makes certain bits combinable with other bits, "'fixing' its potential for meaning in a symbol system, a language, or a logic of combination" (Brummett, 1991, p. 79). Thus, "bits in social context may mean many things but not every thing; how those meanings are fixed socially is something that critics can then discover and bring to light" (Brummett, 1991, p. 79). Obama's speech houses numerous bits that when considered together indicate the ideological pattern of the comic frame. Table one is a break down of the language that fits under the three main concepts in the title of the speech a *More Perfect Union* and the metaphor of the journey. The language of the journey trope is significant in this speech because the "more" column has far more entries than "perfect." I believe this is

because Obama must manage the rhetorical problem of morally absolute and tragic perspectives. To establish the god term as journey, without establishing the destination leads to table two's explanation of the frame of acceptance and rejection. Obama must establish the good and the bad, and the table list such terms.

Table 1 - The bits of Obama's speech

<u>MORE</u>	<u>PERFECT</u>	<u>UNION</u>
- Journey - generational - incremental - imperfection - recognizing/accepting reality of imperfection - rejection of colorblindness - change - American ability to change and progress our best trait - Audacity of hope - Transcendence	- attainable destination - purpose of our existence - ultimate - goal	- Unity - identification - shared fate - diversity is subsumed by larger common interests - recognition of diversity of perspectives

Table 2 - Obama's frame of acceptance and rejection

<u>GOOD</u>	<u>BAD</u>
- unity - imperfection - understanding - the journey - process of perfecting - progress - faith in humanity - hope - "not this time" - "our kids"	- divisiveness - "those kids" - passing judgment without consideration for context - caricatures - lack of context - gap between ideals and reality - chasm between races - distraction - cynicism - despair - stalemate

Another important aspect of the comic frame is perspective through incongruity, which is when the rhetor intentionally uses uncommon associations to disrupt normal patterns or orders, and by doing so, misnames the issue according to the language of the hierarchy. "This action problematizes or 'de-naturalizes' meanings for the audience, forcing them to think further about the issue (Toker, 2002, p. 69)." Obama accomplishes incongruity when he tells his biography, that he has a White mom, his dad was an immigrant from Kenya, and he went on to Harvard, and now running for president. Obama then repeats a sentiment often heard in America, "I will never forget that in no other country on Earth is my story even possible." The classic myth of the "American dream" is not typically about biracial couples and immigrants from Africa, yet Obama's story fits the myth almost perfectly. The incongruity shines light on how the "American dream" myth has typically been a white myth. This functions as Burke describes: "by taking a word usually applied to one setting and transferring its use to another setting. It is a 'perspective by incongruity,' since he established it by violating the 'properties' of the word in its previous linkages," (Burke, 1937, p. 90). Obama's version of the American dream and opening it up to nonWhites who have historically be excluded from this dream. We realize the only thing that makes Obama's "American dream" different from how society typically views the myth is that his father didn't immigrate through Ellis Island, his father was not from Europe. In reference to his personal story Obama says, "It's a story that hasn't made me the most conventional candidate. But it is a story that has seared into my genetic makeup the idea that this nation is more than the sum of its parts -- that out of many, we are truly one." In other words, despite his story not fitting society's typical ideas of the myth, Obama proves his experience is what actually makes him the epitome of the "American dream."

Obama says the social movement has prevailed over the media attempts to "view my candidacy through a purely racial lens." He says the public's desire for unity and real change was succeeding in focusing the campaign on the more important issues, until the recent "divisive turn." Obama establishes the devil term, divisiveness, which threatens to "not only widen the racial divide, but views that denigrate both the greatness and the goodness of our nation and that rightly offend white and black alike." Obama never bothers to question the justification for just visceral outrage over Wright's statements, he just begins from the premise that people are justified to feel alienated by Wright's language. Yet Obama is careful to "condemn" Wright's language because it was harming America when it needed identification. Obama uses clowning

from the comic frame so as to castigate the behaviors and ideas that are not socially acceptable, while at the same time does not demonize the clown as a scapegoat. It laughs at the clown's foibles, and then brings the clown back to the fold. Obama does just this, brings Wright back to the fold when he provides an explanation as to why him and Wright are so close. Obama says the real foible of Wright is that his words insinuated that the country was static, "as if no progress has been made; as if this country… is still irrevocably bound to a tragic past." Wright's real foible was viewing America in the tragic frame, and Obama encourages us to utilize the comic frame.

Yet he forgives Wright just like he forgives his grandma for her own prejudices, because both are good people he loves. "People try to combat alienation *by immediacy*, such as the senses alone provide… because the logic of the social framework can engross them" (Burke, 1984, p. 218). Obama combats the alienation of Wright's words by painting a picture of Wright that allows us to emotionally connect with his perspective. A grandmother is an emotional image, and many Whites can relate to having a grandparent who carries prejudices from the past. If those offended by Wright's words are able to relate to the emotions Wright may have felt having experienced racism in the past, those offended are then able to feel legitimized by Obama, but it may also allow Whites to recognize Wright's anger as legitimate. Thus, they can both establish certain things as not okay while avoiding demonizing Wright. Obama provides the context for Wright's anger: "For the men and women of Rev. Wright's generation, the memories of humiliation and doubt and fear have not gone away; nor has the anger and the bitterness of those years." Then Obama recognizes that this anger is not perfect, and in fact inhibits progress: That anger is not always productive; indeed, all too often it distracts attention from solving real problems; it keeps us from squarely facing our own complicity in our condition, and prevents the African-American community from forging the alliances it needs to bring about real change." The anger inhibits the forensic complexity necessary for viewing the situation outside of the tragic frame. However, he legitimizes the anger as real and to ignore it will only "widen the chasm of misunderstanding that exists between the races." Obama establishes the comic frame and that unity is what ought to be, but warns us of the tragic consequences should we not use the comic frame.

Obama goes beyond legitimizing the anger of the Black community, and he voices the White perspective. "In fact, a similar anger exists within segments of the white community. Most

working- and middle-class white Americans don't feel that they have been particularly privileged by their race." This anger is also counter productive, "Talk show hosts and conservative commentators built entire careers unmasking bogus claims of racism while dismissing legitimate discussions of racial injustice and inequality as mere political correctness or reverse racism." But Obama says to call White anger racist without context is also counter productive, "this too widens the racial divide, and blocks the path to understanding." For perhaps the first time in the America, a presidential candidate addressed the conflicting Black and White perspectives that contain both truth and fiction (Marable, 2009; Fraser, 2009). Obama offers a bridge between the conflicting perspectives, as Obama calls it the growing chasm of race. Obama constructs an account of reality that does not allow colorblind norms to reinforce whiteness, and instead allows a new understanding of reality that can accommodate the new information. But Obama warns the ultimate danger we face is allowing the divisive racialization of politics, the media searching for polarization, all such strategies serve to distract us from the important bigger issues that actually keep all types of Americans disadvantaged. By refusing to allow a lack of context, demonization of the other person, moral absolutism to dictate the news cycle, we can continue to focus on the American journey towards perfection.

Ultimately, Obama frames these perspectives that are both legitimate and flawed as evidentiary of the persistent problem that inhibits the social movement: "the issues that have surfaced over the last few weeks reflect the complexities of race in this country that we've never really worked through -- a part of our union that we have yet to perfect." From here Obama establishes the imperative for America to transcend these issues of division for the sake of the movement. Obama makes it clear that it is the audience choice to accept the challenge of forensic complexity and use the comic frame, or else suffer a tragic fate. "For we have a choice in this country. We can accept a politics that breeds division, and conflict, and cynicism." Or, Obama says, we can choose the path towards perfection, which "requires all Americans to realize that your dreams do not have to come at the expense of my dreams." Obama says when he begins "feeling doubtful or cynical about this possibility, what gives me the most hope is the next generation -- the young people whose attitudes and beliefs and openness to change have already made history in this election." Obama emphasizes the forensic complexity of the comic frame, which "should enable people *to be observers of themselves, while acting*. Its ultimate would not be *passiveness,* but *maximum consciousness.* One would 'transcend' himself by noting his own

foibles" (Burke, 1937, p 171). The speech functions to encourage agents to maximum consciousness so they can participate in the American social movement towards a more perfection union.

Obama's speech functions to put the Wright controversy within a larger context and in terms of the comic frame. The names we give things are important because they "shape our relations with our fellows. They prepare us for some functions and against others, for or against the persons representing these functions. The names go further: they suggest how you shall be for or against" (Burke, 1984, p. 4). Obama's speech functions to establish the journey towards perfection as the God term, while simultaneously avoiding the moral absolution of establishing any person or thing as wholly good or bad. Obama does not identify his campaign as a typical presidential campaign, one that is top down, one that is about the candidate not the people. Obama does not establish himself as perfect or infallible. Instead, Obama's campaign is a social movement, one that aims "to continue the long march of those who came before us, a march for a more just, more equal, more free, more caring, and more prosperous America." It is not that America does not have those qualities, rather we know that this country is destined for **more** of everything we value as Americans. By establishing his campaign as part of the larger social movement or equality and justice, the agents can adopt a frame of acceptance for his campaign as good.

Burke says the comic frame "might mitigate somewhat the difficulties in engineering a shift to new symbols of authority, as required by the new social relationships that the revolutions of historic environment have made necessary" (1984, p. 173). Obama has to mitigate the anxiety in White America over a Black president, and he has to translate Wright into a reality that is not threatening. The advancement of nonWhites in America and the social acceptance that racism is wrong has necessitated a translation of the old civil rights tragic rhetoric for contemporary America. The comic frame Obama used worked to "provide important cues for the composition of one's life, which demands accommodation to the structuring of others' lives" (Burke, 1937, p. 174). As previously mentioned, charting or mapping whiteness is a counterhegemonic act because it draws attention to their inconspicuous privilege. Discussing race goes against our culture's colorblind logic. Crenshaw (1998) explains our society believes the problem with racism is noticing differences, and if we do not see races and different, then racism goes away (p. 66). However, this instills a system that privileges the hegemonic. The hegemonic values become

the assumed values, and the marginalized remain oppressed. Thus, by Obama giving this speech in the first place, a speech that explicitly discusses white privilege, yet also include an empathetic description of their perspective. By taking a dialectic approach, the audience is asked to respect his pastor who married him and Michelle, and he is also asking for us to respect white grandmother who admitted insensitive thought. By juxtaposing the two images are given context and map out a perspective many Whites have. We can see two important things through this comparison: One, Blacks hear the perspective of Whites that they may not have considered, and second, Whites can recognize that their perspective is not definitive like much media perpetrates. By explaining their situation, they are having their voices heard while at the same time being mapped into a specific area they clearly occupy separate from those marginalized by whiteness. By disrupting the colorblind myth, and because their location becomes visible, we can begin to critique it.

