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Barack Obama's Identity Construction and International Media Representations During The 2008 Presidential Election: A Discursive and Comparative Framing Analysis

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BARACK OBAMA'S IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND INTERNATIONAL

MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS DURING THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION:

A DISCURSIVE AND COMPARATIVE FRAMING ANALYSIS

by

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When Barack Hussein Obama was elected the first black president of the prestigious *Harvard Law Review* in 1990, *The New York Times* published a "first black" headline (*The New York Times*, 1990). Obama's election was impossible to ignore as he had brought down a major racial barrier in what was, at the time, the journal's 104-year history. In 2008, Obama once again turned history on its head with his election as America's first black president. While some refer to his complex, mixed-race identity and lack of deep political connection to the traditional African American community as his "racelessness" (Bonilla-Silva, 2008), others denote it as a "distinctive personal history" (Harvard Law School, 2008). To be sure, this stemmed mainly from his bi-racial parentage: son of a Luo (an African people group) from Kogelo in the Nyanza province of Kenya, and a white woman from Kansas. If ever a U.S. president bore any significant links to black Africa, it would be Barack Obama. More than any other election, the 2008 race included narratives on Africa in ways rarely seen in American presidential politics, and in the American media.

The purpose of this dissertation is to critically examine (a) how Barack Hussein Obama discursively constructed his African identity within the framework of his campaign for the presidency of the United States in the 2008 elections, and (b) how a select group of newspapers from three different continents refracted this narrative. In this dissertation the term refraction means the reflection or re-presentation of Obama's Africanity. Previous studies have examined the role of race in the 2008 elections, but the literature is lacking on exploring how Africanity or African identity featured in the race. There also is a lack of research on how Obama's African identity is deployed in his own texts and how the media refracted this aspect of his identity. This dissertation hopes to fill this gap in media, political and communications research. It argues that in order to holistically understand Obama's multifaceted identity, it is important to consider the

Africocentric component of his identity as well. Although Obama ran twice for president, this dissertation focuses solely on the first campaign (the 2008 election) because of the novelty, unprecedented and path-breaking nature of the race and Obama's triumph as the first African American president at the time.

<p style="text-align:center">Obama's American Political Safari</p>

After graduating from Harvard Law School, Obama worked as a civil rights lawyer and taught at the University of Chicago Law School. He later ran and won a seat in the Illinois State Senate in 1996, where he worked on bi-partisan legislation on early childhood, ethics and healthcare. In 2004, after prevailing in the primaries, Obama won a seat in the U.S. Senate, making him the fifth African American to serve in the U.S. Senate, and the third to be popularly elected (Asante, 2007; Obama, 2006). Obama burst onto the national political scene during the 2004 Democratic Convention where he was invited to give the keynote address. This speech shot Barack Obama to political stardom as he addressed issues of race, political tolerance and unity. A few years later, even before he launched his campaign for the Democratic nomination for president of the United States, TIME magazine's Joe Klein wrote: "He has the charisma and ambition to become president" (Klein, 2006). Klein's premonitions were confirmed in 2008 when Obama became America's 44th president. In doing so, the man who had taken down racial barriers in Harvard almost two decades earlier, once again made national history by becoming the first African-American president of the United States. On the day of his election, *The New York Times* declared that Obama's triumph had erased the "last racial barrier in American politics" (*The New York Times*, 2008).

For a country which had at its birth counted blacks as "three-fifths" of a person, as part of a political compromise between the fractious states of the North and South, (United States Constitution, 1854), Obama's electoral success in 2008 was an event of monumental historical significance. Under this "Three-Fifths Compromise" reached during the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention of 1787, between the Southern slave

states and Northern free states, for purposes of distribution of taxes and the apportionment of the members of the United States House of Representatives, three-fifths of the population of slaves, who were essentially the property of their masters, would be counted. It would take the fratricidal Civil War (1861-1865) and a major constitutional revision—the promulgation of the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868—to repeal the "three-fifths compromise" by setting forth principles of equality and citizenship for black people under the law (Goldwin & Kaufman, 1988; Heritage, 2012; Rothenberg, 1998). However, the existence of such a clause in the U.S. Constitution at the time underscores the scope of racial dehumanization primarily anchored by slavery.

Since European settlers first set foot in North America, race has been a major feature of American society. Indeed, it has been suggested by Omi and Howard (1994) that American civilization has been "shaped, and indeed haunted, by race" (p. 55). In historical terms, Bell (1980) writes that "America is a white country and blacks, particularly blacks as a group, were not entitled to the concern, resources, or even empathy that would be extended to whites similarly situated" (p. 2). So intrinsic were the racial divisions of American society that Niebuhr (1932) stated : "However large the number of individual white men who do and will identify themselves completely with the Negro cause, the white race in America will not admit the Negro to equal rights if it is not forced to do so" (pp. 252-253).

According to other scholars, racial discrimination was seen more as a means to development than an end in itself (Elshtain, 1992; Reed, 2005; Robinson, 2003; Patterson, 2009). This was epitomized by the American Civil War (1861-1865) in which the Confederacy) (Southern states) reconciled itself with slavery—which was a predominant issue of the conflict— through the "just war" concept; a term that offers religious, economic, moral and philosophical justification for war (BBC, 2003; Gutman & Rief, 1999). The "just war" justification of Western slavery was sanctioned by Pope Eugene IV who proclaimed in 1442 that enslaving Africans had the blessing of a crusade

if the aim of slavery was to convert the Africans to Christianity (Eko, 2006; Luban, 1980; Russell, 1975). In broad terms, the use of slave labor was later perceived as patently intertwined with the quest for economic primacy. The concept supports the idea that "…some men by their virtue, equated with justice, deserved to extend their rule over less worthy men…" (Russell, 1975, p. 4). Alexis de Tocqueville (1835) recognized that the origins of prejudice in America could be traced to slavery. Tocqueville who wrote extensively on equality and democracy in America stated that:

> The first who attracts the eye, the first in enlightenment, in power and in happiness, is the white man, the European, man par excellence; below him appear the Negro and the Indian. These two unfortunate races have neither birth, nor face, nor language, nor mores in common; only their misfortunes look alike. Both occupy an equally inferior position in the country that they inhabit; both experience the effects of tyranny; and if their miseries are different, they can accuse the same author for them. (p. 433)

Furthermore, scholars have always linked American racial discrimination to secular European philosophies such as eugenics, which encompassed the "social uses to which knowledge of heredity could be put in order to achieve better breeding" (Seldon, 1999, p. 1). It was a movement whose goal was to ensure the "purity" of the human race by advancing breeding among certain "fit" groups by encouraging their reproduction (Adam, 1990; Agar, 2011; Haller, 1963; Kelves, 1985). Additionally, it has been established that in general, American racial ideology is grounded in negative Western attitudes towards Africa (Asante, 2002, 2003, 2007; Eko, 2010; Mudimbe, 1988; Soyinka-Airewele & Edozie, 2010).

Within the United States, as Cooper (1978) rightly points that, issues pertaining to race have historically assumed political dimensions with the Democratic party at the time particularly those in the South (around the 1850s and even before) supporting segregation and discriminatory laws such as the Sectional and Racialization platform of 1904. During this same time period, the Republican Party on the other hand, opposed segregation by adopting documents such as "Rights of the Negro" in 1908 (Frederickson, 1988, 2002; Poliakov, 1974; Wilson, 1996). Clearly racial politics has a long history in the United

States, suggesting that the issue has been an enduring, formidable and complex phenomenon that has characterized the reality of American political and social life.

Basically the idea of racial inferiority and the enduring concept of "othering" in the United States are to a large extent based on the notion of color (Frederickson, 1988; Myrdal, 1944; Snowden, 1983; Park, 1950; Winant, 2000). Further, subjugation of African slaves and their descendants on the basis of their race was promoted through the one-drop rule, which worked as a power dynamic to perpetuate black segregation through the enactment of miscegenation laws. The one-drop rule was used to refer to any individual with a trace of African ancestry or any person with a "single drop" of black blood (Frederickson, 1988; Fluehr-Lobban, 2006; Gilroy, 1991; Malcomson, 2000). The racial definition of African Americans has been shaped by the one-drop rule and racial segregation laws which functioned as a way of entrenching White superiority and assigning blacks to a lower socio-politico-economic status (Montagu, 1997; Myrdal, 1944; Reich, 1981; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997). In retrospect the one-drop rule and other discriminatory laws have historically shaped the black experience in America.

Omi and Howard (1994) referred to such hegemonic undercurrents between blacks and whites as "racial dictatorship." According to them it is important to "recognize that racial discrimination is the norm against which all U.S. politics must be measured" (Omi & Howard, 1994, p. 65). In short, the United States has a long history of institutionalized racism which Jackson et al. (1998) defined as "intentional acts that draw unfair or injurious distinctions, that are based solely on ethnic or racial basis and that have effects favorable to in-groups and negative to out-groups" (p. 110).

From this vantage point, Barack Obama's election as the first African American or bi-racial president of the United States was as historical as it could get. More than any other election or event in contemporary American history, Obama's election captured both national and global attention. In Africa, where Obama has direct ethnic ancestry, his election sparked jubilation across the continent. Kenyan president, Mwai Kibaki (2008),

declared a national holiday saying, "Your victory is not only an inspiration to millions of people all over the world, but it has special resonance with us here in Kenya" (Kenyan National Assembly Hansard, p. 1). On the day of his inauguration, Kenyan MP Millie Odhiambo referred to Obama as "son of the soil." Deputy Kenyan National Assembly Speaker Maalim Farah in a statement echoed similar sentiments:

> Honorable members, as you may be aware, the people of the United States of America have just had a historic election where the son of this soil, Barack Hussein Obama, has been elected the 44th president of the United States of America and the first African-American president in the history of that country…please join me in registering and sending this House's congratulations to the President-elect Obama for overcoming great odds to emerge victorious.

Indeed, few U.S. presidential contests resonated with Africans as much as the elections of 2008. This was in significant part due to Obama's direct ethnic connection to the continent by virtue of his Kenyan father, Barack Obama, Sr. The overriding goal of this dissertation is to examine how Barack Obama discursively constructed his African identity and subsequent media representations thereof. The purpose of this dissertation is to peek behind the screen by investigating Obama's discourse on "Africanity" in his communicative texts and subsequent media representations from six different countries across the globe: Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

<div align="center">Purpose of the Study</div>

The main goal of this study is to explore Barack Obama's constructions and representations of his Africanity in his communicatory texts and to analyze select newspapers' framing of this theme in their coverage of the presidential election campaign of 2008. While past research has yielded knowledge on the role of race in American politics, as well as Obama's successful campaign strategies (Asante, 1999, 2002; Mazama, 2001; Strother-Jordan, 2002), to date there are few studies on Obama's discursive constructions of his Africanity in his speeches, books, and equally importantly, journalistic re-presentations of this theme. Guided by theories of media framing and

Asante's notion of Afrocentricity, the demarche of this dissertation is two-fold. First it focuses on how candidate Obama appropriated his ethnic heritage as a tool for political communication, and second it analyzes media refraction of this aspect of his identity among leading newspapers from six different countries. In this study, I examine identity narratives and predominant themes used in framing of Obama's Africanity.

Obama's campaign was a project of identity construction and dissemination. Identity has been defined by Castells (1997) as "the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or related set of cultural attributes, that is/are given priority over other sources of meaning" (p. 6). Hall (1996) posits that identity is constructed "on the back of recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation" (p. 3). In addition, identity has been theorized to be contextual, shifting and relational (Bonilla-Silva, 2004; Castells, 1997; Gans, 1979; Harris & Sim, 2002). According to Waters (1999), though identity is an "individual's concept of self" (p. 4), it is also impacted by social and cultural factors.

In the course of his political career, Barack Obama created an identity narrative that touched on his diverse multicultural background. For instance most of Obama's speeches are replete with references to his white mother, grandparents and his African American experience especially in the South Side of Chicago. However there is also ample talk about his African ethnicity, his Kenyan father who became an economist in post-independent Kenya, and his paternal grandfather who worked as a cook during the British colonial era. Though his father was physically absent when Obama was growing up, Obama speaks of the empowering influence of his father, Barack Senior, through his limited personal experiences with his absent father, the African continent, its cultures and his admitted sense of belonging felt through his Luo ancestry. It is no surprise therefore that many Africans call Obama their "son". In fact, when Obama eventually became

president and paid his first visit to Sub-Saharan Africa, the *Daily Graphic* of Ghana published a front page headline titled "Welcome home, son" (p. 1).

To critically analyze Obama's use of Africanity, this study will focus on his most relevant speeches. These include the 2004 Democratic Convention Keynote speech, A More Perfect Union ("Race" speech), Announcement for President speech, Selma speech, A World Stands As One ("Berlin" speech), 2008 Presidential Nomination Acceptance speech, 2008 NAACP speech, and Urban League speech (2008).

The media outlets studied include *ThisDay* (Nigeria), *Daily Nation* (Nairobi, Kenya), *Al-Ahram* (Egypt), *The New York Times* (United States), *The Times of London* (UK), and *Mail & Guardian* (South Africa). All these newspapers are noted papers of record in their respective countries. *ThisDay*, *Daily Nation*, *Al-Ahram* and *Mail & Guardian* are leading newspapers not just in their respective countries but on the African continent. The African newspapers are of relevance to this study not only for this reason but because they are published in countries which play a leading role in regional affairs. Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa are seen as two of Africa's strategically important countries while Kenya in addition to its status within the sub-region is the country of Obama's father. All the newspapers are published in English, are independently owned and were retrieved either through Lexis Nexis, Access World News or their online database. *The New York Times* and *The Times of London* are also prominent in their respective countries and have commonly been used for previous media research studies. *The New York Times* was included because it is a leading newspaper in the United States, while a newspaper from Britain was included because of the country's historical (colonial) connections to the United States and Africa as well as its status in world affairs.

<u>Significance and Contribution of the Study</u>

This research will discursively analyze Obama's communicative texts and subsequent media-representations from a comparative perspective. The 2008 election

marked an important historical moment in America due the election of America's first African American president. The examination of the selected artifacts will reveal "not only surface or manifest meanings of the text, but with the often intricate ways in which these meanings are put together, they aim to examine the twists and turns through which data are shaped and look for patterns" (Tonkiss, p. 256). By examining texts, this study will identify themes that Obama used to frame his identity and subsequent refractions by the media through a systematic analysis of campaign materials and media texts.

Since identity has been theorized as shifting and contextual, this study will reveal how Obama constructed his identity during the electoral campaign of 2008. According to Davis (1991), "each of us performs a repertoire of identities that are constantly shifting, and that we negotiate and renegotiate according to the circumstances. In other words identity is not a "zero-sum game" (p. 24). Thus, this investigation will help us construe how Obama's speeches reflected his individual conception of self, and concomitant media re-presentations of such identitarian narratives at this particular moment in his story. While a great deal of discourse has ensued about the political significance of Obama's election and attendant racial implications for American politics and society, a major contribution of this study is that it will add to previous knowledge about Obama's identity construction by accounting for his African ethnicity, its amplifications by the American and international media, and as evidence of his cross-cutting global appeal. Engaging in such a discursive analysis has enduring practical and academic usefulness because it will enhance our understanding of how Obama constructed his persona and how it was reported in the media.

People's words greatly inform us about themselves and their identity. Media reports also inform us about the social construction and representation of various aspects of a person's identity and image. This dissertation is relevant because it analyzes Obama's Africanity—an area which the literature rarely addresses. The value of doing this does not only lie in understanding Obama's life story and identity. By examining

media texts from Africa and other parts of the world, the research pays attention to news institutions which are seldom studied. In addition, a comparative analysis of texts can enable us to glean the cross-national framing of Obama while essentializing the social and historical contexts and conditions that govern the emergence of frames.

<div align="center">Theoretical Framework</div>

This study is underpinned by two dominant theoretical frameworks: (a) media framing and (b) Afrocentricity. In order to address how Obama constructed his identity and how media from a variety of countries re-presented this identity in their reporting, the concept of framing will be drawn upon. Media framing refers to how "issues are defined, identities created and issue narratives are produced" (Gurevitch & Levy, 1985, p. 4). The concept also refers to how politicians, interest groups and the media seek to amplify certain issues and background others. According to Entman's much-cited definition, to frame "is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and /or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Frames are therefore those aspects of texts that are selected, included, emphasized or excluded (Gitlin, 1980). The theory of framing is important for this study because it offers critical ways to (a) examine messages, (b) observe patterns and identify themes, (c) investigate how frames are constructed, (d) and analyze the underlying meanings of these frames (D'Angelo, 2002; Scheufele, 1999; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Afrocentricity denotes the centrality of the black race, culture and ethnicity as a symbol of both individual and group identity (Asante, 1991, 2002; Badejo, 1992; Bankole, 2006; Banks, Hogue, & Terri, 1996; Belgrave, 2000). The significance of Afrocentricity or Afropolitanism is seen through its application to people of black decent irrespective of geographical location. According to Gikandi (2011), "…the idiom of Afropolitanism embraces movement across time and space as the condition of possibility

of an African way of being" (p. 10). Makokha (2011) seems to confirm this perspective as he writes that Afropolitanism is particularly applicable to "Africans or the children of Africans who moved to the West…for various reasons" (p. 16) particularly the post-independence period which saw the migration of thousands of Africans to Europe and the United States for higher education. While many of these Africans returned to their home countries after their education, a good number remained as professionals that formed groups that are distinct from African Americans and peoples of African descent from the Caribbean. Most of these African immigrants are "new embodiments of inter-cultural or inter-racial unions between Africa and the rest of the world" (p. 16). Obama's birth within this time frame and his mixed racial and ethnic composition, which originates from his African and Caucasian parentage, clearly make the application of Afrocentricity or Afropolitanism relevant to this study.

<div align="center">Methodology</div>

Generally speaking this study employs textual analysis to investigate (a) Obama's speeches and books as well as the (b) international media re-presentations of Obama's ethnicity or Africanity. According to McKee (2003) "whenever we produce an interpretation of something's meaning—a book, TV program, film, magazine, T-shirt we treat it as a text" (p. 4).

The main form of textual analysis applied to this study is framing analysis. This frame analysis offers theoretical and methodological congruence to this study of media frames and re-presentations. This method has been utilized by previous framing scholars such as Pan and Kosicki (1993), Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad (1998), Gitlin (1980), Dimitrova and Connolly-Ahern (2007), Reber and Berger (2005), and Liu and Zhang (2005). Framing analysis pioneers Pan and Kosicki (1993) make the case for framing analysis as a way of examining media texts by positing that the method involves "a system of organized signifying elements that both indicate the advocacy of certain ideas and provide devices to encourage certain kinds of audience processing of texts" (p. 56).

This framing analytic approach is also applied to the analysis of Obama's speeches using a framing or speech protocol.

<center>Organization of the Study</center>

To capture Obama's discursive construction of his Africanity and its media representations, this dissertation is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter serves as an introduction that provides a brief overview, background, research purpose, goals and significance of the study. In the second chapter, I provide a detailed discussion on media framing, identity and Afropolitanism, serving as a precursor to the research questions that will be addressed. These two dominant theories provide us with the tools to conceptually ground Obama's conception of himself and media refractions of this construction, thereby focusing on his Afrocentric discourse. The third chapter discusses methodological strategies employed. To comprehensively discuss the use of Africanity in the texts under study, I employed a systematic framing analysis as my methodological technique. Chapters IV, V and VI present results from the analysis from the books, speeches, and newspapers, respectively. Specifically these chapters present the main findings of the study. Here I pay careful attention to the elements of Afrocentricity and the major frames prevalent in the books, speeches, and media artifacts used. Newspaper representations of frames and themes unearthed are further discussed in this chapter while Chapter VII serves as the conclusion to this dissertation. It brings all the evidence together in a conclusive manner that makes meaning and arrives at major conclusions.

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

<u>Media Framing</u>

The basic premise undergirding the framing theory is the idea that discourse whether by political actors or the media is constructed through selection, emphasis, labeling, and categorization through which information is presented to audiences. In the 1970s, Gregory Bateson offered one of the earliest and most useful conceptualizations of framing when he postulated that communication occurs within "frames," which perform several functions including providing context, signals, and identification, which help in the communication process. Bateson believed that frames provide a means through which language achieves an awareness of certain issues, and transmits cues and messages through what is implied, included or excluded. In this sense the concept of framing is valid for any form of discourse or text as well as media artifacts (Bateson, 1972). He writes that frames work because "by including certain messages within a frame, certain other messages are excluded...and by excluding certain messages certain others are included" (p. 187). This basic perspective of framing has roots in other fields such as anthropology but has been extended to the field of media and communication studies. In his study of patients with schizophrenia, Bateson postulated that such patients had difficulty with "framing" in the sense that they cannot tell where a picture frame ends and a wall paper begins (Bateson, 1972).

In general much of the scholarship on framing is diverse with some perceiving it as a way to make sense of and understand a complex world, issue or personality (Goffman, 1974), a "central organizing idea" used to comprehend messages (Gamson & Modigliani,1989, p. 2), a way to "organize everyday reality" (Tuchman, 1978, p. 193), a "social narrative" (Durham, 1998, p. 102), or as a means to "group, categories and thematize texts in order to get to the heart of issues being discussed and to make for easier understanding" (Reese, 2001, p. 7). Framing is an appropriate approach for

analyzing speeches, books and media reports because in Goffman's view, the concept is fundamentally about how experience or reality is organized and presented (Goffman, 1974).

As the concept gained prominence, scholars like Entman sought to grant it some theoretical congruence in the light of what he called a "scattered conceptualization" (p. 52). Entman's burden in the early 1990s was to formulate a "general statement of framing theory" in order to address increasingly divergent explications. According to Entman (1991), "frames highlight some bits of information about an item that is the subject of a communication, thereby elevating them in salience" (p. 53). In general the framing process involves the selection and illumination of certain aspects of an issue, personality or event through the use of key words, phrases or "devices" that emerge through themes. However in 2002, D'Angelo challenged the notion of a unified framing paradigm or a "general statement of framing theory" (Entman, 1993, p. 52) by setting forth what he called a "multiparadigmatic" framing research program. In what later became a seminal piece among framing scholars, he wrote that framing as a research program "encourages researchers to employ and refine many theories about the framing process under the guidance of distinct paradigmatic perspectives" (p. 871). The central thesis of his argument was that framing need not be construed from a singular or all-encompassing perspective. From D'Angelo's (2002), perspective framing constituted three separate paradigms: constructive, critical and cognitive.

Primarily, this research will be concerned with framing from a constructive perspective since it is interested in ascertaining how Obama constructed his African identity and how the media produced, constructed or re-presented this narrative. However, since these frames will be examined within a wider social and political context, the critical paradigm will also prove useful. The constructionist view of framing holds that the very nature of textual presentations, the way news is formulated, re-produced or re-presented constitutes the constructive view of framing. Here the media are seen as sites

where issues are portrayed, policies defined, identities created and reports constructed (Dimitrova & Lee, 2009; Durham 1998; Gurevitch & Levy, 1985; Mason, 2009). The very process of discourse, speech and news presentation is recognized as the constructionist approach to framing. Discourse, it is argued, is a key component of the construction of meaning and social reality. Here framing devices such as metaphors, catchphrases, visual images, moral appeals and other symbolic devices (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989) are seen as instruments through which framing takes place. Constructionism has to do with representations and discourses. For instance, based on the constructionist approach, Gamson and Modigliani (1989) investigated media discourse on nuclear power. They found that public support for nuclear power waned concomitantly with media coverage. The major elements that support a constructionist approach to framing include the quest for construction of meaning, interpretation and context. According to constructionists, symbolic devices help to organize discourse which privileges a particular image or angle over the other. This is based on the assumption that on almost any given issue or event, there are competing frames. When applied to Obama's candidacy one might identify "competing packages" or symbolic contests not just on the electoral level but over his very persona.