The Daily Show Analysis

One of the devil terms Obama establishes in his speech is distraction, as in distracting from the issues our country must address, which is interesting when considering *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, "a television program that use 'fake' news stories and real guest interviews to mock the substance and form of traditional television news programs" (Brewer & Marquardt, 2007, p. 249). Most studies of TDS have focused on its "news" content, and many have been concerned that if younger audiences use TDS as their primary news source this would lead to a less informed public, which is antithetical to democracy. TDS consistently rejects the label of "news," and they insist they are only trying to make people laugh (Baym, 2005). However, Brummett taught us that agents construct texts, and even if TDS does not intend to act as news, it does not matter because agents construct texts for themselves. If TDS is functioning as an inadequate "news" source, this could mean TDS is a distraction from the real issues Obama says cannot wait. Scholars like Neal Postman feared the effects of television on public discourse because it would turn important public issues into mere entertainment, and that television is not the proper forum in which political issues are debated. Such scholars believe that infotainment distract the public and ultimately ruins the public's ability to cognitively process and participate in traditional expositional political discourse (Postman, 1985). Hart and Hartelius charged TDS with encouraging cynicism and discouraging participation in politics (2007). Would TDS be as

dangerous as people like Postman believe? Would TDS's reactions to Obama's speech antithetical to Obama's message? Does TDS provide tools for living in a democratic society, or would they impede participation by encouraging cynicism? Brummett argues, however, that Postman is misguided because he subscribes deterministic implications to the medium of television, rather than the content (1991, p. 8). My analysis of both Obama and TDS has discovered the content of the traditional expositional political speech and the "fake news" of TDS are homologically connected. Brummett argues that the role of the media today is to "reduce" the complex world into more manageable and simpler packets of information. "The media metonymize the great issues of the day into forms that the mass public can grasp" (Brummett, 1991, p. 27). My analysis has indicated this is especially true for TDS's reactions to Obama's speech, TDS reiterates Obama's main message in a way that is easier to grasp. TDS provides agents with tools for living in America.

The first segment I will analyze is titled "Barack's Wright Response" from March 18th, 2008. While much of the scholarly research on TDS focuses on their attacks on politicians and the mass media, I failed to find scholars who discussed the positive critiques from TDS. In this first segment, we can see TDS values Obama's speech in the title of the segment: Barack's Wright Response. The play on Wright/right implies an agreement with the means by which Obama dealt with the exigency. Furthermore, when Stewart begins his coverage of the speech, he introduces Obama as if he were a professional athlete running onto the court/field like a superstar. He takes on the voice of the announcer, saying "Ladies and Gentlemen… The goy from Illinois… Obama…" and then he imitates the type of song played at sporting events.

Stewart puts the Wright controversy in a specific context, first saying that throughout Obama's campaign there had been an undercurrent of fear Obama was an Other. This fear was manifested in fears Obama was a Muslim, Stewart continues. Then Stewart says, "The good news is that he's Christian! The bad news is: this guy is his pastor…" The scene cuts from Stewart to the frequently aired sound bites. The clip shows Wright angrily saying "God damn America" and cuts back to Stewart who acts scared of the anger. Stewart then plays 24 hour news clips saying these Wright sound bites would scare White voters, and Stewart sarcastically agrees with the clips by saying, "Yeah! We all love Jesus, but why do you have to be so Black and angry about it?!" Then Stewart explicitly says that this controversy is not about religion, it is about race. He identifies the issue being about race, not the relationship between Obama and

Wright the way Wikipedia implies. The only mention of their relationship is that Wright is Obama's pastor.

Stewart adopts the role of the clown in the segment, a clown the audience already loves and sees as ultimately a good person. By Stewart adopting the role of the clown, yet already loved by audiences, he encourages agents to identify with the clown. Spirituality is reflected in the segment by Stewart's willingness to be the White/clown that is ignorant of Black anger or a Black perspective. White audience members can identify with Stewart as the clown, thus begin to recognize their own Whiteness and their perceptions of Wright. Stewart uses the tool of perspective through incongruity as he plays the clown. For example, after commenting on the politically easy way to deal with Wright being to just try and ignore it, he plays the clip of Obama saying he would not reject Wright. It cuts back to Stewart who exclaims, "What you talkin' about Obama?" The stereotypical Black character who says that line, when contrasted with the elegant words of Obama, provides perspective through incongruity that highlights Obama's nuanced and smart speech. Furthermore, it hints at the nature of this controversy being rooted in the stereotypical, perhaps prejudice, expectations Whites have for a Black candidate. One of the reasons Wright was as alienating for Whites was the angry nature of his words. White rejection of Black anger meant Obama's campaign would have to avoid appearing "too Black" (Marable, 2009). Stewart implies the nature of the controversy is not Wright himself, so much as White discomfort with the legitimate anger of those in the Black community. Stewart clowns on this fear when he pretends to "lock" his desk like a car using remote keyless entry. When Obama says that Black anger is real and legitimate, Stewart says, "Black anger real?" in a high pitched voice that shows he is afraid. The beeping of a car alarm makes Stewart's desk formally vulnerable to the image of a scared White driver in a Black neighborhood. The metaphor is extended into the following segment titled "Open Dialogue." Stewart braces himself, saying "Okay, the doors are locked. I'm ready to hear another diatribe against White America." But that diatribe does not come, and Stewart is pleasantly surprised and unlocks his desk.

Stewart again uses perspective through incongruity when he plays the clips of Obama's recognition and legitimization of White anger, then asks two men in white Ku Klux Klan sheets their perspective and they men respond thoughtfully, "hmmm, did not see that coming." Obviously members of the KKK would never be so thoughtful about Obama's speech, they are explicitly racist. This is in contrast with Whiteness the average White person reinforces in

society, oppression that does not take the form of white sheets and burning crosses. This incongruity makes it clear that Obama's audience were not the people we typically think of as "racist," but rather the average White person whose perspective Obama legitimizes. Finally, Stewart closes the segment with the serious line: *"And so, at 11am on a Tuesday, a prominent politician spoke to Americans about race as though they were adults."* This is an honest assessment from Stewart about the quality of Obama's speech, an endorsement that we rarely hear on the program. Such an incongruous statement with the typical TDS humor makes it clear the speech, in Stewart's opinion, was a rare time where a politician addressed race in America without the patronizing simplicity that comes with scapegoating and the tragic frame. It is an ultimate reinforcement of the values of the comic frame.

The second segment I will analyze is from March 18, 2008 titled "Open Dialogue," The Daily Show with Jon Stewart decided to have a dialogue with the "senior black correspondent" Larry Wilmore. The "dialogue" between the two men was inspired by Obama's speech. As we will see, this clip is able to perform aspects of Obama's speech due to the use of the comic frame. First, TDS clip establishes the identification of both Jon Stewart and Larry Wilmore as individuals as well as representative of their respective races. At first, Wilmore and Stewart do not seem like they will find a common point of identification. The two men use us/them language, such as Wilmore complaining that Whites as a group ruin music, and Stewart notes that "we're too afraid" to ask Blacks to turn down their car stereos. While the Wilmore and Stewart have yet to find common ground, the two men build identification with their respective races in the audience. Stewart becomes the representative for Whites, and Wilmore becomes the representative for Blacks. Because both men are offering issues they have with the other group, both men share characteristics that are seen as funny, humbling because all humans are fallible. This context removes the politics of a presidential campaign, and instead places Obama's in the context of two "normal" guys. Of course they are comedians, but more "normal" than a presidential candidate. However, what Stewart and Wilmore are able to do, that Obama could not, was push Whites to recognize their privilege as the clowns without also making a Black man the clown.

Perspective through incongruity was accomplished when Stewart asserts a common White belief in the opportunity available to Americans. When Wilmore complains that despite how hard he has worked and the success he has gained, he is sometimes still followed around

retail stores as if he is going to steal something. However, when Stewart attempts to be positive about Wilmore's experience with racism, and acknowledges that is wrong, but at least we live in a country where one can work hard and become successful. This comment seems to put Wilmore on the defense. The bootstrap myth does not mean the same thing for African Americans as it does for whites, and Wilmore rejects this myth as not compensating for the racism. It is rare this bootstrap myth is rejected in popular culture, and Wilmore asks if that bootstrap crap makes it somehow okay he is followed by store clerks. The rejection disrupts the cultural norm and insists there is more progress to be made. It was incongruity to reject the myth.

Stewart then becomes offended and illustrates the hidden injuries of class Obama addressed in his speech (Marable, 2009). Stewart argues his family worked hard too. Wilmore also disrupts the common white conceptions of their ancestors immigrating to America by emphasizing, "yeah, when your people *chose* to come here." African slaves had no choice. Just as Obama addressed in his speech, many Whites are proud of their immigrant roots, and are often romantic about America's European immigrants and the melting pot metaphor. Thus, inserting slavery into this image taints it with the reality of African American's ancestry, perspective through incongruity. This stark "realization" for Stewart leads him to again "lock" his desk out of fear of Wilmore's anger. Stewart, at this point in the dialogue, is incredibly uncomfortable with these realities Wilmore provided him. Thus, we are led to the third characteristic of the comic frame: Clowning.

Stewart pretends he is very uncomfortable, and playing off the stereotype of angry Black men and White guys who fear them, Stewart backs down. He is the clown, the ignorant White guy that did not consider the ways in which he may have benefited from Whiteness. While the dialogue does mention the hidden injuries of class, they are not the point Wilmore was trying to make. The persistent racism experienced by Blacks is not okay, even if many Black men have become successful despite it, including the presidential candidate Barack Obama. The men struggle to find something to say after the conflict, until one of them mentions Starsky and Hutch. The two men are able to find common ground with a television show. It is reminiscent of the narrative Obama ends his speech with. Obama says the moment of recognition between Ashley and this older Black man is not enough to fix our problems, but it is where we begin. Similarly, the common ground the two men find is not enough to heal the tensions we saw in the exchange, but it's a good place to start.

The third segment I will analyze includes John Hodgman's fake/real historical accounts titled "Spiritual Advisor." The segment functions to highlight the issue of race in the double standard of media coverage, while simultaneously downplaying the Wright controversy. They provide perspective beyond just the 2008 election, including fictional spiritual advisors for Lincoln and Carter, but the real one being Billy Graham and Nixon's personal phone calls on tape that were released to public. The clear hate and bigotry of Graham stands in stark contrast with Graham's overall reputation in our culture as a respected religious figure. What makes this time different? Race. Graham by looking white hid a huge prejudice, and Wright looks Black, and is no worse than Graham yet scary. The stark racism of the white dude back in the day is not too recent to make whites defensive, while at the same time forcing whites to admit their may be a double standard based on race. Hodgman is known for his "fake" historical explanations, which use the conventions of historical writing to weave both fiction and reality together to emphasize a perspective about a current event. Using the absurd fictions to contrast with the gross reality is the epitome of perspective through incongruity. Hodgman dismissive the horribly prejudice influence of Graham on Nixon by sighing and saying, "Oh Jon, who are we to judge what comforted Nixon?" As if a president in the '70s is so foreign and in the past we don't know what it was like back then. Forcing Whites to recognize the extent to which American history is White history, makes us reflect upon our own reaction to Wright and the extent to which is was a reaction to an unfamiliar culture. Perhaps the most subtle attack on the universalization of Whiteness: Hodgman argues that Obama got involved with the church, implying he was making a rookie mistake by actually participating and attending a church. He asks if that is *really* the type of *Christian* we want in office.

Finally, the last segment of TDS I will analyze is his May 13th, 2008 interview with Bill Moyers, who hosts a PBS show and was on the show to pitch his book *On Democracy*. While this segment airs over a month after Obama's speech, the controversy had been rekindled by the media and subsequent statements made by Reverend Wright. This included statements he made during an interview on Bill Moyers Journal, where he said some of the things Obama said about him were necessary politically. Some reacted with outrage to those comments, as if that statement somehow undermined the significance and message of Obama's speech. Thus, the controversy was still fresh, especially for Moyers, whose show was cited in the controversy.

Also, the passing of time allowed Moyers and Stewart to discuss the controversy with a bit more perspective that only time can provide.

While the interview segment on TDS resembles that of a typical late night comedy program, the important distinction is the performance of deliberative democracy. "Running as long as 10 minutes, the studio interview can constitute more than half the show's content" (Baym, 2005, pp. 272-71). In fact, there have been numerous occasions where far more than 10 minutes will be dedicated to an interview, such as when he has a particularly important guest. The show is typically broken down into 3 chucks divided by 2 commercial breaks. Typically the interview will be the final chunk of time, around 10 minutes, but Stewart's interview with McCain was extended for two of those sections, about 15 minutes. However, when he had picked a fight with CNBC and Jim Cramer came on his program as representative of the network, the whole program was dedicated to the interview, and the additional footage was online. TDS is willing to reject a commercial model for actual discourse.

To assume a market perspective of TDS would lead the critic to miss the significance of the book pitch at the beginning of the segment. Stewart begins the interview by pitching Moyer's book, and describing it as thoughtful and wonderful. However, to dismiss this as mere commercial is misguided. Baym says, "the political guests also appear on the show largely to promote their work or their cause… [Stewart] begins and ends each segment with an overt pitch for the product. Obviously, the interview is a marketing device… but it is also the circulation of ideas and argument" (2005, p. 272). Stewart will always announce a guest's product as available for purchase, but he does not always endorse it. Thus, his praise of Moyer's book is a clear sign of respect for Moyers and his work, a very clear celebrity endorsement not all guests receive. In fact, by opening with the guests work, it provides the person's context and justifies why they are being interviewed. In Moyer's case, it also functioned as a credibility statement, which indicated he was a legitimate expert Stewart respects. When viewed outside of a commercial television framework, the "pitch" for the guest's product becomes a credibility statement, and when Stewart fails to gush about the work, audiences can tell when he is not endorsing the product.

In fact, the pitch for Moyer's book becomes the transition into a discussion about the Reverend Wright controversy. When Stewart asks Moyers why he compiled his old speeches into a book, he does have a television show on PBS after all. Moyers then says he has developed a "more consistent and coherent view of democracy than I can communicate in sound bites on

television." Stewart replies sarcastically, "Really!? So television is a sound bite obsessed medium?" Reaffirming this as an obvious fact the two laugh, Moyers says that some television certainly is, and says "look what happened to Jeremiah Wright. He was assassinated by sound bites." With little time spent on the book pitch, Moyers jumped at the opportunity to discuss the Wright controversy. Baym says the interviews on TDS are not about tearing the other person down, like "debates" on Crossfire Stewart claimed was "hurting America" years prior. Instead TDS makes an "effort to gain greater understanding of national problems and their potential solutions" (2005, p. 271).

Moyers and Stewart immediately begin discussing the national problem of the sound bites obsessed medium of television by providing context. Stewart mentions Moyers interview with Wright that caused controversy, and he asks if Moyers thought Wright was a "thoughtful" man or the "caricature" the media portrayed him to be. Stewart's framing of the question clearly indicates his perspective on the matter: Wright was not as the sound bites implied. Moyers said he has been asked how Wright could sound so reasonable on his show, yet so angry in subsequent media appearances. Moyers says he does not know the answer because he is not a psychologist, making a clear disclaimer that he cannot know for certain what another person thinks and feels. This statement disrupts the tendency for people to make tragic assumptions about individuals as evil or good. However, because he mentioned his interview with Wright, it establishes the source of Moyer's limited expert opinion about Wright. Moyers wastes no time moving from "pitching" his book, to introducing the conversation about Wright and establishing his expertise that is based on his interpersonal interaction with Wright, not mere speculation based on the media coverage alone.

The interview proceeds to provide agents with context that sheds light on Wright's perspective that the media failed to cover. Moyers says he thinks Wright was angry because his "36 years" at Trinity, over "205,711 minutes" of sermons, were being reduced by the media into just "20 seconds" of sound bites. Moyers says, "His whole life, his whole ministry, his whole career" was being reduced to short statements that were being used to politically attack Obama. Moyers says he thinks Wright was also upset because his words were being used to take down Obama's campaign, which he most certainly did not want. Moyers blames the "media grinder" that endlessly played the sound bites as the clowns, and compares Wright to a guy that steps out on his front porch to get the paper and is swept up in a cyclone. Moyers attributes the

convergence of this moment in history drew Wright unsuspectingly into the spot light. The conversation is reiterating Obama's point about the need to consider context, as well as the perspective that is necessary for the enactment of the comic frame.

The argument that it was unfair to summarize his work into sound bites and fail to understand Wright's context had been made by Obama and others. However, Stewart provides a challenge to this argument by saying that some of Wright's statements, even in context some people "found tough to swallow, and asks if Wright seemed to recognize his statements were abrasive to the mainstream. Moyers makes a disclaimer and says he is no "apologist" for his guests, like Stewart, and was not going to make excuses for Wright. However, Moyers emphasizes the fallibility of humans, and we have all said things we regret. Moyers is working to build identification with the clown, because we are all clowns. Moyers said he did not get the chance to ask Wright about his claims the government spread HIV, however explained the anger and paranoia in the Black they justly feel because of things like the Tuskegee experiments. Then Wright explained the experiments where the US government deliberately led uneducated Blacks in the South to believe they were being treated for syphilis, but instead watched them die. For many Whites, especially my generation, we had never learned about these atrocities, and Moyers deliberately explains them for the audience. The importance of consideration of perspective and context are necessary for both deliberative democracy and the comic frame, and Stewart and Moyers make sure they provide it for the audience.

The segment is an excellent source of context for the audience; however, some context is left out. While I think some agents would have been unfamiliar to the references Stewart makes, I think it is indicative of a level of respect he feels for his audience. Stewart asks Moyers if Stewart TDS and other liberals were at fault for the same kind of cherry picking from conservative religious figures, and mentions when he will pick a sound bite from Pat Robertson, the host of the 700 Club on TV. He asks Moyers if he were to read over Robertson's work, would he realize Robertson was a reasonable person like Wright. Stewart asks if it is fair to cover what Robertson said because he is a leader of a "Political movement" which I think he means Robertson who directly tries to play a role in politics and is a public figure on TV. Moyers had compared Wright to a cyclone victim, and Stewart wanted to know if he was also guilty of similar victimization. This is a question of media ethics, what justifies "news" coverage? This is also a question about the double standard Obama faced. Moyers agrees the media gave McCain a

free pass in regards to his courtship of John Hagee's support. However, I don't know if they adequately explain who Hagee is. I think it is more like an assumption the audience knows, but I had to look it up on Wikipedia: John Hagee is the chief executive officer (CEO) at his non-profit corporation, Global Evangelism Television (GETV)" (John Hagee, 2009). With that context, I can see that they are distinguishing between a person who wanted to be on the national stage versus Wright who was hit by a "cyclone." The media dismissed the story because it was "political," while they failed to recognize the difference between the politician and the church congregant. Here the conversation is functioning as reasoned deliberation about what warrants press coverage, although it was not as explicit as my analysis here.

Stewart and Moyers end the segment on a positive and optimistic conclusion that ultimately reinforces the values of deliberative democracy and the message of Obama's speech. Stewart asks Moyers if he is more dispirited than he has been in the past, to which Moyers says his book makes the point that "democracy is a story of narrow escapes" from the detrimental actions of the clowns of the day. This establishes democracy as the god term that is being perfected over time, like Obama says, but is a system that is good and distinct from the current problems in our society caused by fallible humans. Moyers says he sometimes wonders if his optimism is justified, but he thinks that Obama's wins at primaries post Wright controversy are indicative of the ability of the public to manage the logical fallacy that Obama's connections to Wright somehow made him less of a candidate. This point is reinforcing deliberative democracy according to Baym, which "understands the political system ideally to be comprised of individuals engaged in reasoned discussion, a cooperative discourse that seeks to reach a consensual notion of the common good" (2005, pp. 272-73). Despite the clowns in the media that profited from the sensationalization of the controversy, Moyers argues the ability of Americans to make reasoned choices. However, Moyers fears that his grandchildren and the audience of TDS will not have an "even playing field," equality of opportunity which is a fundamental value of American democracy established in the Federalist Papers. Stewart agrees, saying he believes that the younger generation, once they recognize the fight, will pick up the movement and continue the American journey towards a more perfect union.

Ultimately, this interview is exemplar of Baym's claim that TDS's interviews are in the tradition of Habermas and other scholar's conceptualization of deliberative democracy, and "reasoned conversation is the defining feature of a democratic system" (2005, p. 273). The

interview deliberates upon national problems with the media coverage of Reverend Wright as well as the solution to that problem as it lies in the ability of the public to reject the logical fallacy that Wright was a legitimate attack against Obama's campaign. "In place of reductionist polemics, Stewart's politically oriented interviews pursue thoughtful discussions of national problems" (Baym, 2005, p. 271). They end on the urgent yet optimistic conclusion that the public is capable of deliberative democracy, and that this younger generation is capable of the social movement necessary to overcome the problem. This interview is a perfection example of how TDS "regularly offers a model of and resources for political dialogue and reasoned conversation" (2005, p. 273). The conversation between Moyers and Stewart exemplifies the concept of forum in deliberative democracy, "which depends in the first instance on active deliberation among citizens. Dialogue here is the locus of democracy, the public process through which citizens determine their preferences and define the public will" (Baym, 2005, p. 273). This forum reinforces the message of Obama's speech by establishing the journey towards "a more perfect union" the younger generation must begin to fight for. Ultimately, the demonstration of forum and the conclusions that are drawn are the result of the comic frame that views humans as clowns, the necessity of perspective and context, and the system of democracy that is capable of addressing these problems should the public continue fighting for it.

CHAPTER 5 - Discussion

I do you think that sense of humor goes as far as our ideology. Jon Stewart on Bill Moyer's Journal*, April 27th, 2007.*

When I first experienced my visceral gut reaction to the texts of Obama's speech and TDS, I was unable to verbalize the source of that gut reaction. This project has been my personal journey to understand that reaction, and by doing so I aim to shed light on the intersection of political and popular discourse. By first analyzing the context that made Obama's speech exigent, then analyzing Obama's speech, and finally analyzing TDS's reactions to the controversy and the speech, I was able to recognize the comic frame as a shared homology between the political discourse of Obama and the popular discourse of TDS. However, Brummett says, "The critic is not a mere jigsaw puzzle worker who is satisfied once a coherence is identified, but must ask *why* a certain homology could have obtained in a situation" (Brummett, 1991, p. 98). I need to explore how the homology of the comic frame *may* have served as "equipment for living" for agents experiencing the rhetorical transaction of the Wright controversy. The critic should try and identify the potential of that homology to function as equipment for living in future rhetorical transactions as well. I believe the homology of the comic frame was that important something I felt in my gut was the comic frame.[iii] I think coming to that conclusion was the easiest part of this project. The difficult part is figuring out what this means on a variety of levels.