In this case, both Obama and the media played a mutually reinforcing role in the process of frame construction. This is done through various forms of discourse. Discourse is construed as occurring in various forms either through journalism, texts or speeches. Individual discourses and media texts are therefore crucial to constructionism because they serve as "[sites] on which various social groups, institutions, and ideologies struggle over the definition and construction of social reality" (Gurevitch & Levy, 1985, p. 19).

Generally, framing theory is relevant for this study because it offers important ways to (a) examine messages, (b) observe patterns and identify themes, (c) investigate how frames are constructed, (d) and analyze the underlying meanings of these frames (D'Angelo, 2002; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Scheufele, 1999; Scheufele &

Tewksbury, 2007). Frames are defined by "what they omit as well as include" (Entman, 1993, p. 54). Furthermore framing also involves how politicians, the media and interest groups "take an increasingly proactive approach to amplify their views of what an issue is about" (Pan & Kosicki,1993, p. 55). "Texts" are therefore central to framing because they serve as the major bodies of work that advocate certain elements of developing situations over others. In framing, texts and news articles are viewed as forms of discourse. Frames perform a variety of roles in any discourse. First they help people to "locate, perceive, identify and label" (Goffman, 1974, p. 21) identities and issues. Second, they help news producers to "process large amounts of information quickly and routinely and to package the information for effective relay to their audiences" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7). According to Reese (2001), framing helps to "group, categorize and thematize texts in order to get to the heart of issues being discussed and to make for easier understanding" (p. 7). Thus, frames help us to understand how people—including politicians—perceive themselves and understand the world, and how institutions such as the media help to shape our general understanding of the social world (Bryman, 1998).

Frames have four locations: "the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). This research will be concerned with the communicator as well as the textual and cultural aspects of framing locations. In the first location, Barack Obama is identified as the communicator. The texts for frame analysis in this project are located in newspaper reports as well as in Obama's books and relevant speeches, all of which perform a social shaping role through cues, symbols, themes and other framing mechanisms. Lastly the culture in which all these operate is important as it gives context. In other words, text is seen as operating within a context or culture that must be accounted for. Thus, the case for the importance of framing in this study begins with the notion that texts play a major role in political communication and media reportage. American journalistic discourse serves an important role in society by making issues available to the public in simple or easy-to-grasp manner. Framing thus involves

issues of salience selection, omission, inclusions and exclusions in order to promote a certain angle, or dimension of an issue, event or personality (Durham, 2007; Gitlin, 1980; Reese, 2001; Tuchman, 1978).

Media frames perform an organizational and definitional role through "selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration (Gitlin, 1980). Overall, a frame suggests what an issue is and heightens or attenuates the importance of one issue, argument or narrative over the other. Framing also contributes to the achievement of the following goals: (a) grouping and categorization of themes, (b) examining the conditions that influence the formulation of frames, (c) the priming and interaction of framing with audience knowledge, and (d) the shaping of issues, events and identities (D'Angelo, 2002). According to London (2003), a frame is "central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue" (p. 1). In this study framing refers to (a) ways in which communicators use texts to develop messages and identities within a socio-politico-cultural milieu using particularistic languages and symbols, and (b) the process whereby journalists present news messages through narratives, cues or themes to the public.

<div align="center">Identity</div>

Over the past several decades, much work has been done in the area of identity studies, within a wide range of academic fields. There is currently no single definition for the term. Broader explications on identity delineate a multiplicity of factors which shape the way an individual identifies himself including the media, culture, biology, gender, religion, and race, among others (Castells, 1997; Ivanic, 1998; Lawler, 2008; Miller, 1994; Noonan 1980, 1993; Tajfel, 1982). In setting forth a broad-based understanding of the concept, past scholars have postulated a variety of ways in which identity can be understood.

According to Castells (1997), "Identity is the people's source of meaning and experience" (p. 6) or the way in which individual or public actors "understand the process

of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute or set of related attributes that is/are given priority over other sources of meaning" (p. 6). McAdams (2003) perceives of identity as a self-regulatory mechanism that filters information and manages both internal and external presentations through impression management and behavioral selections. Marcia (1980) defines identity as structural presence of awareness composed of "an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history" (p. 158). For Erikson (1956), "identity…connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (self-sameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others" (p. 57). These theorizations of identity rest on the idea that identity is self-asserted and driven by recognition of the individual's agency. In a related sense, Markus and Nurius (1986) posit that identities are created through self-conceptions; that is, how a person sees or think of himself/herself. The preceding definitions indicate that the idea of a personal life story made up of self-definitions and self-characterizations is central to understanding one's identity.

Several scholars have also put forth other explications which suggest that identity is socially constructed (Appiah & Gates, 1995; Berger & Luckmann, 1996; Bloom, 1990; Booth, 1999; Brubaker & Cooper, 1999; Miller, 1994; Laitin, 1998). The literature on the social construction of identity points to the fact that in-group associations leads to a feeling of belonging and contribute to the creation of social identities. Here, identity is seen as a socially distinguishing feature that people take pride in. Strauss (1959) postulates that the social construction of identity is affected by contextual and historical antecedents. Hence, though there may be individual differences, group identity gives individuals an important sense of belonging and representation. The social construction of identity is rooted in sociological theories such as symbolic interactionism propounded by scholars such as Mead (1934) and Goffman (1959) who assert that the way people perceive of themselves or act is based on group actions, interaction and their concomitant interpretations. In this way, identity is seen as much as an individual's assertion of his

self-sameness as the inter-play between this personal agency and a variety of external

interactions, inter-personal relationships and communal engagements (Albert & Whetten,

1985; Ashforth & Mael, 1998; Hogg, 1987; Hogg & Abrams, 1999). According to

Rimskii (2010), "Identity is the state of the individual's consciousness in which, on the

basis of the aggregate set of personal characteristics, one knows oneself, one recognizes

the stability of one's own personality, one separates oneself from the surrounding reality,

and one determines one's membership in a particular social group and, conversely,

acknowledges the impossibility of belonging to other social groups" (p. 12). This view is

shared by Castells who writes that identity is a "group's collective story, but it also

becomes the story of individual members of the group or the story against which they

measure their own stories, fitting it or not" (p. 7). The social construction of identity as

applied to this research has to do with how the media as news institution constructed

Obama's Africanity.

In political contests such as the one Obama was involved in, group belongings can

either be beneficial or detrimental depending on audience perceptions. In other words an

individual's identity and identity construction process are important in identifying his

representational space within the political system. While this helps us understand an

individual's identity, it is also reflective of the peculiarities in the political or social

system in which candidates operate. Thus, identities illuminate both personal and social

attributes.

Previous research teaches us that identities are also fluid, dynamic and constantly

changing. Contemporary identity scholars such as Yurchisin, Watchraresringkan, and

McCabe (2005) perceive of identity as "endlessly created and re-created as individuals

engage in the continuous, dynamic process of cognitive negotiation and re-negotiation"

(p. 737). In a related sense, Markus and Nurius (1986) posit that identities are created

through self-conceptions; that is, how people see or think of themselves. This self-

conception changes over time. It is made up of the now selves and the possible selves

(Markus & Nurius, 1986). Identities are therefore unstable over time, often influenced by a number of factors including the now and possible persona, a triggering event such as a change in status or aspirations, growth, religious decisions and other life based choices that are undertaken at any point in time (Schau & Gilly, 2003; Schouten, 1991; Yurchisin et al., 2005). It is this sense that some scholars have argued for the fluid nature of identity since individuals are likely to adapt to changes in society thereby leading to multiple identities or the "coexistence of different identities" (Rimskii, 2010, p. 12) at any point in time.

Overall, identity is important because it enables an individual cohesion of self even in different situations (Cerulo, 1997; Hogg & Abrams, 1999; Rimskii, 2010; Swann, 1987; Swann & Read, 1981). But what constitutes the identity building process? According to Castells (1997), the identity construction process utilizes "raw materials" from (a) history, (b) geography, (c) biology, (d) productive and reproductive institutions, (e) collective memory, (f) personal fantasies, (g) power apparatuses, and (h) religious revelations. In Castells' observation, individuals and groups "process all these materials and rearrange their meaning, according to social determinations and cultural projects that are rooted in their social structure and in their space/time framework" (p. 7). In addition to these building blocks of identity, Castells also suggests that "identity takes place in a space marked by power relations" (pp. 7-8). For him the process of identity building is rooted in three structural markers which he calls the "forms and origins" (p. 7) of identity creation which include (a) legitimizing identity, (b) resistance identity, and (c) project identity. The first of these, *legitimizing identity,* is concerned with the maintenance of a dominant power in society where the major social group seeks to preserve its primacy over other social groups thus defining who is in and who is out or who belongs to the mainstream and who does not. The second form of identity building is *resistance identity,* which is "generated by those actors that are in positions/conditions devalued and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination…." This form of domination or bias thus leads to

the development of resistant identities either for social survival or during other specific occurrences such as political contests. Lastly, *project identity* refers to when individual and social actors redefine their identity and "by so doing seek the transformation of the overall social structure" (p. 8). Project identities therefore involve the individual and the collective. Also this last form of identity building extends to issues pertaining to race, feminism or sexuality among others.

Identity is central to the field of politics. It forms the basis of identification between candidates and their constituents. Candidates seek to maximize their voter appeal on the basis of in-groups and out-groups while voters either seek to identify with a specific cause or candidate (Callero, 1985; Lipsitz, 1998, 1995; McDermott, 1998). Implicit in these relationships is a shared sense or political activity and alliances with the quid pro quo goal of candidates getting elected and citizens ensuring that someone who identifies with them on different levels gains power (Calhoun, 1994; Cerulo, 1997; Plutzer & Zipp, 1996). In this regard "identity politics", which still plays very much a central part in politics in America, provides a means of understanding the role of race, communities and cultural mappings and potential factors that shape a candidate's agenda and personality, as well as audience evaluation of that candidate.

The intersection between identity and politics was evident in the 2008 elections because of the exceptional nature of the contest: the prospect of electing America's first Black president. Tropes of representation and identity loomed large over the race as Obama struggled to find political legitimacy as an "outsider." Obama's challenge was thus to frame his candidacy in such as a way as to attract the votes of a broad spectrum of the American population by carefully crafting and portraying an appealing message or image of who he really was. In this regard, another way to understand the identity formation process of Obama is in reference to what is known in the literature as ontological awareness—the desire to experience the presence of the self. This search for self has ripple effects as it not only helps the individual to craft his persona but also leads

others to categorize the person in question, thereby leading to uncertainty reduction on both sides. The search for and definition of self not only creates an individual's consciousness of her identity but also generates a response on how she is treated by the larger society (Cerulo, 1997; Hogg & Reid, 2006; Stryker & Burker, 2000)

In terms of identity types, Bradley (1996) argues for active and passive identities. Active identification is said to occur as "a defense against the actions of others or when an individual is conscious of being defined in a negative way." This kind of identity is thus influenced by experiences of prejudice (Bradley, 1996, pp. 25-26). Passive identities are seen to be costless and symbolic. Additionally, Korostelina (2007) in synthesizing the vast array of literature on identity identifies three types: core identities, short-term identities, and situational identities. Core identities are the primary identities which are stable and dominant over a long period of time. They only change is situations of general societal changes. Short-term identities are fluid and subject to frequent change, whereas situational identities are those identities that are contingent on different situations. They are therefore seen as building material for the formation of short-term and core identities.