Why does the comic frame emerge from the analysis of these texts? I believe one of the reasons the comic frame is especially useful for dealing with contemporary issues of race in America. From my analysis, I have determined that the best way for us to deal with racial conflict today is through the comic frame. "Race relations itself has been such a complicated, difficult, and painful issue for so many Americans for so long that free and open discussion of racial matters may be difficult for people" (Brummett, 2008, p. 3). Indeed, Obama faced a double standard, where he had to embody both change, but not too much change, a standard rooted in prejudice. Obama was a beneficiary of the civil rights movement advances in making racism

socially unacceptable, yet inequality lives on through Whiteness. The race-based politics of his predecessors was no longer effective against the invisible power of Whiteness, and Obama had to adopt a different style of politics that was not divisive. However, Whiteness' power to promote harmful colorblind policies led to the assumption by many that racism was no longer a problem (Fraser, 2009). Many Whites were happy to support the 1st Black President with the belief that finally America's painful history of racism would be over. If Obama were to allow the media to demonize Wright so as to uphold the fiction of a postracial America, I do not believe he would have won. It would have stood in such stark contrast with the message of his whole campaign, and the ideological incoherence would have possibly ruined his credibility.

The conflict between the general White and Black subject position is willingly overlooked by many Whites, and many become uncomfortable acknowledging their life. One Washington Post op-ed, after calling Reverend Wright a "wackadoodle," critiqued Obama's subsequent statements on a radio station:

> He called his grandmother *'a typical white person, who...* Obama might be right, but he should stay away from the phrase "typical white person" because typically white people don't like to be reminded of their prejudices. It also undermines Obama's feel-good appeal in which whites are allowed to transcend race because the candidate himself has transcended race. (Dowd, para 7, #78)

It is precisely this kind of rhetoric that is evidentiary of the urgent need for us reject the term postracial. It has been used to lump together all young Black politicians who did not experience the civil rights movement and did not pursue race-based politics (Fraser, 2009). However, this description is only accurate in a temporal sense, as in post-race-based politics. This term functions to imply a monolithic group, not individual politicians with their own ideas and values who deliberately choose to affiliate with certain political ideologies over others. Certain Black politicians may reinforce colorblindness ideologies that are antithetical to the goals of other Black politicians working to overturn Whiteness. The term postracial functions to obscure and hinder public discourse on the topic of race by limiting considerations for context and Black subject position, while simultaneously demanding Whites never be addressed as a collective. Obama's rhetoric does not reinforce the myth of colorblindness, and it should not be lumped in with the politicians who do not share the same ideology:

But what did he suggest in his speech? … For Obama there was no disavowal, but instead

a new assertion, and a new challenge. But in order to make this challenge, he had to

navigate his way through the shoals of something no African American leader had yet

attempted--an ongoing source of continued racism on the part of whites, namely, their

resentments over what they see as a preferential treatment of blacks by elites in the post

civil rights era. (Dumm, 2008, p. 318)

Many have said Obama's speech was brilliant, and I think it was his use of the comic frame to distinguish himself from the postracial falsehoods the media were peddling. Furthermore, I think his use of the comic frame is that "new assertion, and a new challenge."

Obama's use of the comic frame I believe reflects a cultural need for a term that refers to oppression, hegemony, inequality, but one that unifies the problems under a new term that is not as tragic as the term racist. Racism has been used to demonize and alienate individuals, and calling someone racist is one of the most socially stigmatized labels because it comes with some kind of implication of intention on the part of the "racist." Dovidio, Gaertner, Nier, Kawakami, and Hodson (2005) found that many well intentioned Whites lacked interpersonal experience with minorities or accurate pictures of minorities outside of Whiteness. The representations of minorities within the media often more accurately represent White culture than marginalized cultures. The White is surprised when interacting with actual minorities and confronted with the recognition of difference colorblindness has taught them shouldn't be seen (Crenshaw, 1998). This surprise and sometimes discomfort with the unfamiliar culture and the realization of difference can lead Whites to subconsciously communicate unease through their verbal and nonverbal behaviors, which is interpreted as racism by minorities or results in subconsciously racist actions by the White person. The scholars call this aversive racism because the White person does not consciously want to be racist, yet they perpetuate and communicate racism subconsciously. Aversive racism means we must not overemphasize the intentional nature of a racist act:

Thus, from this perspective, aversive racism clearly does not fit the popular notion of evil

as a malicious and deliberate act designed intentionally to harm another individual…

However, when the consequences of these discriminatory acts are considered, this

behavior can hardly be described as morally neutral. This kind of discrimination reflects a

new form of evil that should not be judged by conventional legal and moral standards.

Perhaps the morality of racism in the United States should be assessed by its profoundly damaging effects rather than its subtle causes or the degree of intentionality that characterizes it. Judged by this yardstick, contemporary racism is an evil act committed by people who are not evil and who, my most normal standards, are good people. Nevertheless, the fact that the motivation for aversive racists biases may be unconscious and their discrimination may be unintentional and subtle should not ultimately exonerate them from responsibility for their bad actions. (Dovidio et al., 2005, p. 161)

The comic frame is an attitudinizing frame that allows for the correction of behaviors that perpetuate inequalities while recognizing that all humans are fallible. It allows for kinder motives towards others, and promotes a consideration of perspective and context. Just as in the comic frame, it puts the situation into the bigger picture. Obama legitimizes a White perspective that is fallible without being racist in the traditional sense. I believe the potential for the comic frame to address issues of Whiteness is why Obama's speech was so powerful.

What does it mean that TDS also uses the comic frame when addressing the Wright controversy? My initial reaction was to conclude TDS was somehow "reporting" the ideological message of Obama's speech: the comic frame. I thought that the homological connection would be indicate TDS was going beyond reporting "facts" about what Obama said to reporting the ideology of Obama's speech. Indeed this would be a complex and informative report from TDS. This idea supports Baym when he says TDS "can be better understood not as 'fake news' but as an alternative journalism, one that uses satire to interrogate power," and "parody to critique contemporary news" (Baym, 2005, p. 261). While to an extent I agree with Baym's term for TDS as *alternative journalism*, I believe we need to expand our understanding about TDS beyond this idea it is just and alternative to contemporary broadcast journalism.

To call TDS alternative journalism is just reinforcing the traditional speaker-focus of rhetorical criticism Brummett warns against. If I were to view the potential for audiences to construct TDS texts using the comic frame as merely TDS "reporting" the "news" of Obama's speech, I would be limiting myself to the confines of the label "news" or "fake news," which comes with ideological implications. It seems as if most scholarship on TDS has been focused on the label "fake news," and TDS's formal characteristics that satirize the "news." According to Burke (1937) satire is a frame of rejection, but the comic is a frame of acceptance. I have clearly shown TDS's use of the comic frame for the purposes of gaining acceptance, instead of a mere

rejection of main stream media that most research has dealt with. This has severely limited the knowledge we can gain about the rhetoric of TDS by enclosing it in the ideological birdcage of conventional news that privileges the assumption of objective meaning not constructed by agents. TDS does so much more than just make fun of the clowns in the media or the government. Rather TDS *rejects* contemporary journalistic standards, and by doing so "The Daily Show achieves a critical distance" missing in the news media today (Baym, 2005, p. 265). TDS has no credibility to lose; they can feel free to promote meaning silenced in the news media. However, while the rejection of legitimacy allows for critical distance, this would not make TDS critical rhetoric. McKerrow's critical rhetoric taught us that it is important to critique the birdcage, but also to provide alternatives to the hegemonic perspective. Much of the rhetorical scholarship and social commentary on TDS has only focused on TDS's critique of the status quo, the politicians and the news media. This is just focusing on TDS's function that critiques the birdcage, yet overlooking the alternative constructions TDS provides audiences.

I would like to argue that TDS is alternative journalism because of the comic frame. TDS's journalism is *alternative* because it utilizes the comic frame that traditional news media are discouraged from using. The harmful conventional standards of journalism have generally been lost to the commercialization of the media, which results in a lack of context and recognition of human fallibility countered by TDS's use of the comic frame. TDS does not just *inform* the audience about something, so much as it provides "equipment for living" (Burke, 1937). The laughter attracts the audience, "But comedy also provides the method to engage in serious political criticism" (Baym, 2005, p. 273). TDS "endorses and enacts a deliberative model of democracy based on civility of exchange, complexity of argument, and the goal of mutual understanding. Lying just beneath or perhaps imbricated within the laughter is a quite serious demand for fact, accountability and reason in political discourse" (Baym, 2005, p. 273). The features Baym says makes TDS alternative journalism are also features of the comic frame. During their segment "Open Dialogue" they perform for the agents a method in which they can enact the message of Obama's speech. TDS does not reinforce Obama's message because they want to support the candidate; rather TDS has always promoted the comic frame as tools for living in this historical moment. Hariman argues TDS's comic frame is "homeopathic," meant to inoculate us from the "disease" of cynicism (2007, p. 275). My analysis indicates, however, TDS goes beyond "treating" the symptoms, and is working on "preventing" the "illness." By

performing a dialogue that Obama asked of the American public, they are offering another means of understanding the Obama text, reinforcing the ultimate ideology of the comic frame. In fact, I would argue that the popularity and cultural power of TDS is the result of their comic frame. I believe Baym is right when he says, "The program is a product of a specific historical moment, fueled both by the post-September 11 dissuasion of open inquiry and the particular talents of its current host" (Baym, 2005, p. 274). The historical exigency of TDS and Obama's speech was a thirst for alternatives to the status quo.

Furthermore, I believe Obama's popularity and incredible success is the result of his comic frame. The frame was especially effective for dealing with the Wright controversy because, as previously argued, the comic frame seems exceptionally powerful for dealing with contemporary Whiteness. Beyond the specific texts of the Wright controversy, both Obama and TDS appear to use the comic frame frequently. It seems that their use of the comic frame is not a reaction to the specific exigency of the Wright controversy, rather it is their personal ideology they cultivated from their own personal journeys. Their popularity is evidence of a need for the comic frame at this moment in time, and I will argue Obama and TDS are both products of that social movement as well as influential figures in that social movement.

Another important conclusion of this analysis is that Obama is a social movement leader. Initially I assumed Obama would have to be a social movement leader by virtue of being the 1st Black president alone, but Projansky and Ono's words echo through my head, no rhetoric is immune to the rearticulation of Whiteness. Considering the significance of the concept of postracial in this election, we must be careful not to make assumptions about the significance of Obama's rhetoric. However, the Obama's rhetoric of the comic frame has indicated a social movement. Rolling Stone magazine published a story about the technological innovations the Obama campaign utilized in innovative ways. Yet as I began to read it, it was actually an article about the grass-roots social movement Obama started by a sophisticated use of technology to reach out to supporters and turn them into activists offline (Dickinson, 2008). The Obama administration was able to organize a social movement, not a typical top-down campaign. Obama's campaign can be understood as just a movement to get a candidate elected, but Obama's speech on race consistently places himself within the American journey. There is a larger movement Obama is speaking for, and returning to Leland Griffin's dramatist theory of social movement is useful for understanding what this larger movement may be.

Griffin begins with the assumption that "all movements are essentially moral--strivings for salvation, perfection, the 'good'" (Griffin, 1969, p. 200). Obama's speech works to reinforce this idea by establishing the god term as the act of obtaining perfection, not perfection itself. In other words, Obama's god term is actually social movement. Without a clear definition of what he means by perfection, it is a movement not defined by a destination: a specific policy objective, electing a particular candidate, etc. If there is no clear destination for the movement, why would anyone join? According to Griffin, humans strive for order, which he are necessarily "hierarchical, involving division" (1969, p. 202). But the rhetorical exigency Obama had to address was about the harms of division and hierarchy. His Black preacher was the cause of the controversy because there is a double standard that requires Black politicians to reject "radical" Black leaders, which is the result of hierarchy that places White above Black. Obama's rhetoric of unity is a response to the attempts to divide people with Wright's most alienating statements. Obama had to manage the reality that "men, in any system, are inevitably divided," which he counteracts "through identification with a common condition or 'substance,'" (Griffin, 1969, p. 202). Obama's goal was identification, and thus he establishes our American journey, our shared social movement, as the basis of identification. Perhaps Griffin is not wrong when he says all "orders are of necessity hierarchical," but Obama's message is that of unity and the values of equality. Instead of Obama reinforcing hierarchy and division, he creates a "motive of piety" for the audience that is not based on any Order one should be pious to, rather he aims to establish piety to the act of social movement in general. The only way humans can fight the "necessity" of hierarchy is by placing that fight for equality as the god term at the top of the hierarchy. The act of striving for equality will be placed above ambivalence towards inequality.

If the purpose of studying the rhetoric of social movements is as Griffin says, "to discover the motive, or motives--the ultimate meaning, or Purpose--of the movement" (1969, p. 207), what does it mean when the Purpose established by the movement is social movement itself? This question must be fundamental to the study of rhetoric of social movements: **What does it mean when a movement defines its Purpose as social movement in general?** Obama's masterful address on the topic of race appears to be about much more than race, it seems to be the rhetoric of a movement's inception period, a new social movement. But not just a new social movement, a **meta social movement**, a movement of movements. I propose expanding Brummett's mosaic model to the study of social movements, exploding the boundaries of

specific movements and resituating them in a larger mosaic of the meta-movement. Specific movements such as the feminist movement, civil rights movement, and the LBGT movement can be texts that are comprised of bits of rhetoric, protest signs, speeches, clothing, songs, etc. These texts are subsumed into a larger mosaic of the meta-movement. The critic of meta-movements must look to see what social movements are aligned ideologically. The homology that holds the disparate texts of various movements together is what defines the meta-movement.

Carlson (1986) argues Griffin's assumption that social movements are tragic rituals is limited because some movements use the comic frame, such as Gandhi's nonviolent resistance. However, I feel as if that critique is perhaps beside the point. When Griffin says "Man's movements, in time, come to an end. And they come to an end in tragedy" (1969, p. 218), I do not believe he is saying all movements will utilize rhetoric in the tragic frame. I believe his point was that all social movements come to an end at some point, where the movement becomes either the new status quo or goes away. Similarly, humans are mortal beings that must some day pass away. This does not mean, however, that person's life was lived tragically. Both the scapegoat and the clown will die someday. Griffin says, "Yet if his movements are tragic, the fate of man himself is comic… And if the wheel forever turns, it is man who does the turning" (1969, p. 219). It is not as if Griffin does not recognize the potential for movements that view the conflict comically and utilize comic methods of resistance. I think Griffin's point was that the very nature of movements are tragic, emphasizing cyclical nature of social movements in general. This assumption about the tragic nature of movements is temporally fixed, with a beginning and an end.

It is Griffin's assumption of social movements as temporally fixed, thus tragic, that I find problematic. I think it is reasonable to say that the civil rights movement as a historical era may be over, but does that have to mean it is dead? I have trouble applying temporal limits to social movements because I think it functions to limit the real influence of that movement beyond its own timeline. Stewart (1980) said, "Social movements may find it necessary to revise their versions of history as they age, meet with successes and failures, and adapt to changing situations" (p. 302). Obama's rhetoric has been said to demonstrate the values of prophetic coherency for a new generation. The civil rights movement lives on through Obama's rhetoric, however the movement's tactics had to be altered. The premises of our society have changed. Whereas it was once acceptable to be racist, it is now assumed to be morally wrong. Thus, the

movement must adjust and redefine itself for a new generation. I guess you could say that the civil rights movement is "dead," but if that is the case I insist upon the metaphor of a phoenix that rises from the ashes. The influence of the previous social movements are vital to the larger meta social movement.

The concept of a meta-movement has great potential for the study of social movements because it allows the critic to study movements that have yet to be identified as movements by others. The critic need not wait for historians or members of the movement to announce its existence, rather the critic can define the movement by its rhetoric free from outside approval. This freedom allows the critic to break out of the ideological cages that limit scholarship. There is no need to limit the study of movements to the rhetoric of certain time periods, and the concept of a meta-movement allows the critic to reclaim and reappropriate history. An example of such a reappropriation would be Voss and Rowland's analysis of "pre-inception" rhetoric (2000). This allows for redefinition of history for the purposes of coherency as the movement progresses over time. Furthermore, the meta-movement has the potential to shed light on the relative successes and failures of specific movements within the meta-movement. For example, two movements may be fighting for the same cause, but only the movement with a certain homology succeeds while the other movement using a different homology may not have succeeded as a result of the different homologies. Placing specific movements within the context of the meta-movement dwarfs the specific movement and avoids the use of tragic and epic frames. It is a way for critics to perform McKerrow's critical rhetoric because it allows for the construction of alternative texts outside the confines of an ideological cage. Most importantly, the concept of the meta-movement is capable of accommodating the ever changing nature of public discourse thanks to the radical advances in technology we continue to experience. Contemporary discourse more accurately reflects Brummett's mosaic model than it does traditional speaker-focused models. Contemporary public discourse is comprised of many diffuse texts of all types. Social networking sites like Facebook had a great impact on Obama's presidential campaign. Twitters from Iran functioned to subvert attempts to silence protestors. We constantly hear about the Blog-O-Sphere as an increasingly powerful landscape of discourse, and user generated content such as Wikipedia are changing the way the public views reference sources. Brummett wrote about the mosaic model in 1991, pre-internet, yet it is just has become even more applicable as technology rapidly progresses.

The meta-movement has much potential for scholarship, but critics must be careful in how they attribute rhetoric to a meta-movement. Brummett emphasizes that the critic should be focusing on the functions and manifestations of rhetoric, not the role of the speaker in producing that rhetoric. The concept of a person speaking for a movement is thus problematic, especially when the critic is essentially inventing a movement said speaker will obviously be unaware of. TDS, for example, constituently refuses legitimacy others try and give him, especially any claims they are social movement leaders. While I most certainly think the world of Jon Stewart, I feel compelled to respect his authority when he says he is "people don't understand that we're not warriors in their cause. We're a group of people… that want to write jokes about the absurdity that we see in government and the world and all that, and that's it" (Moyers, 2007, April 27). It would be wrongheaded to assume TDS deliberately participates in any social movement, and I do not aim to impose legitimacy or authority to TDS because it could undermine their credibility. It is not as if they need to keep some kind of "street cred" that shows they are cool, rather their ideology is the comic frame, and to subscribe super human authority to Stewart would undermine his message. Stewart explains his role in the meta-movement when he told Moyers:

> I don't know how people feel. And you know, that's the beauty of TV, is they can see us, but we can't see them. I think that, if we do anything in a positive sense for the world, is provide one little bit of context, that's very specifically focused, and hopefully people can add to their entire puzzle that gives them a larger picture of what it is that they see. (Moyers, 2007, April 27).

If Stewart were to portray himself as more powerful and authoritative than he currently claims to be, he would potentially be held accountable for providing more than just one piece of a larger puzzle. That is a responsibility that Stewart rejects, and the critic should respect such a rejection of legitimacy. However, that piece of the puzzle Stewart provides is part of the comic frame, part of the homology that links him with the larger meta-movement. The rhetoric of TDS functions to support a movement the speaker has no intention of claiming. I want to view TDS as movements rhetoric, not because they are a leader, but because they are a contributor. But the rhetoric of Obama and TDS contributes to a critical optimist meta movement. I think this is a position Stewart would be more likely to accept.

> I do believe we function as a sort of editorial cartoon. That we are a digestive process, like so many other digestive processes that go on. … there's a lot of young people get this

and you know, young people get that from me. People are very sophisticated consumers of information, and they're pulling all different things. (Moyers, 2007, April 27)

Stewart recognizes what he gives members of the movement, but most importantly, he recognizes that it is the agent that constructs the meaning from many different texts. Torosyan summarizes this nicely:

> When he himself is interviewed, he denies that The Daily Show is anything but comedy or at best, political and cultural satire. Such denials only reaffirm that Stewart's self-inclusive way of poking fun embodies a powerful way of being in the world - one of thoughtful, self-reflective, and modest engagement. (2007, p. 118)

Stewart's refusal of legitimacy is all a part of the comic frame.

What is this meta-movement I claim Obama and TDS contribute to? It is a movement derived from a cultural mandate for the comic frame, one that encourages critical rhetoric and the construction of alternative texts, one that is optimistic in its assumption humans are moral beings striving for perfection. I call this meta-movement **Critical Optimism**. It is a movement fighting hegemonic oppression, thus critical like McKerrow's critical rhetoric. Yet it is a movement that rejects pessimism and cynicism for the optimism afforded us by the comic frame. Burke calls it the most "civilized" frame, but I reject such a title for its implication of hierarchy. Instead, I believe it is the wisest frame, and the critical optimism meta-movement spans the decades it has taken to get us to such wisdom. Stewart reinforces the societal need for critical optimism when Bill Moyers asks if Stewart has "lost" his "innocence," Stewart says:

> What? Well, it was in 1981, it was at a frat party. Oh, I'm sorry. You know, I think this is gonna sound incredibly pat, but I think you lose your innocence when you have kids, because the world suddenly becomes a much more dangerous place. And you become much more — there are two things that happen. You recognize how fragile individuals are, and you recognize the strength of the general overall group, but you don't care anymore. You're just fighting for the one thing. See and then, you also recognize that everybody, then, is also somebody's child. It's I'm yeah, I mean it's-- tumultuous. But I don't think it's a feeling of hopelessness that people feel. I think if they feel — if they're feeling what we're feeling, it's that this is how we fight back. I can only fight back in a way that I feel like I'm talented. And I feel like the only thing that I can do, and I've been fired from enough jobs, that I'm pretty confident in saying this, the only thing that I can

do, even a little bit better than most people, is create that sort of that context with humor. And that's my way of not being helpless and not being hopeless. (Moyers, 2007, April 27)

One has to be optimistic if they are to continue this fight, and the comic frame that connects the texts of Obama and TDS reinforce that optimism for my generation that has been raised without much reason for optimism with the state of our country and media. Yet it is not a blind optimism, it is optimism fortified with the power of critical rhetoric. Most importantly, the critical optimism is that feeling I had in my gut, and it is a movement I shall continue to explore and contribute to.