Ultimately it is clear that theorists have not converged on a single definition of identity. However the notion of identity cuts across both individual agency and social belongings. According to Weeks (1990), "Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you have from others. At its most basic form, it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality" (p. 88). Giddens writes that identity is "the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her/his biography" (p. 53). He continues by writing that "to be a human being is to know…both what one is doing and why one is doing it…" (pp. 32, 35). As previously discussed, some scholars have also argued for the fluid and changing nature of identity. Other scholars have also touched on the issue of race and ethnicity to help understand the concept of identity. According to Walters (1999), "Ethnic or racial identities are social identities" (p. 44). So where does all this fit into the present research

on Obama's discursive constructions and media representation? The aim of this dissertation is to examine the presence of individual identity formation and group identity belongings that shaped Obama's persona.

The available literature demonstrates a link between identity, race and re-presentation because it will be difficult to understand any one of these concepts without understanding the others. For example, central to our understanding of how individuals and groups negotiate their identities is their race (Walters, 1999). These concepts do not therefore exist in a vacuum but in relation to one another. The next section addresses the closely related subject of race and ethnicity.

<div align="center">Ethnicity and Race</div>

Obama's presidential candidacy brought issues of ethnicity and race to the fore of American politics like never before. The concepts of ethnicity and race, which are widely discussed subjects in both academic research and the larger society, are therefore very relevant in this dissertation. Indeed in the immediate aftermath of Obama's election as president, there were several discussions alluding to the fact that America might have crossed the racial barrier and probably evolved into a nation devoid of racial prejudice and discrimination. Although there is existing theorization on the distinction between both concepts, there is a great deal of commonality between both topics. Discussions on race and ethnicity are part of the process of understanding one's identity. In fact much of the characterization of identity such as its fluidity and social constructionism can also be applied to race and ethnicity.

Some scholars see ethnicity as referring to a group of people with common descent. Waters (1999) perceives ethnicity as groups that share the same ancestral origins. The term has taken on different meanings over time but now mostly connotes a subjective way of defining a collective group of people as well as "others." According to Weber (1958), ethnic groups refer to "human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or

because of memories of colonization and migration…" (p. 389). Overall, several comprehensive and meaningful discussions on ethnicity identify common descent as central to understanding the concept (Brubaker, 2004; Fenton, 2003; Gans, 1979). Another way of understanding ethnicity is in terms of culture. Several authors define ethnicity in terms of a shared culture that includes language, religion or other belief systems. Farley (2000) defines an ethnic group as "a group of people who are generally recognized by themselves and /or by others as a distinct group, with such recognition based on social or cultural characteristics" (p. 8). Closely related to this, Sollors (1996) perceives ethnicity as a "peoplehood." This perspective on ethnicity denotes a collective institution with shared history, practices and cultural characteristics.

In addition, while ethnicity can signify peoplehood, it can also describe otherness (Brubaker, 2004; Foner & Frederickson, 2004). That is to say, ethnicity helps one to identify with one group while separating oneself from others. Though "otherness" can lead to marginalization, it can also be construed positively when people take pride in their difference and assert their otherness. Other pragmatic definitions of ethnicity include that of Blumer (1986), who defines ethnicity as "a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood. Examples of such symbolic elements are: kinship patterns, physical contiguity (as in localism or sectionalism), religious affiliation, language and dialectical forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, or any combination of these. A necessary accompaniment is some consciousness of kind among members of the group" (p. 54). This universally accepted definition of ethnicity across the broad spectrum of the academic literature reviewed will serve as a guiding definition of ethnicity for this dissertation. Though broad, such a definition speaks to the notion of ethnicity as self-asserted. In this way one of the main attributes or characteristics of ethnicity is that it is based on a group's self-identification or self-perception based on common ancestry.

More recent characterizations of ethnicity perceive it as socially constructed. That is, ethnicity is construed through human interaction, and in particular, different social systems. Ethnic boundaries are thus constantly changing or relational based on different interests, in response to external situations or outside groups. For instance, several scholars have predicted the blurring of ethnicities based on several factors such as marriage, immigration and modernity (Brubaker, 2004; Gil-White, 2005; Jenkins, 2008; Wimmer, 2008). Thus, ethnicity is a changing and relational concept. To claim an ethnicity is to make group distinctions on relation to others. Ethnic groups thus exist in differentiation to several different groups within the social system. According to Cornell and Hartman (2007), "to claim ethnic identity (or to attempt to assign one to someone else) is to distinguish ourselves from others; it is to draw a boundary between 'us' and 'them' on the basis of the claim we make that 'we' share something that 'they' do not" (p. 20). In sum a synthesis of the literature shows that ethnic groups are characterized by people with perceived or real descent and ancestry, symbolic, cultural or historical linkages, kinship, self-assertion and self-consciousness (Cornell & Hartman, 2007; Greene & Owen, 2004; Song, 2003; Stanfield, 1993).

<p style="text-align:center">Race</p>

Although there is available evidence that Barack Obama's electoral victory was celebrated and exalted in many parts of the world, there were still some comments in certain quarters which demonstrated the complexity and controversy surrounding race as an important theme in political and social life. To cite an example, a regional legislator in Germany, Juergen Gansel, made comments to the effect that Obama's victory signaled the destruction of "white identity" in statement released under the heading "African conquers the White House". In Austria, a leading television journalist stated on camera that he "wouldn't want the Western world to be directed by a black man" (*Washington Post*, 2008, p. 1). Thus in addition to ethnicity, another closely related term that has been widely used in identity and representational discourse is race.

Similar to ethnicity, race is a "slippery" subject to define (Cornel & Hartmann, 2007, p. 21). Several studies by various theorists have identified certain predominant characteristics of race. Many of the earlier conceptualization of race tended to think of it in biological terms (Cerulo, 1997; Waters, 1999; West, 1993; Yinger, 1986). Race was described as a "genetically distinct population of a given species" (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007, p. 21). However, this view has waned considerably considering "inconsistent evidence as well as disagreements among scientists on the specific genetic markers" of race (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007, p. 21). Such sociological constructions on race are rooted in perspectives that gained prominence in the 19th century such as eugenics, the just war concept and biologism which informed early western theories of race (Elshtain, 1992; Reed, 2005; Robinson, 2003; Patterson, 2009). These pre-colonial antecedents to race represented a fundamental orientation towards differentiation and barbarism with regards to African slaves and other minorities. Although these concepts seemed to be based in biological characteristics, researchers have noted that race has always been intertwined with social and historical conditions (Back & Solomos, 2000; Cerulo, 1997; Reed, 2005). For instance, eugenics, which originally means "well born," was concerned with the social uses to which heredity could be employed in order to preserve specific species, while the just war concept was propagated by prominent personalities such as Pope Eugene IV who sanctioned it as legitimate and ethical war (with religious and moral grounding) as far the intervention had a just cause such as Christian conversion missions or crusades (Agar, 2011; Kevles, 1995; Lubam, 1980; Selden, 1999). These preliminary ideologies of racial differentiation according to Winant (2000) could be perceived as biologically deterministic and informed by religious as well as metaphysical beliefs that formed the rubric under which events such as the slave trade, racial categorization and domination took place. It was a period in which race theories and relations were justified by the Eurocentric worldview premised on divine assumptions of naturally ordained superiority (Banton, 1997), where human entities had their fixed orderings (Mills, 1997)

and assigned roles (Glasgow, 2009; Haslanger, 2005). Upon serious examination, sociological scholars conclude that such solely biological classifications though prevalent at the time can be "imprecise if not arbitrary" (Winant, 2006, p. 34).

It is this arbitrariness of biological or physiological characteristics as racial markers that gave birth to a second dominant view of race as socially constructed phenomenon. That is to say, "race, like ethnic groups, are not established by some set of natural forces, but are products of human perception and classification" (Cornell & Hartmann, 2004, p. 24). The main point here is that culture, human interaction and the social world are important forces shaping race. The theoretical explanation of the social construction of race revolves around the idea that social action, polices, organization and other forms of relations within various fields including politics is sometimes influenced by one's categorization (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; David, 1991; Omi & Winant, 1994). Although some of these categorizations can be based on physical characteristics, such markers or attributes are socially defined and vary (Calhoun, 1994; Cerulo, 1997; Sollors, 1996; Song, 2003). Cornell and Hartmann (2007) thus define race as "a human group defined by itself or others as distinct by virtue of perceived common physical characteristics that are held to be inherent. A race is a group of human beings socially defined in the basis of physical characteristics" (p. 25). Winant (2006) defines race as "a concept that signifies and symbolizes sociopolitical conflicts and interests in reference to different types of human bodies" (p. 172). According to Omi and Winant (1994), racial categories are "created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed" by human action and are, therefore, preeminently social products (p. 55).

Additionally, just like ethnicity, most theorists subscribe to the view that conceptions of race are unstable and change over time (Farley, 2000; Sollors, 1996; Waters, 1990). For instance race and ethnic classification has also undergone certain changes in official U.S. census documentation over the years. According to Grieco and Cassidy (2001). factors such as (a) new techniques for collecting and processing data, (b)

adaptation to the decade in which a census was administered, and (c) changes in emerging lifestyles and "sensitivities" influence ways in which census information is collected or by extension racial and ethnic categorizations. Over the past decade, some of the most important changes that have occurred include changes in census questions to reflect greater diversity in America with the question of Hispanic origin being asked of everyone living in America in the 2000 census. These questions were also asked of everyone living in the country to reflect the increasing spate of immigration in the country. Furthermore, people can now check more than one box to signify the races to which they belong (Europeans, North Africans and Middle Easterners are also now classified as White according to the 2010 census). In other words one could select one or more racial categories (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In general, changes indicate the importance of race as a fundamental organizing issue in American life. It may also reflect the ideological, demographic or political changes in society.

In terms of boundary-making and human treatment, race has been used as a common element in institutionalized and general boundary demarcations such that over time, Whiteness has been privileged over non-whiteness (Greene & Owen, 2004; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Tilly, 2005; West, 1993). The issue of racial categorization has historical antecedents which speak to Western constructions of difference (Hegel, 1944; Mbembe, 2001, 2010). This imagery or legacy of differentiation has characterized racial relations in the Western world over time. The trope of domination is underpinned by hierarchical assumptions of superiority of the white or European race over people of African descent and other non-Whites (Chandler, 1994; Davidson, 1966; de Tocqueville (1969), Mudimbe, 1994). When it comes to the Middle East, for instance, Said's (1978) influential work, *Orientalism*, is often cited to explain Western conquest over other regions such as Asia and the Arab regions. According to Said, "Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient's difference with its weakness....As a cultural

apparatus Orientalism is all aggression, activity, judgment, will-to-truth, and knowledge" (Said, 1978, p. 204). The power of race as a measure of difference is thus much stronger than ethnicity. In this context, various scholars have argued that race is one of the most powerful distinguishing forces in American society (Appiah, 1990, 1996; Back & Solomos, 2000; Banton, 1977; Winant, 2006). This is aptly summarized by Lieberman (2005), who captures the binary nature of racial discourse in America when he states that "nearly a century and a half after the end of the civil war, the American racial and ethnic hierarchy is largely intact, with whites at the top and other groups arranged in varying relations to whites ether as subordinates or outsiders" (p. 1).