Conclusion

As I conclude this project, one in which I have put in more time and effort than any other project in my career, I realize the importance of the comic frame. The homology that connects the disparate texts of Obama and TDS is the comic frame, and I believe their use of the frame is indicative of a cultural mandate demanding a shift from the tragic frame to the comic frame. Thus, I have proposed the comic frame is more than just a stylistic choice on the part of the speakers, rather it is a burgeoning social movement. However, it is not just any social movement, it is a meta-movement comprised of numerous individual social movements. It is important we view rhetors such as Obama and TDS within the context of this meta-movement, but we must also avoid calling them leaders of a movement this critic has proposed. This is why I choose to view them as contributors to this meta-movement, because they are the product of this social mandate, but they also influence the mandate with their rhetoric.

Yet, the value I place in the comic frame is not just a result of my analysis, it is also the result of my personal journey from the tragic frame to the comic frame. Barry Brummett's *Rhetorical Dimensions of Popular Culture* (1991) has helped me understand Whiteness studies within the comic frame. The process of writing a masters thesis has been isolating and overwhelming, but when I approach it through the comic frame I gain the perspective necessary to be proud of this work. It is far from perfect, but I am a clown, who by definition is not perfect. It is the comic frame that allows me to view the imperfections of this project with laughter, rather than tears. Perhaps the emergence of the comic frame homology for these texts is influenced by my own need to view this project within the comic frame. Regardless, I believe the comic frame

is useful for most aspects of an individual's life, and I hope to continue my research on the critical optimist meta-movement.

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The **Jeremiah Wright controversy** is an American political issue, which gained national attention in March 2008 when ABC News, after reviewing dozens of U.S. 2008 Presidential Election candidate Barack Obama's pastor Jeremiah Wright's sermons,[1] excerpted parts which were subject to intense media scrutiny.[2][3] Wright is a retired senior pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago and former pastor of President of the United States Barack Obama.[4] Obama denounced the statements in question, but after critics continued to press the issue of his relationship with Wright he gave a speech titled "A More Perfect Union", in which he sought to place Dr. Wright's comments in a historical and sociological context. In the speech, Obama again denounced Wright's remarks, but did not disown him as a person. The controversy began to fade, but was renewed in late April when Wright made a series of media appearances, including an interview on Bill Moyers Journal, a speech at the NAACP and a speech at the National Press Club.[5] After the last of these, Obama spoke more forcefully against his former pastor, saying that he was "outraged" and "saddened" by his behavior, and in May he resigned his membership in the church.[6]

Background

1. Barack Obama first met Wright in the late 1980s, while he was working as a community organizer in Chicago before attending Harvard Law School.[7] Wright officiated at the wedding ceremony of Barack and Michelle Obama, as well as their children's baptisms.[8]

2. The title of Obama's 2006 memoir, *The Audacity of Hope*, was inspired by one of Wright's sermons, which was also a theme of Obama's 2004 keynote address to the Democratic National Convention.[8][7][9] Wright served as both a role model and a spiritual mentor for Obama, and the senator would check with Wright prior to making

any bold political moves.[7] According to the Reverend Jim Wallis, who is a leader of the religious left, "If you want to understand where Barack gets his feeling and rhetoric from, just look at Jeremiah Wright."[10]

3. Wright was scheduled to give the public invocation before Obama's presidential announcement, but Obama withdrew the invitation the night before the event.[11] Wright wrote a rebuttal letter to the editor disputing the characterization of the account as reported in an article in *The New York Times*.[12]

4. In 2007 Wright was appointed to Barack Obama's African American Religious Leadership Committee, a group of over 170 national black religious leaders who supported Obama's bid for the Democratic nomination.[13] However, it was announced in March 2008 that Wright was no longer serving as a member of this group.[14]

Controversial sermon excerpts

Most of the controversial excerpts that gained national attention in March 2008 were taken from two sermons: one titled "The Day of Jerusalem's Fall" delivered on September 16, 2001 and another, titled "Confusing God and Government", delivered on April 13, 2003.

The Day of Jerusalem's Fall"

In a sermon delivered shortly after the September 11 attacks in 2001, Wright made comments about an interview of former U.S. Ambassador Edward Peck he saw on Fox News. Wright said:

> "I heard Ambassador Peck on an interview yesterday. Did anybody else see him or hear him? He was on Fox News. This is a white man, and he was upsetting the Fox News commentators to no end. He pointed out — did you see him, John? — a white man, he pointed out, ambassador, that what Malcolm X said when he got silenced by Elijah Muhammad was in fact true — America's chickens are coming home to roost."[15]

Wright spoke of the United States taking land from the Indian tribes by what he labeled as terror, bombing Grenada, Panama, Libya, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki, and argued that the United States supported state terrorism against the Palestinians and South Africa. He said that his parishioners' response should be to examine their relationship with God, not go "from the hatred of armed enemies to the hatred of unarmed innocents." His comment (quoting Malcolm X) that "America's chickens are coming home to roost" was widely interpreted as meaning that America had brought the September 11, 2001 attacks upon itself.[16][17][18] ABC News broadcast clips[19] from the sermon[1][20] in which Wright said:

"We bombed Hiroshima, we bombed Nagasaki, and we nuked far more than the thousands in New York and the Pentagon, and we never batted an eye... and now we are indignant, because the stuff we have done overseas is now brought back into our own front yards. America's chickens are coming home to roost."

Later, Wright continued :

"Violence begets violence. Hatred begets hatred. And terrorism begets terrorism. A white ambassador said that y'all, not a black militant. Not a reverend who preaches about racism. An ambassador whose eyes are wide open and who is trying to get us to wake up and move away from this dangerous precipice upon which we are now poised. The ambassador said the people that we have wounded don't have the military capability we have. But they do have individuals who are willing to die and take thousands with them. And we need to come to grips with that."[19]

"Confusing God and Government"

Clips from a sermon that Wright gave, entitled "Confusing God and Government", were also shown on ABC's *Good Morning America*[1] and Fox News. In the sermon, Wright first makes the distinction between God and governments, and points out that many governments in the past have failed: "Where governments lie, God does not lie. Where governments change, God does not change."[21] Wright then states:

"[The United States] government lied about their belief that all men were created equal. The truth is they believed that all white men were created equal. The truth is they did not even believe that white women were created equal, in creation nor civilization. The government had to pass an amendment to the Constitution to get white women the vote. Then the government had to pass an equal rights amendment to get equal protection under the law for women. The government still thinks a woman has no rights over her own body, and between Uncle Clarence who sexually harassed Anita Hill, and a closeted Klan court, that is a throwback to the 19th century, handpicked by Daddy Bush, Ronald Reagan, Gerald Ford, between Clarence and that stacked court, they are about to undo Roe vs. Wade, just like they are about to un-do affirmative action. The government lied in its founding documents and the government is still lying today. Governments lie."

He continued:

"The government lied about Pearl Harbor too. They knew the Japanese were going to attack. Governments lie. The government lied about the Gulf of Tonkin Incident. They wanted that resolution to get us in the Vietnam War. Governments lie. The government lied about Nelson Mandela and our CIA helped put him in prison and keep him there for 27 years. The South African government lied on Nelson Mandela. Governments lie."

Wright then stated:

"The government lied about the Tuskegee experiment. They purposely infected African American men with syphilis. Governments lie. The government lied about bombing Cambodia and Richard Nixon stood in front of the camera, 'Let me make myself perfectly clear…' Governments lie. The government lied about the drugs for arms Contra scheme orchestrated by Oliver North, and then the government pardoned all the perpetrators so they could get better jobs in the government. Governments lie.... The government lied about inventing the HIV virus as a means of genocide against people of color. Governments lie. The government lied about a connection between Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein and a connection between 9.11.01 and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Governments lie."

He spoke about the government's rationale for the Iraq War:

"The government lied about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq being a threat to the United States peace. And guess what else? If they don't find them some weapons of mass destruction, they gonna do just like the LAPD, and plant the some weapons of mass destruction. Governments lie."

Wright then commented on God and government:

"And the United States of America government, when it came to treating her citizens of Indian descent fairly, she failed. She put them on reservations. When it came to treating her citizens of Japanese descent fairly, she failed. She put them in internment prison camps. When it came to treating her citizens of African descent fairly, America failed. She put them in chains, the government put them on slave quarters, put them on auction blocks, put them in cotton field, put them in inferior schools, put them in substandard housing, put them in scientific experiments, put them in the lowest paying jobs, put them outside the equal protection of the law, kept them out of their racist bastions of higher education and locked them into positions of hopelessness and helplessness. The

government gives them the drugs, builds bigger prisons, passes a three-strike law and then wants us to sing 'God Bless America.' No, no, no, not God Bless America. God damn America — that's in the Bible — for killing innocent people. God damn America, for treating our citizens as less than human. God damn America, as long as she tries to act like she is God, and she is supreme. The United States government has failed the vast majority of her citizens of African descent.."[22][21][23][24]

These sermon excerpts were widely viewed in early 2008 on network television and the internet.[25]

Reaction

Barack Obama

When Wright's comments were aired in the national media, Obama distanced himself from them, saying to Charles Gibson of ABC News, "It's as if we took the five dumbest things that I've ever said or you've ever said in our lives and compressed them and put them out there — I think that people's reaction would, understandably, be upset."[26] At the same time, Obama stated that "words that degrade individuals have no place in our public dialogue, whether it's on the campaign stump or in the pulpit. In sum, I reject outright the statements by Rev. Wright that are at issue."[27] Obama later added, "Had the reverend not retired, and had he not acknowledged that what he had said had deeply offended people and were inappropriate and mischaracterized what I believe is the greatness of this country, for all its flaws, then I wouldn't have felt as comfortable staying at the church."[28]

Obama first denied that he had ever heard Pastor Wright's controversial comments before.[29] The Illinois Senator later admitted, "Did I ever hear him make remarks that could be considered controversial while I sat in church? Yes."[30] Obama said the remarks had come to his attention at the beginning of his presidential campaign but contended that because Wright was on the verge of retirement, and because of Obama's strong links to Trinity, he had not thought it appropriate to leave the church.[31] He began distancing himself from Wright when he called his pastor the night before the February 2007 announcement of Obama's presidential candidacy to withdraw his request that Wright deliver an invocation at the event. A spokesperson later said, "Senator Obama is proud of his pastor and his church, but... decided to avoid having statements and beliefs being used out of context and forcing the entire church to defend itself."[32] Wright attended the announcement, prayed with Obama beforehand, and in December 2007 Obama

named him to the African American Religious Leadership Committee of his campaign.[33][34] The Obama campaign released Wright after the controversy.[35][36][37][38]