While there will continue to be extensive and continued debate on race and ethnicity and while scholars may explore the normative character of both concepts, it has become clear that they do have some similarities and differences (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). Pierre Van den Berghe (1967) speaks of race as "socially defined but on the basis of physical criteria" whereas an ethnic group is "socially defined but on the basis of cultural criteria" (p. 10). Gossett (1963) perceives of ethnic groups as more inclusive and self-asserted than race, while Wallman (1978) posits that ethnic groups, because of their inclusiveness, seem to be more fluid and blurred than race. The sharp distinctiveness associated with race has served as an adequate marker of categorization between the mainstream ("us") and the "other". It is not surprising therefore that the salience of racial categorization tends to eclipse that of ethnicity. Race has traditionally focused on assignment while ethnicity has its origins in assertions, though it can have similar origins of assignment as well (Berry, 1965; Isik, 2011; Van den Berghe, 1967; Yinger, 1986).

Generally, those deemed as the mainstream ("the norm") have the power to assign and to organize social life often times in racial terms and to the meanings or consequences of such assignments. Ethnicity on other hand is deemed a self-constructed term but can be born out of race. That is, "when a racial group sets out to construct its

own version of its identity, it makes itself both a race and an ethnic group at once (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007, p. 31).

In terms of usage, both terms are used interchangeably within and outside academic circles. Many scholars have suggested that both ethnicity and race are socially constructed concepts (Van den Berghe, 1967). As Cornell and Hartmann (2007) posit, "they are products of interaction between diverse populations" (p. 32). The trope of social construction includes a definition of "us" and them," material and political implications associated with belonging to race and ethnic groups (Gordon, 1964; Greene & Owen, 2004). Also race and ethnicity have been identified as "natural" categories. Notions of common descent, origin, and physical characteristics underlie definitions of both concepts. The process of identification, belonging and making claims of membership applies to both racial and ethnic categories. This speaks to the arbitrariness of physical descriptions. Considering such ambiguity when it comes to physical features, race and ethnicity are seen more as a result of social conventions, circumstances and cultures (Gans, 1999; Greene & Owen, 2004; Isik, 2011; Waters, 1990). Other scholars have robustly argued that race and ethnicity overlap. Similarly Cornell and Hartman (2007) state that "ethnicity refers to perceived common ancestry, the perception of a shared history of some sort, and shared symbols of peoplehood. Race refers to a group of human beings socially defined on the basis of physical characteristics. A human group might well meet both sets of criteria. Definitionally, in other words, there is nothing that says that a race cannot be an ethnic group, or vice versa" (p. 33).

The analytical blurring of race and ethnicity has therefore led Cornell and Hartman (2007) to the following conclusion: "American blacks fit both definitions. They are held by others and often by themselves to be members of a distinct race, identified primarily by skin color and other bodily features. At the same time, they have also become an ethnic group, a self-conscious population that defines itself partly in terms of common descent (Africa as homeland), a distinctive history (slavery in particular), and a

broad set of cultural symbols (from language to expressive culture) that are held to capture much of the essence of their peoplehood. When they lay claim to an identity of their own making and meaning and when they act on the basis of that identity, they are acting as an ethnic group"(p. 34). Barack Obama thus identifies racially as an African-American but, based on his direct paternal and ancestral connection to the Luo tribe of East Africa, could also make claims of an African or Afrocentric ethnicity.

<div align="center">Afrocentricity/Africanity</div>

The central thesis of the Afrocentric paradigm is that for black people, African heritage is a key component of their identities, values and beliefs (Asante, 1983, 1990, 1998, 2003, 2007; Mazama, 2001). The goal here is to ascertain the presence of Africanity in Obama's communication and media reports and how it was expressed or framed. Afrocentricity denotes redemption of the black cultural experience and a foregrounding of one's African heritage through a rubric of collectivism, reconciliation, unity and diversity (Asante, 1988; Cummings & Roy, 2002; Howard, 2011). It is a concept that recognizes the difference and diversity of blackness and the manifestation of Africa outside the "trope of crisis" Gikandi, 2011, p. 3). That is to say Afrocentricity deals primarily with the African cultural experience, Africa in the global world and the ancestral heritage of African-Americans.

For the purposes of this dissertation and clarification, the terms Afrocentricity, Afropolitanism or Afrocentrism are used interchangeably. Tutton (2012) refers to Afrocentricity simply as an intellectual focus on "people of African descent with a very global outlook" (p. 1). It denotes people of mixed races but with strong roots in Africa (Bekerie, 1994; Schiele, 1996; Tutton, 2012). The notion of Afrocentrism seeks to centralize previous philosophical and intellectual movements that sought to essentialize and assert Afrocentric identities (Asante, 1993; Baptiste, 2002). Asante (1998), recognized as one of the major proponents of the perspective, draws on the tenets of previous but related concepts: negritude, pan-Africanism and black nationalism which

assumed major relevance at different historical moments in academic circles. He states that "Afrocentricity is the theoretical notion that insists on viewing African phenomena as subjects rather than objects" (Asante, 1998, p. vii). The concept of Afrocentricity has contemporary relevance to this examination of how Obama framed his identity and how the media refracted or echoed this framing.

According to Adeleke (2009), Afrocentricity can be applied to persons of black descent irrespective of their geographic location. According to Asante (1991), Afrocentrism establishes "a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person…it centers on placing people of African origin in control of their lives and attitudes about the world" (p. 172). Here people of African descent are seen as "key players rather than victims" (Asante 1991, p. 172). Thus, the concept assumes even greater resonance with reference to Barack Obama who evidentially traces his paternal lineage directly to the East African nation of Kenya. Obama, who was obviously the primary figure during the 2008 election cycle, does not hide the fact of his Kenyan origin and his multicultural heritage. Schiele (1998) writes that "the Afrocentric paradigm is predicated on traditional African philosophical assumptions that emphasize the interconnectedness and interdependency" of natural and human phenomena (p. 7). A survey of past and recent critical pieces on Afrocentrism reveals similar theorizations. Adeleke (2009) theorizes that "in Afrocentric essentialist thought, Africa is the embodiment of what are characterized as immutable identitarian elements that unite all blacks: race, ethnicity and culture. These elements, especially culture and ethnicity, according to Afrocentric essentialist scholars, have not been fundamentally impacted by centuries of separation from Africa and acculturation in America" (p. 11). This definition privileges the ethnic narrative and seeks to promote boundary-breaking imperatives between Africans on the mainland and their diasporic counterparts. Perhaps this explains the extraordinary interest by Africans all over the world in the American presidential elections of 2008. And also why residents of

Kisumu—home of Obama's Kenyan relatives—as well as many others of African descent erupted in scenes of jubilation upon Obama's electoral victory in the fall of 2008. Afrocentricity is built around the idea that image and discourse on Africa can be recast in a positive light.

The argument for Afrocentricity is grounded in the "black experience" or lived experiences of people of African descent based on the assumption that one cannot separate oneself from the past (Bekerie, 1994; Conyers, 2004; Cooksey, 1993; Crosby, 1993; Cudjoe, 1993). Instead the past is engaged by opening up social and racial fissures useful for a reengagement with one's own personality and identity construction. In sum, Afrocentric scholars articulate a formation of ethnic identities where continental Africans and diasporan blacks severed from their ancestral lands as a result of the slave trade share an identical cultural and historical heritage. In Afrocentric discourse, Africa is reified and essentialized because the concept is a revolutionary one that recognizes the importance of African agency and reconstructs the African narrative, celebrates African heritage, appreciates the importance of tradition, unity, harmony, and community (Cudjoe, 1993; Israel, 1992; Mazama, 2001; Morikawa, 2001). As such, Afrocentrism is a celebration of human diversity and multiple realities. This celebration calls for certain active processes and actions (Asante, 1988) such as choosing and keeping an African name instead of trying to modify it, replacing defeatist and can't do notions with boldness, victorious thoughts and inspiration, love of one's culture and a posture of confidence. This perspective is a clear departure from previous Western conceptualizations or portrayals of Africa as inferior (Eko, 2010; Lule, 2001), as a vast "Dark Continent" (Mudimbe, 1994, p. 46) or as an expression of "racial apartness" (Barthes, 1957, p. 72).

From the ensuing discussion, Afrocentrism can be seen as the use of "the idea of Africa" (Mudimbe, 1994, p. 1) to advance a brighter, elevated and homogenous history, culture and identity for all blacks, regardless of geographical location. This framework is particularly useful to the present study because unlike other black candidates such as

Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, Barack Obama drew on his direct African lineage or bi-raciality throughout his campaign. This dissertation seeks to explore if Africanity was present in Obama's speeches and books and subsequent media representations thereof.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

Based on the theoretical foundations set forth above, this dissertation asks:

RQ1**:** How did Barack Obama Barack Obama draw on, or appropriate his African parentage and linkage in his speeches during the 2008 U.S presidential election campaign?

RQ2: How did Barack Obama draw on or appropriate and focus on his African parentage and related social, historical and familial links in his bestselling books, *Dreams from My Father* and *Audacity of Hope*?

Since politics is the art of messaging and image management over time, the following question arises: *RQ3:* Did Obama's books contain the themes/frames that later informed his campaign rhetoric?

RQ4: Did the newspapers under study echo Obama's Africanity in their reportage?

The next section outlines the framing analytic methodology employed to answer the research questions delineated, using Obama's speeches, books, and newspapers reports of these discursive constructions. Protocols developed will also be explicated.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY: FRAMING ANALYSIS

Over the past two decades, there has been an expansive and ever increasing body of academic research on media framing. This has led to wide-ranging definitions of the subject. The present study adopts some of the framing definitions deemed most appropriate to conduct a framing analysis of then candidate Obama's discursive construction of his African heritage in the context of the 2008 presidential election campaign. Typically, one may adopt a singular definition of framing for particular studies. However this study draws upon two definitions of framing that are deemed most appropriate to answer the research questions set forth.

This dissertation investigates: 1) The Afrocentric (the African heritage) elements of Obama's identity that were chosen, foregrounded and presented in his textual artifacts (speeches and books). The term "Afrocentric" refers to research pertaining to understanding the African background, descent, components or heritage of an individual. It is often used interchangeably with the term Afrocentric or Afropolitan. The dissertation also investigates 2) how these ideas and themes were refracted or reported by a number of newspapers from several countries around the world. The newspapers studied include: *Daily Nation* (Kenya), *ThisDay* (Nigeria), *Al-Ahram* (English edition, Egypt), *The New York Times* (The United States), *The Times of London* (Britain), and *Mail & Guardian* (South Africa). This two-stage study therefore sought to address how then Senator Obama discursively constructed his African identity in the context of the elections and how the newspapers under study refracted this narrative. The study was carried out within the perspectives on framing provided by Pan and Kosicki (1993) and Entman (1993).

Pan and Kosicki (1993) theorize that the basic tenet behind framing involves studying how politicians and the media "take an increasingly proactive approach to amplify their views of what an issue is about" (p. 55). This is in line with many empirical framing studies which show that framing helps to label, group and thematize information

in order to provide depth and enhance general understanding of political and social issues. For Pan and Kosicki (1993), themes and frames play the same role in media texts. They conclude that "a theme is also called a frame" (p. 59). Themes are determined by overall patterns, issues emphasized, descriptions, background information, quotes, events citied, propositions implied, and evidence presented to support a thesis of a storyline when conveying messages (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Additionally "one may identify subthemes and their empirical support through episodes, background information, and quotes" (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 61). On the whole, deciphering the themes present in written texts and discussing them is a key aspect of this analysis because "themes are intrinsically related to meaning" (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 59).

In addition, frames achieve meaning by employing symbolic devices which also aid in the interpretive process. Symbolic devices here are operationalized as the "presence or absence of certain keywords or stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of fact or judgment" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Other symbolic devices might include metaphors, exemplars, descriptions, word choice, arguments, catchphrases, depictions, moral appeals, visual images as well as the context within which they might appear (Entman, 1993; Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Pan & Kosicki, 1993).

Overall, this study adds to the literature by integrating these two approaches: (a) Pan and Kosicki's (1993) thematic view that framing involves studying how politicians and the media "take an increasingly proactive approach to amplify their views of what an issue is about" (p. 55), and (b) Entman's (1993) definition which posits that framing analysis involves "presence or absence of certain keywords or stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of fact or judgment" (p. 52).

For this study, frames will be viewed specifically as themes (Pan & Kosicki, 1993) operationalized by quotes, patterns, storylines, descriptions, background

information and propositions implied. This definition illustrates the importance of employing the thematic analytic approach to examine narratives. Entman's definition of frames as the "presence or absence of certain keywords or stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of fact or judgment" (Entman, 1993, p. 52) will also aid in the framing analytic process. For instance in 2004, Obama was the keynote speaker at the Democratic National Convention, which ultimately nominated Senator John Kerry as the Democratic candidate for the presidential election of that year. In this speech, which was viewed as Obama's introduction to America and to the world, Obama spoke of his parents and the origin of his name: "They would give me an Africa name, Barack, or blessed, believing that in a tolerant America your name is no barrier to success" (Obama, 2004, p. 1). This sentence contains certain key words which touch on his Africanity the most visible being the use of the word "Africa" to denote his heritage and the origin of his name.

<div align="center">Obama's Discursive Construction of His African Persona:</div>

<div align="center">Speeches and Books</div>

To determine how Obama framed or discursively constructed the African side of his persona in the context of the 2008 presidential election campaign, eight of his political speeches and two of his bestselling books were selected. The speeches were selected based on their importance to the issue of race and identity and to the presidential campaign process. Not all speeches delivered during the campaign period spoke directly to Obama's race, ethnicity and identity. In this regard, two speeches that were deemed most appropriate for this study because of their relation to the issue of race and identity were (a) Obama's keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention in Boston, and (b) His speech on race during the 2008 primary season titled "A More Perfect Union" ("Race" speech).

These two speeches—the 2004 Democratic National Convention speech that marked a moment of political stardom for Barack Obama as well as a platform for an

introduction of the Obama persona, and the 2008 "Race" speech that touched on race, ethnicity, and identity—were the main texts for the framing analytic exercise for this dissertation. However other relevant political speeches that spoke to identity and represented pivotal moments in the campaign when Obama had to address issues of race, identity, and ethnicity also were examined. These speeches include:

1) 2004 Democratic Convention speech (July 27, 2004)

2) The Presidential candidacy announcement speech (February 10, 2007)

3) "Selma" speech delivered on the occasion of the 42nd anniversary of Bloody Sunday in Selma, Alabama. (March 5, 2007)

4) "More Perfect Union" ("Race") speech (March 18, 2008)

5) 2008 NAACP Convention speech (July 14, 2008)

6) "The World As One" speech delivered in Berlin, Germany (July 24, 2008)

7) The Urban League Convention speech (August 2, 2008)

8) Nomination Acceptance speech, 2008 Democratic National Convention (August 28, 2008)

Furthermore, Obama's books, *Dreams from My Father* and *Audacity of Hope*, were analyzed to determine how he constructed his identity within the public domain.

Framing analysis was used to examine discursive constructions of Obama's African identity in his speeches and books. Previous scholars have devoted much attention to analyzing Afrocentric discourse in a number of settings. Afrocentric discourse is dedicated to discourse that recognizes the African heritage of an individual despite that individual's global or diverse identity. It is also used to denote discourse that represents "a new phenomenology of Africanness" (Gikandi, 2011, p. 9) where one's African ethnicity is asserted and viewed positively through a lens of redemption rather than through an Afro-pessimistic world view. Afrocentricity, Africanity or Afropolitanism are terms which are often used interchangeably to denote individuals who embrace or foreground their African roots despite being of different worlds or of multiple

cultures and identities (Asante, 1988; Gikandi, 2011; Woodyard, 2005). Afrocentric research has been conducted by previous scholars including White (2006) who examined the role of Afrocentrism in Black theology, Asante (1988) who promulgated, theorized and further established the concept of Afrocentrism and Stewart (2007) who conducted an Afrocentric analysis of Obama's speeches in educational institutions such as Xavier University in Louisiana and Obama's primary speech in San Antonio, Texas. While Asante (1998) looked generally into defining and grounding the general concept of Afrocentrism as a new paradigm of viewing blackness, Walker and Greene's (2006) work explored Afrocentricity in Jesse Jackson's discourse noticing that Jackson's discourse spoke mostly to the black community in the United States rather than "Africanity" or "blackness" beyond U.S. borders. Walker (2006) also conducted an Afrocentric rhetorical analysis of John Cochran's closing argument in the O. J. Simpson trial noting that some communication styles used in African and African American literature such as rhythm was predominantly used by Cochran.

In general there scholarly studies apply the concept of Afrocentricity to Barack Obama's communicative materials. The closest work includes Stewart (2011) who analyzed the presence of Afrocentric discourse in Obama's commencement address at Xavier University and in "Turn the page," a speech delivered at the California Democratic National Convention. Although some previous studies have examined Obama's election within the U.S. political, racial, and media setting, we have little insights into how Obama's "Africanity" was reflected in his speeches and in the media. Even more rare are systematic studies investigating his ethnic identity from the media centric theory of framing. This dissertation therefore fills this gap in media research.

This study analyzes Afrocentric constructions in Obama's speeches and books within the framework of the framing analytic approach. The framing analysis of Obama's speeches is aided by certain elements of Afrocentricity laid down by scholars such as Asante (1998) and Walker and Greene (2006). These elements are discussed below. I find

these elements useful because they will help unearth Afrocentric constructions in Obama's discourse. These Afrocentric elements include the following: (a) Afrocentric discourse must recognize not suppress African heritage, (b) Afrocentric discourse must not delineate Africa or Africanity as "the other," and (c) Afrocentric discourse must centralize Africa because, in Asante's words, "alterity is an attack on centricity" (Asante, 1998 p.177). Centricity which is defined as discourse that recognizes other cultures, histories by being inclusive is thus a major element of Afrocentrism. Closely related to this is the idea that Afrocentric discourse must avoid the negation of Africa in Western culture. Afrocentric discourse must recognize multiple realities and use language that brings about harmony by celebrating community and diversity. In other words it does not seek to oppress or construct Africa in Eurocentric frames of negativity and doom. Afrocentric discourse must be humanistic, recognize individual and collective rights as well as the coexistence of multiple cultures. Afrocentric discourse is positive rather than reactionary. Afrocentric discourse must recognize African communitarian or community values of unity and togetherness (Asante, 1988, 1998, 2002; Mazama, 2001).

Framing analysis is appropriate for this study for a few reasons. First, this method makes it possible to probe messages in an in-depth way in order to detect recurring or repetitive patterns and narratives. Second it helps researchers probe for any underlying meanings. Third, framing analysis often provides context to further aid in the construction of meaning. This generates meaningful and useful research because it helps us to make sense of issues, events and identities. In addition, Pan and Kosciki (1993), in their sanguine view, note that frames are also themes. In this way frame analysis takes the form of a thematic analysis enabling the researcher to delineate what is included or excluded and in highlighting certain narratives in a person's identity construction process. Furthermore, books and speeches are media artifacts and therefore lend themselves to this framing analytic approach. In terms of reflexivity, the frames unearthed are both a combination of repeated examination of the text as well as my own educated reading.

Such a combined approach makes it more likely to comprehensively account for different aspects of Obama's Afrocentric identity construction. Since frames are embodied in key words and other symbolic devices through selection and reinforcing associations, framing analysis helps to reveal how messages and information are constructed, represented or refracted in political discourse and in the news media. One way of achieving rigorous analysis in the qualitative paradigm, within which this research is based, is through stringent application of theory or "theory guided" analysis. Framing analysis sufficiently satisfies this standard.

The framing analytic strategy borrows from, and extends current framing studies with a focus on Afrocentric discourse. As previously noted, the framing analysis for this dissertation will be based on Pan and Kosicki's (1993) and Entman's (1993) approaches. For instance, in his 2004 Democratic Convention speech, Obama says:

> My father was a foreign student, born and raised in a small village in Kenya. He grew up herding goats, went to school in a tin-roof shack. Through hard work and perseverance my father got a scholarship to study in a magical place…. (Obama, 2004, p. 1)

In this statement Barack Obama seeks to amplify his immigrant background as the son of an African father who was raised in an African village, and lived an ordinary life. This is therefore concomitant to the theme of his African father, which is a major aspect of Obama's personality. In other words, it speaks to Obama's roots and ethnicity.

<u>Framing Analytic Strategy</u>

In terms of data analytic strategy or to conduct the framing analysis for this dissertation, I undertook the following steps: I retrieved the full version of the relevant speeches from a larger database, obamaspeeches.com, and the newspaper archives of the *Washington Post,* which had original texts of Obama's speeches. Framing analysis was conducted using a speech protocol developed by an initial reading of Obama's speeches, noting key themes and then re-reading to find further examples of these major themes. This process is in line with an open coding process where the researcher approaches text

without a predefined matrix or protocol (Hoepfl, 1997; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The speech protocol is thus constructed through the open coding process and then used for further analysis. Once the themes have been identified they will then be "mapped" with the newspapers or applied to the newspapers to see if there was a refraction of themes or whether different themes emerge. The speech protocol developed is as follows:

Table 1. Speech Protocol for Afrocentric Analysis of Obama's Speeches

Frame	Description	Example
American Exceptionalism	Obama's Africanity is part of the fabric of American exceptionalism.	"…let's face it, my presence on this stage is pretty unlikely"
Father/Origin/Roots	His Africanity can also be traced to his African/Kenyan father and Luo heritage	"…My father was a foreign student; born and raised in a small village in Kenya…"
Africanity and African Cultural/Ethnic Values: collectivism, community, togetherness	Includes references to African communal values and the sense of community. Recognizes not suppress African heritage.	"I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper."
Rights Frame	Includes emphasis on slavery, suffering, subjugation, human rights, racial denigration	"…my grandfather was a cook, a domestic servant"

Speeches, Background and Contexts

This study seeks to investigate the issue of Africanity or representations of Obama's Africanity in the context of the 2008 presidential election campaign, as well as subsequent media refractions of this narrative. Given the importance of candidate discourse in the construction of their identities (Fearon, 1999; Dickson & Scheve, 2005),

this research focused on significant speeches Obama presented during his campaign for the presidency. This section presents the contexts of Obama's speeches that are analyzed in this dissertation.

2004 Democratic National Convention Speech

Barack Obama's speech during the 2004 Democratic Convention was a pivotal moment in his political career. It is the speech that launched him onto the national political scene and essentially served as the kick-off of his 2008 presidential campaign. At the time, Obama was a senator from the state of Illinois, a position to which he had first been elected in 1996. In 2004, he was a senatorial candidate for the U.S. Senate who was gaining traction both in his state and nationally. In that 2004 election cycle, John Kerry was the Democratic nominee for president and John Edwards was the vice-presidential candidate. Barack Obama delivered the keynote address at the Democratic National Convention in Boston. This was the beginning of his meteoric rise in the U.S. national political landscape.

In this speech, Obama introduced himself to the American public, saying that as the son of a Kenyan father who had grown up herding goats his presence on the stage was "pretty unlikely" (Obama, 2004). He also talked about uniting the country, as well as the hope and dreams that America embodied. The speech received widespread acclaim. It allowed Obama to introduce himself to a wider audience and in the process take charge of his identity construction process in the public arena. For this reason, the 2004 Democratic National Convention speech was chosen for analysis because it is a rich source of original data for examining Obama's construction of his identity in his own words.

Presidential Candidacy Announcement Speech (2007)

Barack Obama announced his candidacy for president of the United States on February 10, 2007, at the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Illinois. Speaking with his wife and children in the background, Obama presented himself as an agent of change and

unity in the face of partisanship in Washington, D.C. The speech is important because it not only marked his formal entry into the presidential race and was thus his first official opportunity to define himself, and his identity to the American people, but it was widely covered nationally and internationally.