Many critics found this response inadequate; Mark Steyn, writing in the conservative publication *National Review*, stated: "Reverend Wright['s] appeals to racial bitterness are supposed to be everything President Obama will transcend. Right now, it sounds more like the same-old same-old."[39]

On March 18, in the wake of the controversy, Obama delivered a speech entitled "A More Perfect Union" at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. During the course of the 37-minute speech, Obama spoke of the divisions formed through generations through slavery, segregation, and Jim Crow laws, and the reasons for the kinds of discussions and rhetoric used among blacks and whites in their own communities. While condemning the remarks by the pastor, he sought to place them in historical context by describing some of the key events that have formed Wright's views on race-related matters in America. Obama did not disown Wright, whom he has labeled as "an old uncle", as akin to disowning the black community or disowning his white grandmother, Madelyn Dunham.[40] The speech was generally well received.[41] Obama said that some of the comments by his pastor reminded him of what he called America's "tragic history when it comes to race."[42] Stanley Kurtz, writing an opinion piece in a *National Review* cover story on Wright, said, "Nearly every sermon Wright preaches, as well as his now-infamous bulletins and church magazines, is filled with his radicalism, and it's therefore impossible not to conclude that Obama was broadly attracted to Wright's politics."[43]

Other Presidential candidates

In an interview with the editorial board of the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* on March 25, 2008, Hillary Clinton commented on Obama's attendance at Trinity United Church of Christ, stating, "You don't choose your family, but you choose what church you want to attend." Later the same day, during a press conference, Clinton spoke on her personal preference in a pastor: "I think given all we have heard and seen, [Wright] would not have been my pastor." A spokesperson for the Obama campaign asserted that Clinton's comments were part of a "transparent effort to distract attention away from the story she made up about dodging sniper fire in Bosnia" the prior week.[44] Weeks later during the Pennsylvania debate in Philadelphia, Clinton said, "For Pastor

Wright to have given his first sermon after 9/11 and to have blamed the United States for the attack, which happened in my city of New York, would have been just intolerable for me."[45] Future Republican nominee John McCain defended Obama when it came to allegations of guilt by association, saying, "I think that when people support you, it doesn't mean that you support everything they say. Obviously, those words and those statements are statements that none of us would associate ourselves with, and I don't believe that Senator Obama would support any of those, as well."[46]

Government officials

Vice President Dick Cheney weighed in on the Wright matter on April 10, 2008. He appeared on Sean Hannity's radio show and said, "I thought some of the things he said were absolutely appalling... I haven't gotten into the business of trying to judge how Sen. Obama dealt with it, or didn't deal with it, but I think, like most Americans, I was stunned at what the reverend was preaching in his church and then putting up on his Web site."[47]

Lawrence Korb, Director of National Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and former assistant Secretary of Defense in the administration of Ronald Reagan defended Wright's military service, stating, "We've seen on television, in a seemingly endless loop, sound bites of a select few of Rev. Wright's many sermons. Some of the Wright's comments are inexcusable and inappropriate and should be condemned, but in calling him 'unpatriotic,' let us not forget that this is a man who gave up six of the most productive years of his life to serve his country... he has demonstrated his patriotism."[48]

Media

Commentators and pundits

Conservative radio talk show and television host Sean Hannity expressed shock and anger when hearing the comments, saying, "First of all, I will not let up on this issue. If his pastor went to Libya, Tripoli with Louis Farrakhan, a virulent, anti-Semitic racist, his church gave a lifetime achievement award to Louis Farrakhan. That's been Barack Obama's pastor for 20 years. And we will continue to expose this until somebody in the mainstream media has the courage to take this on."[49]

Salon.com editor-in-chief Joan Walsh wrote, "the whole idea that Wright has been attacked over 'sound bites,' and if Americans saw his entire sermons, in context, they'd feel differently, now seems ludicrous. The long clips Moyers played only confirm what was broadcast in the

snippets..." and notes, "My conclusion Friday night was bolstered by new tapes of Wright that came out this weekend, including one that captures him saying the Iraq war is 'the same thing al-Qaida is doing under a different color flag,' and a much longer excerpt from the 'God damn America' sermon that denounces 'Condoskeezer Rice...'".[50]

Fox News' Bill O'Reilly said of Wright, "In my opinion, Rev. Jeremiah Wright is not an honest man. He preaches anti-white and anti-American rhetoric, all the while making money off it."[51]

Democratic strategist Flavia Colgan asserted that Obama was not always in church and that the several minutes of soundbites continually played by the media do not equate to twenty years. Colgan also argued that had the media been able to find additional controversial statements beyond the ones they played, they would have played them as well.[52][*verification needed*]

Cultural critic Kelefa Sanneh traced Wright's theology and rhetoric back to Frederick Douglass, analyzing his 1854 reference to antebellum US Christians as "bad, corrupt, and wicked."[53] Noting that "many observers argue that Wright's sermons convey a more complex message than simple sound bites can express," the Chicago Tribune published lengthy excerpts in an article, "Rev. Jeremiah Wright's words: Sound bite vs. sermon excerpt".[54]

Economist and social commentator Thomas Sowell wrote that there was "no way that [Obama] didn't know about Jeremiah Wright's anti-American and racist diatribes from the pulpit." He wrote that Obama was "no ordinary member" of the church, having once donated $20,000 to it, and that Obama's speech was "like the Soviet show trials during their 1930s purges", intended only to convince supporters.[55]

Commentary on media coverage

The controversy sparked continuous media coverage, on both national media outlets and local sources. More than 3,000 news stories had been written on the issue by early April.[56]

Wright's church, Trinity United Church of Christ, criticized the media coverage of his past sermons, saying in a statement that Wright's "character is being assassinated in the public sphere.... It is an indictment on Dr. Wright's ministerial legacy to present his global ministry within a 15- or 30-second sound bite."[57]

Lara Cohen, news director at the *Us Weekly*, noted that her publication "has been accused of distracting people from the 'Important Issues'" because of its focus on Supermarket tabloid concerns, and said that mainstream media "talking heads love to tut-tut about how attention to celebrity gossip is causing the great dumbing-down of American society." She charged that, in

light of the sensationalized coverage about Wright, mainstream media outlets no longer had grounds to make these criticisms of *Us Weekly*, and turned the charge back upon the mainstream media. Cohen state, "The true hallmark of sensationalized journalism is ginning up controversy to drive sales, and for the mainstream news media Wright was a tailor-made tabloid icon. With newspaper sales at record lows, network news ratings tanking and 24-hour news channels desperate to fill up all 24 hours, Wright's outbursts were the mainstream media's equivalent of Tom Cruise jumping on Oprah's couch—a train wreck no one could turn away from. And so they milked it, regardless of the impact on the very race they were supposedly covering objectively."[58]

Republican commentator and former National Security Council staff member Lt. Col. Oliver North (whom Wright mentioned in his controversial comments) said of the controversy's media coverage, "Rather than serving up more blather about Jeremiah Wright, editors, producers and program directors would better serve us all by sending their commentators and correspondents out to cover those who have volunteered to serve in our military."[59]

Stephen Colbert satirized what he portrayed as the media's obsession with the Wright story.[60] Jon Stewart similarly made fun of the media's obsession with Wright, calling it their "Festival of Wrights" and the "Reverending Story."[61][62]

Investigative journalist Robert Parry contrasted the mainstream media's attention to Wright with its almost total silence on the topic of South Korean religious leader Sun Myung Moon and his relationship with the Republican Party and especially the Bush family.[63]

Trinity United Church of Christ members

Lisa Miller in *Newsweek* reported that, before the political controversy erupted, "Trinity was already in the throes of a difficult generational transition." After the period of Wright's speaking engagements before national audiences, Miller describes how "the reaction was anguish and anger" among church members and that three basic factions developed among them: those who wished Wright would not speak anymore, those who believed in what he said, and those who just wished the whole controversy would go away.[64]

- ❖ **Academia**
- ❖ Many academics commented on Wright, black theology, and the concomitant political controversy within a broader context of American history and culture.

- In 2004, prior to the Wright controversy, Anthony E. Cook, a professor of law at Georgetown University, provided a detailed comparative analysis of sermons delivered after 9-11 by Jerry Falwell, T.D. Jakes and Jeremiah Wright. Cook noted that the overall intent of Falwell's and Jakes's sermons was to use the Christian religion as a justification for the War on Terror, while Wright's overall intent was to side against war and to get listeners to engage in introspection about their daily behavior and relationship with God.[65]

- After the political controversy erupted, Georgetown University sociology professor Michael Eric Dyson stated, "Patriotism is the affirmation of one's country in light of its best values, including the attempt to correct it when it's in error. Wright's words are the tough love of a war-tested patriot speaking his mind."[66] J. Kameron Carter, associate professor of theology and black church studies at Duke Divinity School, stated that Wright "voiced in his sermons a pain that must be interpreted inside of the tradition of black prophetic Christianity."[67]

- Martin E. Marty, an emeritus professor of religious history,[68] criticized reporters' "naiveté" about the civil rights movement[69] He placed Wright's comments in context of his church: "For Trinity, being 'unashamedly black' does not mean being 'anti-white', and noted that black shame was a debilitating legacy of slavery and segregation in society and church. Marty also argued that Trinity's Africentrism "should not be more offensive than that synagogues should be 'Judeo-centric' or that Chicago's Irish parishes be 'Celtic-centric'."[70]

- Bill J. Leonard, Dean of the divinity school and professor of church history at Wake Forest University, argued that Wright "was standing and speaking out of the jeremiad tradition or preaching in the U.S.," which he said "dates back to the Puritans" and that both "black and white ministers have used since the 1600s in this country." Leonard explains that the jeremiad tradition dealt with woe and promise and moral failure not only in the church but in the nation."[5] James B. Bennett of Santa Clara University, says Martin Luther King, Jr. shared similar feelings with Wright concerning some U.S. activities, quoting King as saying, "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today — my own government," and that "America was founded on genocide, and a nation that is founded on genocide is destructive."[71][72]

- ❖ Stephan Thernstrom[73], Winthrop professor of history at Harvard, and Abigail Thernstrom, political scientist and the vice chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights wrote that "[Wright] contended that blacks and whites had completely different brain structures, one left-dominant, the other right-dominant. This is nothing more than an updated version of the pseudo-science once used to defend segregation in the Jim Crow South," and "clearly, Rev. Wright does not speak for mainstream black churches — and he has done them a gross disservice by claiming to do so."[74] Former Harvard lecturer Martin Peretz concurred, endorsing the article and saying that it "puts Trinity into its proper place in relation to other black churches and shows how different it is from them."[75]

Subsequent Jeremiah Wright appearances

The Rev. Jeremiah Wright publicly discussed the controversy in depth in an hour-long interview with Bill Moyers on April 25, 2008.[76] This included longer clips of his sermons, along with his explanations of what he was saying. There were also clips of his ministry and parishioners at various points in time since he became pastor in 1972, in an attempt to show what Trinity stands for and has accomplished. Wright stated that his comments were "taken out of context"[77] and that "the persons who have heard the entire sermon understand the communication perfectly."[77] He went on to say: "When something is taken like a sound bite for a political purpose and put constantly over and over again, looped in the face of the public, that's not a failure to communicate. Those who are doing that are communicating exactly what they want to do, which is to paint me as some sort of fanatic or as the learned journalist from the *New York Times* called me, a 'wackadoodle'...[78] The message that is being communicated by the soundbites is exactly what those pushing those sound bites *want* to communicate."[77] Conservative pundits and PBS's ombudsman criticized Moyers for being too gentle on Wright.[79]

On April 27, Wright gave a keynote address at a fundraising dinner for the Detroit-chapter of the NAACP. In front of nearly 10,000, he discussed the controversy, saying, "I am not running for the Oval Office," referring to what he perceived as Republican attempts to make the controversy part of the campaign. Earlier that day, he delivered a sermon to 4000 at the Friendship-West Baptist Church in Dallas.[80] On April 28, he spoke to the National Press Club, where he discussed the Black church.[81]

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In his speech to the NAACP, Wright speculated that, "Africans have a different meter, and Africans have a different tonality. Europeans have seven tones, Africans have five. White people clap differently than black people. Africans and African-Americans are right-brained, subject-oriented in their learning style. They have a different way of learning."[82] The comments were labeled as racist,[83] and likened to eugenics.[84] This initiated a revival of the controversy, which had been slowly waning.