Selma Speech (2007)

On March 4, 2007, Barack Obama delivered a speech from the pulpit of Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) to commemorate "Bloody Sunday" in Selma, Alabama. The event is held annually to commemorate the attack on civil rights marchers at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma on March 7, 1965. The marches were being held as part of the civil rights movement's agitation for equal voting rights. The impact of these marches were significant because they served as a precursor to landmark legislation— The Voting Rights Act of 1965—which sought to address discriminatory voting practices against African Americans on the basis of their race and color. The speech that Obama delivered here is important because of the significance of the event for African Americans; a constituency Obama was struggling to woo at the beginning of the race because he needed their votes to win the nomination of the Democratic Party to be its candidate in the presidential election. Additionally the speech touched on race, ethnicity, and identity, and sought to ground Obama's multicultural and ethnic background within the African American civil rights experience (Fager, 1985; nps.gov; abcnews.go.com)

More Perfect Union ("Race") Speech (2008)

His "Race" speech, officially titled, "A More Perfect Union," was chosen for similar reasons. It is now widely accepted that this speech forced Obama to address the issue of his race and ethnicity more directly than any other speech during the entire campaign. The speech was given in the midst of public outcry over statements made by his pastor, the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, in a recorded sermon that was duplicated as audio and video recordings that started circulating on the Internet in March 2008. The

controversy resulting from Wright's statements could largely be traced to two sermons
"The Day of Jerusalem's Fall" and "Confusing God and Government." Generally,
Jeremiah Wright's statements became a campaign issue because they were deemed
"inflammatory," "divisive," and "unpatriotic" or "anti-American" and "anti-White". In
the sermon, among other things, White blamed America for the September 11, 2001,
terrorist attacks. Additionally, he made statements like "God damn America!" Obama's
close ties with the Reverend Wright fueled much controversy during the campaign. Rev.
Wright was Obama's spiritual mentor and is credited by Obama as providing the title for
his book, *Audacity of Hope*. He was also the officiating minister at Barack and Michelle's
wedding. Due to these close relationships and the racial overtone of the controversy,
Obama was forced to address issues of race, ethnicity and identity in his "A More Perfect
Union," speech thereby making it an appropriate artifact for this research (CBS, 2008;
Kantor, 2008).

NAACP Convention Speech (2008)

Obama's speech to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored
People (NAACP) in 2008 is also analyzed for this research. This speech is important
because it gave Obama an opportunity to speak directly to a constituency that he clearly
identifies with racially and ethnic-wise. The role of the NAACP in terms of advancing
the rights and status of the black community cannot be underestimated and it will be
worthwhile to critically analyze the text of Obama's discourse to this identity group.

Urban League Convention Speech (2008)

Obama's speech to the Urban League Convention, historically an interracial
group which is also committed to addressing issues of racial discrimination, urban
integration and communal identity will be analyzed. This speech is important because it
marks the first time Obama was addressing the group as a presidential candidate and
therefore provides appropriate data to examine his discourse pertaining to race, ethnicity
and his identity.

Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech (2008)

During the 2008 Democratic Convention in Denver, Colorado, Obama was formally presented as the Democratic Party's nominee for president. Because party conventions are highly watched and highly patronized events, candidates use that event to lay down not just policy positions but to once again present themselves to the American people by speaking to issues of their persona and identity. Obama's speech at the Democratic Convention is important not just because they mark the highpoint of the nomination cycle but also because Obama used this event to speak about his background, race, identity and overall persona. In line with the overarching goal of this study the speeches identified were carefully scrutinized for Obama's discursive constructions of his Africanity.

<u>Discursive Constructions of Africanity in Obama's Books</u>

As previously mentioned, two of Obama's books, *Dreams from My Father* and *Audacity of Hope,* will also be used in the analytic process. These books were selected because they are best-selling books which touch on Obama's identity in a more detailed manner.

Dreams from My Father

In *Dreams from My Father,* which Obama himself subtitles, "A story of race and inheritance," Obama narrates his struggle with identity and the search for self. For example in this book Obama talks about his father, his relationship with the White and African American community and how his visit to Africa brought him "full circle" because in Africa, "my name belonged and so I belonged" (Obama, 2005, p. 305).

Audacity of Hope

In *Audacity of Hope*, subtitled, "Thoughts on reclaiming the American dream," Obama focuses on his thoughts and views on America by touching on certain cross-cutting themes within the American society. The book is sometimes viewed more as a

political narrative, but it does offer some insights into Obama's identity, thereby necessitating further interrogation to unearth any present themes of Africanity.

A similar framing analytic process used to investigate discourses on Africanity within Obama's speeches was employed to ascertain themes in his books that touch on the African ethnicity, heritage, or other such related elements of Obama's African identity. The books were analyzed as textual artifacts to decipher manifestations of Africanity. The framing analytic process was conducted using a thematic protocol developed through an open coding process which involved an in-depth reading and the notation of emerging frames, further detailed re-reading of the entire texts to confirm these themes, find examples and further firm up the frames. This qualitative framing analytic approach was adopted in order to cogently capture major themes specifically related to Obama's Africanity. This approach is consistent with the grounded approach to qualitative data analysis in which categories emerge through an analytic process (Charmaz, 2006) thereby providing the needed frames and "vocabularies to make meaning" (Hammack, 2010, p. 187) of texts or documents. The protocol developed is presented below in Table 2.

<div align="center">Framing Analysis for Newspapers</div>

The second part of this dissertation involves investigating newspaper representations and possible refractions of Obama's Africanity using framing analysis. The study focused on six newspapers from different geographical regions of the world: *Daily Nation* (Kenya), *ThisDay* (Nigeria), *Al-Ahram* (English edition, Egypt), *The New York Times* (The United States), *The Times of London* (Britain), and *Mail & Guardian* (South Africa). These newspapers were chosen because of their influential role in their respective nations and internationally. All the newspapers are considered publications of record, dominant or leading newspapers in their respective countries and have consistently been used as texts for analysis by media researchers (Berkowitz & Eko, 2007; Dimitrova & Lee, 2009; Fair 1993; Scott, 2009).

Table 2. Protocol for Obama's *Dreams from My Father* and *Audacity of Hope*

Frame	Description	Example
Africa: Distance, shame and marginalization	Obama's early imaginations or "frames" of Africa was that of a continent he felt distant from and which brought him shame among his peers.	"When I finally said Luo, a sandy-haired boy behind me repeated the word in a loud hoot, like the sound of a monkey, The children could no longer contain themselves, and it took a stern reprimand from Miss Hefty before the class would settle… I spent the rest of the day in a daze". (Obama, 2005, p. 60)
Confusion and emptiness	Obama's Africanity also placed him out of the "White" mainstream as well as the typical "African American" mainstream experience leading to an emptiness and search for identity.	"What did Marcus call you just now? Some African name, wasn't it?"(Obama, 2005, p.104)
Acceptance: roots, origins, memories of Father and acceptance.	In Africa Obama finally closed the "circle" of emptiness. He felt a natural, free flowing sense of belonging and communality and was able to connect with his African heritage.	"For a span of weeks or months you could experience the freedom that comes from not feeling watched, the freedom of believing that your hair grows as it's supposed to grow and that your rump sways the way rump is supposed to sway…Here the world was black, and so you were unique to your life without living a lie or committing betrayal." (p. 311)

Mail & Guardian, Johannesburg, South Africa

Formerly known as the *Weekly Mail*, *Mail & Guardian* was established in 1985. Following the end of apartheid in South African and the new dawn of pluralism that engulfed the country, the paper was re-launched as a daily paper. It is one of the most respected media outlets in South Africa targeted toward a niche market of academics, the business community and non-governmental organizations. With a readership of about 5000, 000 and a circulation of about 58, 300, the newspaper is known to have one of the

highest circulation percentage of readers in the South African news market (medicaclubsouthafrica.com).

ThisDay, Abuja, Lagos, Nigeria

This newspaper is one of Nigeria's leading independent newspapers. The newspaper has won Nigeria's "Newspaper of the Year" award on three occasions and is the preferred news source for most professionals in and outside the country. The newspaper has no party affiliation and is recognized for its straightforward and expansive coverage across the country (Olukoyun, 2005; Smith, 2001). It has a circulation of 100,000 countrywide (thisday.com). As one Nigeria's more established newspapers with new media technology, the paper plays an important role in providing news coverage to the public.

Daily Nation, Nairobi, Kenya

Daily Nation is Kenya's largest independent newspaper. It was founded in 1960 by Aga Kahn to give an alternative independent perspective in national affairs as opposed to the colonial or governmental press. The paper has a circulation of about 205,000. As part of the Nation Media group, it is distributed across Kenya as well as neighboring countries such as Tanzania and Uganda. Observers have attributed its success to high journalistic professionalism by its staff and it's non-partisan, non-ideological position in public affairs (csmonitor.com; standardmedia.co.ke)

Al-Ahram (English), Cairo, Egypt

The English version of one of Egypt's most recognizable newspapers across the world *Al-Ahram* was also utilized. The newspaper is a well-established one not just in Egypt but also internationally, with subscribers found in most countries worldwide and in university newspaper selections (Arab Media Review, 2005; pressreference.com; Dimitrova & Connolly-Ahern, 2007; Al Maskati, 2012). The English version of the newspaper provides an important avenue for foreign readers to access news from Egypt

and the Arab world. Also as one of the well-known newspapers in the North Africa this paper offers an opportunity to examine news coverage from this sub-region.

The New York Times, New York City, The United States

The New York Times is one of the world's most preeminent newspapers. With a circulation of 779, 731 (Alliance of Audited Media, 2012), *The New York Times* bears the reputation of being the newspaper of record in the United States with major bureaus and seasoned reporters spread across the country and globe (Dearing & Rogers, 1996). Kiousis (2004) called it the "key gatekeeper in national issues" (p. 77). Founded in 1851, *The New York Times* strives towards journalistic objectivity, breaking news and investigative reporting on a wide variety of issues. It has won the most Pulitzer Prizes (106) of any other newspaper in the United States. In addition, *The New York Times* has the highest online digital circulation in the United States with a circulation of 807, 026 giving it a strong presence and making it accessible to a wider variety of readers (nytco.com; businessweek.com)

The Times of London, London, England

The Times of London was founded in 1785 and is one of Britain's oldest and most influential newspapers. It has a readership of about 399,339 and occupies a leading position in national and international affairs. Founded by John Walter, the paper initially operated under the name *The Daily Universal Register* until it was switched to *The Times* in 1788. It quickly gained widespread readership and became a respected paper nationally and around the world. The paper is credited to have inspired other versions of the "Times" such as *Times of India* and *The New York Times* (Britannica, 2012).

The various countries where these flagship newspapers are published were chosen because of their dominance or leading role in their respective regions and internationally. Newspapers from Africa were also selected because of Obama's direct connection to the continent. Nigeria, Kenya, Egypt and South Africa were chosen because of their dominant position within the African Union. The newspapers also represent different sub-

regions on the continent. Including newspapers from Africa is helpful not only for this Afrocentric analysis but also because the African media have generally been underrepresented in scholarly research (Mahadeo & McKinney, 1997; Scott, 2009). The United States and Britain were included because of their significance in the world order. Additionally, the United States represents the country where Obama was running for president, while Britain has historical, colonial or bilateral ties with the countries whose newspapers are included.