Former aide to President Ronald Reagan David Gergen called Wright's speaking tour "the dumbest, most selfish, most narcissistic thing I've seen in 40 years of covering politics."[85] Libertarian commentator Andrew Sullivan said Wright's comments on the tour were a "calculated, ugly, repulsive, vile display of arrogance, egotism, and self-regard."[86] Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich characterized Wright's speaking tour as an attempt to deliberately hurt Obama, and stated that Wright's sense of self-importance appeared to be his motivation.[87] Columnist Bob Herbert of *The New York Times* also suggested that Wright was being a "narcissist" and trying to "wreck" Obama's campaign.[88]

Obama's response

Obama attempted to further distance himself from Wright, as he expressed outrage and shock at a press conference on April 29:

> "I am outraged by the comments that were made and saddened by the spectacle that we saw yesterday... The person that I saw yesterday was not the person that I met 20 years ago. His comments were not only divisive and destructive, but I believe that they end up giving comfort to those who prey on hate, and I believe that they do not portray accurately the perspective of the black church. They certainly don't portray accurately my values and beliefs. And if Reverend Wright thinks that that's political posturing, as he put it, then he doesn't know me very well. And based on his remarks yesterday, well, I may not know him as well as I thought either.... What became clear to me is that he was presenting a world view that contradicts who I am and what I stand for, and what I think particularly angered me was his suggestion somehow that my previous denunciation of his remarks were somehow political posturing. Anybody who knows me and anybody who knows what I'm about knows that I am about trying to bridge gaps and I see the commonality in all people. ...[A]fter seeing Reverend Wright's performance, I felt as if there was a complete disregard for what the American people are going through and the

need for them to rally together to solve these problems. ...[W]hatever relationship I had with Reverend Wright has changed, as a consequence of this."[89][90]

Reaction

Obama's second statement on the controversy elicited a range of responses. Noam Scheiber of the New Republic, wrote, "I thought Obama put the distance he needed to between himself and Wright just now...The other lingering question is whether people will wonder all over again how Obama could have been friends with this guy for 20 years. It's a legitimate concern, but if it didn't weigh him down too much after the Philadelphia speech in March, I wouldn't expect it to do him in this time. Wright's "performance" yesterday struck me as new and brazen enough to warrant a different reaction than Obama would have had in the past."[91] Victor Davis Hanson wrote, "Obama, by what he wrote in his memoirs, by what he said when he spoke in his early campaign speeches, by his frequent praise of Wright, and by his 20-year presence in front of, and subsidies to, Wright knew exactly the racist and anti-American nature of his odious pastor."[92] American linguist and social commentator John McWhorter wrote, "now that the Reverend Wright has gone on tour and given us full doses of these professionally alienated postures from another time, it is good to see that Mr. Obama has had the courage to decisively break with him. Sad, too — the man was his pastor, after all. But here is one more way that Mr. Obama is learning what hardball really is."[93]

Obama leaves Trinity United Church of Christ

On May 31, 2008, Barack and Michelle Obama announced that they had withdrawn their membership in Trinity United Church of Christ, where Wright had previously served as senior pastor, stating that "Our relations with Trinity have been strained by the divisive statements of Reverend Wright, which sharply conflict with our own views".[6][94]

Opinion polling

In mid-March, a Rasmussen Reports national telephone poll of voters found that just 8% had a favorable opinion of Jeremiah Wright,[95] while 58% had an unfavorable view. 73% of voters believed that Wright's comments were divisive, while 29% of African-Americans said Wright's comments made them more likely to support Obama.[*citation needed*] 66% of those polled had read, seen, or heard news stories about Wright's comments.[95]

During these events, Clinton briefly took the lead in the Gallup national tracking poll, ahead of Obama by 7 points on March 18. By March 20, Clinton's lead decreased to 2 points, a

statistically insignificant amount. The same day, John McCain took a 3 point lead over both Democratic candidates in hypothetical General Election match ups, with a 2 point margin of error.[96] By March 22, Obama had regained his lead over Clinton and was up by 3 points.[97] The editor-in-chief of the Gallup Poll said that the effect of the controversy "died after a couple of days".[98]

A CBS poll taken from March 15 to March 17 found that sixty-five percent of registered voters said it made no difference in their view of Obama, while thirty percent said it made them have a less favorable view.[99]

At the end of March 2008, as over 40 states had already held their Democratic primary processes, Barack Obama built on his national Gallup daily tracking poll results to become the first candidate to open a double-digit lead since Super Tuesday, when his competitor Hillary Clinton had a similar margin. On March 30 the poll showed Obama at 52% and Clinton at 42%. The Rassmussen Reports poll, taken during the same time frame, showed an Obama advantage of five points.[100] These polls followed weeks of heavy campaigning and heated rhetoric from both camps, and another late-March poll found Obama maintaining his positive rating and limiting his negative rating, better than his chief rival Clinton, even considering Obama's involvement in controversy during the period. The NBC News and Wall Street Journal poll showed Obama losing two points of positive rating and gaining four points of negative rating, while Clinton lost eight points of positive rating and gained five points of negative rating.[101] Following the revival of the controversy surrounding Wright in late April 2008, several polls showed that Obama's image among voters had suffered.[102] According to a poll taken by the Gallup Organization, Obama's nationwide favorable rating dropped from 50% to 45% while his challenger for the nomination, Hillary Clinton's, rating rose to 49%.[102] In this poll, McCain edged Obama by four percentage points in general election match ups, while Clinton was tied with McCain.[102] As of May 5, a Gallup poll of Democratic and Democratic-leaning voters showed Obama with a 5% lead over Clinton for the Democratic nomination.[103]

In poll data released 3 May 2008 from the *New York Times* and *CBS News*, Obama's favorable/unfavorable rating among white Democrats remained the same from last summer. During the same period, Hillary Clinton's unfavorable rating among black Democrats increased by 36 percentage points. The *Times* theorized that the opinion shift among blacks was due to tactics of the Clinton campaign labelled 'racially tinged' by many vocal elements within the

media, including the alleged 'amplifying' by Hillary Clinton of the Wright affair at numerous times.[104]

Comparisons with other candidates

Several commentators have drawn comparisons between the media's treatment of Barack Obama and Jeremiah Wright with the treatment of political candidates who ally themselves with white religious leaders who have made controversial statements.[105][106][107][108] These critics said that John McCain actively sought the recommendation of John Hagee, who has been criticized for anti-Catholic and anti-Muslim statements and has described Hurricane Katrina as "the judgment of God on the city of New Orleans" for the city's "level of sin" (specifically a planned gay pride march).[105][106][107][108][109][110] E. J. Dionne of the *Washington Post* contended that white religious leaders who make controversial statements often maintain their political influence. He specifically mentioned the remarks of Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, who agreed that gays, feminists and liberals shared the blame for the 9/11 attacks, but faced no calls for denunciation by politicians with whom they had relationships.[105][107][110] Frank Rich of the *New York Times* wrote that Rudy Giuliani's relationship with Monsignor Alan Placa had gained little media attention.[108] (Placa is a longtime friend of Giuliani and performed his second wedding; Giuliani hired him to work in his consulting firm after Placa was barred from his priestly duties due to sexual abuse allegations.[108][111]) Conservative commentator John Podhoretz said that the comparison of Wright with Hagee was "entirely specious", because Obama had a longstanding relationship with Wright and McCain has no personal relationship with Hagee.[112] Dionne and Rich acknowledged this point, but also suggested that a double standard exists for white religious leaders and black religious leaders.[107][108]

Footnotes

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[i] I have decided to capitalize White and Black upon the guidance of Barry Brummett in *Rhetorical Dimensions of Popular Culture*. "When we refer to people of European extraction, there is no question but that we will capitalize designations of their origins such as English, Polish, or Czech. We have a sense that those descriptors denote the cultural identity of the people involved. History has robbed some residents of the United States of an ability to identify themselves as being Hausa, Ibo, or other heritage. To identify them as African is as inappropriately general as identifying a person whose cultural heritage is Polish as merely European. An appropriate term to name a vital cultural heritage that has evolved in this country is therefore *Black*, as a cultural marker, rather than merely *black*, as a racial marker. Correspondingly, since I am referring to the shared cultural experiences of Caucasians in this country, regardless of diversity within that cultural group, I maintain symmetry by using the capitalized term *White*" (1991, pp. xxiii-xxiv).

[ii] Wikipedia does pose a problem for those who want to cite their entries due to website's ephemeral nature. If I am to analyze the entries as artifacts, I must provide the texts for my readers to ensure they are able to refer to the same text used in the analysis. Thus, to circumvent this problem, I have provided the full Wikipedia entries I use in my analysis in appendix A. The purpose of using Wikipedia entries as texts is to shed light on the popular perceptions Wikipedia reflects, which includes sources cited in the entry. These sources are an aspect of the meaning managed by the entry, but also function as guides for the critic to explore the context further. Wikipedia narrows the vast number of texts available about the controversy, which guides the critic towards a more general media environment available to an agent constructing mosaics. I did not just use the entries, but also went directly to many of the sources cited. This poses a problem because I may use parts of the source not cited in the actual entry, yet still need to indicate the source was found because of Wikipedia. I need to be able to indicate a source I am citing For the sake of transparency and clarity, I have decided if I am referring to the text of a source cited in the Wikipedia entry, but what I am citing may not actually be in the entry, I will cite the source itself but also include the source's reference number that indicates the footnote number of the source. For example, (Brachear, 2007, para 37, #7), which means it is footnote number 7 of the Wikipedia entry. When I am quoting the Wikipedia entry, I will leave in the bracketed numbers, which indicate the footnote with the source citation. Readers may look to appendix A for the list of footnotes for further information.

[iii] Or gas. It would probably be more accurate to admit it was likely a combination of the soaring sense of brilliance that I experienced in the rhetorical transaction and my diet. [∞] if Jon Stewart gets to refuse his credibility by insisting he is "just a comedian," I reserve the right to refuse the formality of a masters thesis by making fart jokes in my endnotes.