In order to account for newspaper frames and possible refractions from Obama's speeches, this dissertation used a data analytic process similar to what was outlined for the candidate's speeches. To be specific, Pan and Kosicki's (1993) perspective of framing was adopted. In their view framing occurs when the media "take an increasingly proactive approach to amplify their views of what an issue is about" (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 55). News publications constitute an important source of information for the public, as well as sites where issues and identities are constructed, represented and possibly refracted. Here too, the aim of the framing analysis undertaken was to unearth recurrent themes, issues emphasized and symbolic devices used to represent Obama's Africanity in newspaper reporting. I combined Pan and Kosicki's and Entman's approaches to framing because these theoretical and methodological, approaches, taken together, helped me to gain deeper insights and to capture aspects of Obama's Afrocentric constructions reported in these newspapers which are considered prominent and authoritative sources of news discourse.

To conduct the analysis, news texts were gathered through Access World News (*Daily Nation*, *The Times of London*), Lexis Nexis (*The New York Times)*, and the online archives(*Mail & Guardian* and *Al-Ahram*) of the individual newspapers. Four different combinations of search words were used for all the newspapers: "Obama and Africa," "Obama and race," "Obama and ethnicity," Obama and identity," The most relevant articles were selected by reading and removing articles which were not related to the

topic under study. Only news articles and editorials were used in this analysis. The case for the use of editorials in media studies has been well documented in previous research (Fowler, 1991). Editorials have been delineated as journalistic representations where leadership and persuasion on important issues of the day take place. They also help to reflect broader ideological, social and contextual settings within which journalism operates and signify the mainstream, ignored or alternative positions in a given culture (Fowler, 1991; Henry & Tator, 2002). All in all they help to enrich the analytic process.

Articles that were published within one week after a major speech were drawn upon. In qualitative research, each article is examined for its unique quality. It is also examined to identify relevant aspects of what is being studied for further analysis and applications to the theoretical construct of the study. This search process therefore makes it possible to generate relevant data for subsequent examination. The search produced 292 articles across all the newspapers. All articles were read and the most relevant ones selected. News summaries, letters to the editor, and duplicate articles were eliminated. As a result, 160 articles in total were included in the analysis. The breakdown is as follows: For the Democratic Convention speech (2004), there were 12 articles in *Daily Nation*, four in *The Times of London*, and five in *The New York Times* while *ThisDay*, *Mail & Guardian* and *Al-Ahram* (English) had no relevant stories. For Obama's 2007 announcement for president in Illinois, there were five articles in *Daily Nation*, three in *ThisDay*, four in *The Times of London*, and four in *The New York Times*, with *Mail & Guardian* and *Al-Ahram* each publishing one story. For Obama's speech delivered at Selma, *The Times of London* (two) and *The New York Times* (four) were the only newspapers that covered this event (I noticed that the more domestic/local an issue was, the less coverage it received in some of the international newspapers). For Obama's Race speech, there were six articles in *Daily Nation*, two in *ThisDay*, 17 in *The Times of London*, 19 in *The New York Times*, and one each in the *Mail & Guardian* and *Al-Ahram*. Obama's speech in Berlin generated the following results: three in *The London Times*,

seven in *The New York Times*, and *Daily Nation* and *ThisDay* had one major story on this. *Al-Ahram* had no coverage of the event. For Obama's Nomination acceptance speech, *ThisDay* had six stories, *Daily Nation* had 31, *The London Times* had nine, *The New York Times* had 10, and the *Mail & Guardian* and *Al-Ahram* had one major story each for this event. *The New York Times* published one relevant article each on Obama's speech to the Urban League Convention and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The search yielded no relevant articles for the other news publications for both speeches. The data generated are presented in simple charts below (see Figures 1 through 8).

Democratic Convention Speech

	Daily Nation	Times of London	New York Times	This Day	The Mail and Guardian	Al Ahram
■ Number of articles	12	4	5	0	0	0

Figure 1. 2004 Democratic Convention Speech

Announcement for president

	Daily Nation	Times of London	New York Times	This Day	The Mail and Guardian	Al Ahram
■ Number of articles	5	4	4	3	1	1
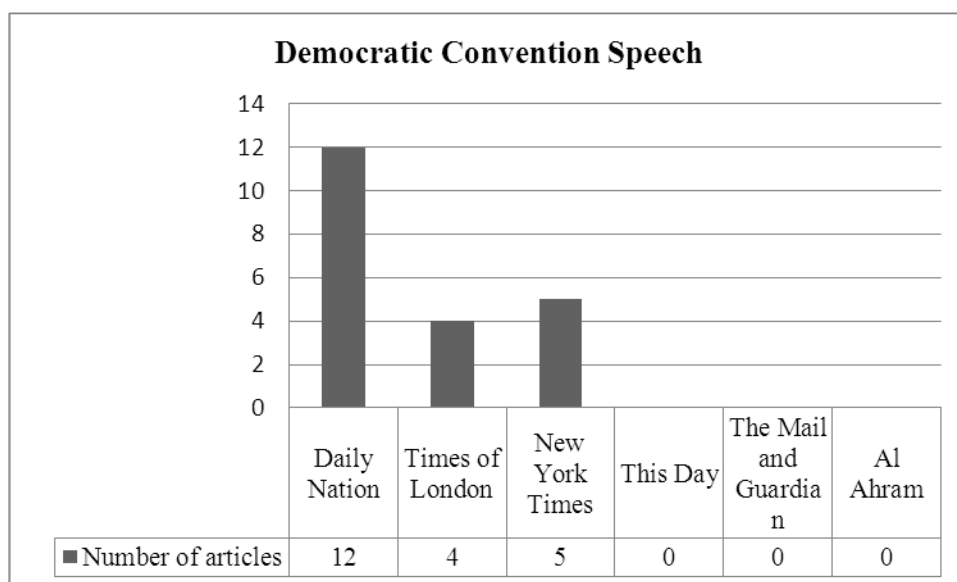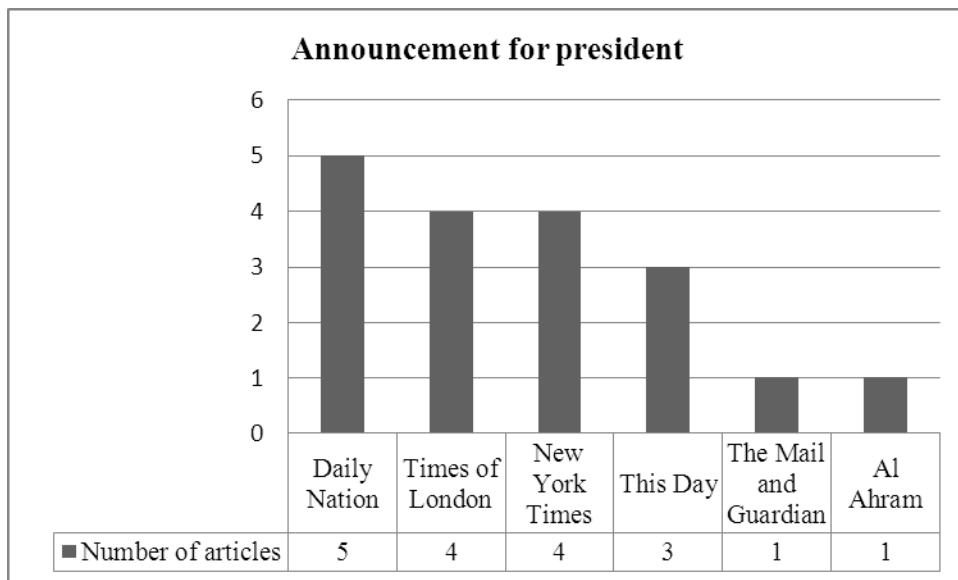
Figure 2. Presidential Candidacy Announcement Speech (2007)

Selma Speech

	Daily Nation	Times of London	New York Times	This Day	The Mail and Guardian	Al Ahram
■ Number of articles	0	2	4	0	0	0
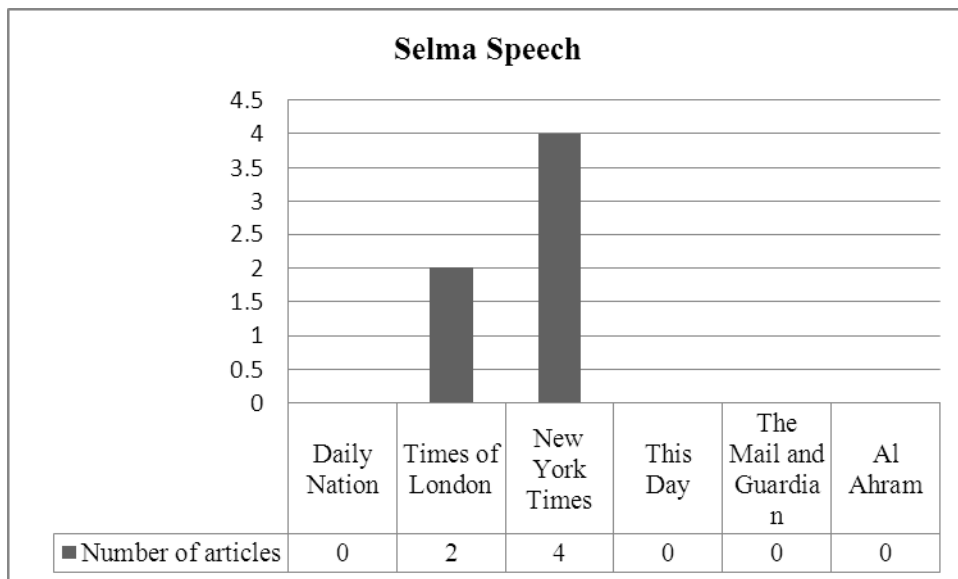
Figure 3. Selma Speech (2007)

A More Perfect Union ('Race') Speech

	Daily Nation	Times of London	New York Times	This Day	The Mail and Guardian	Al Ahram
■ Number of articles	6	17	19	2	1	1
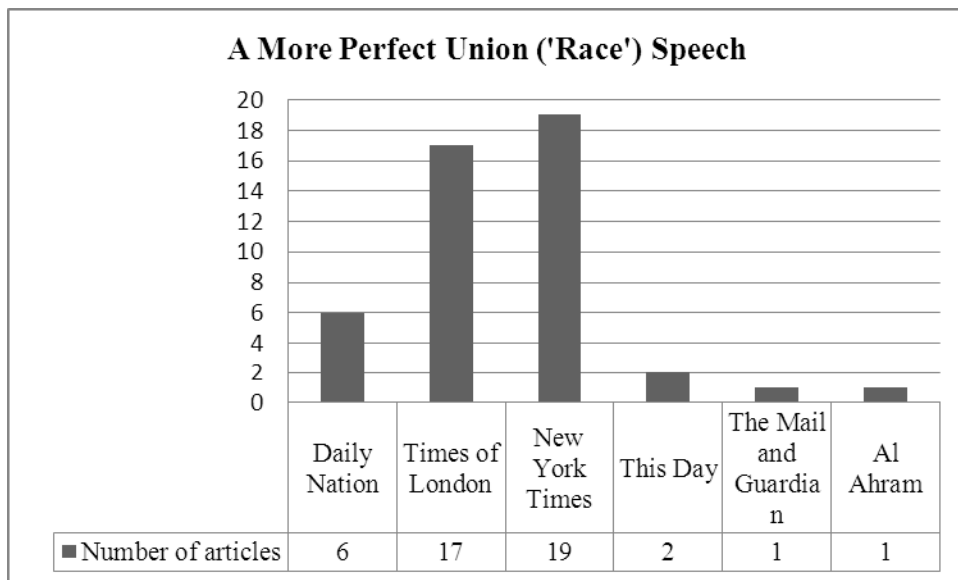
Figure 4. More Perfect Union ("Race") Speech (2008)

A world As One (Berlin) speech

	Daily Nation	Times of London	New York Times	This Day	The Mail and Guardian	Al Ahram
■ Number of articles	1	3	7	1	0	0
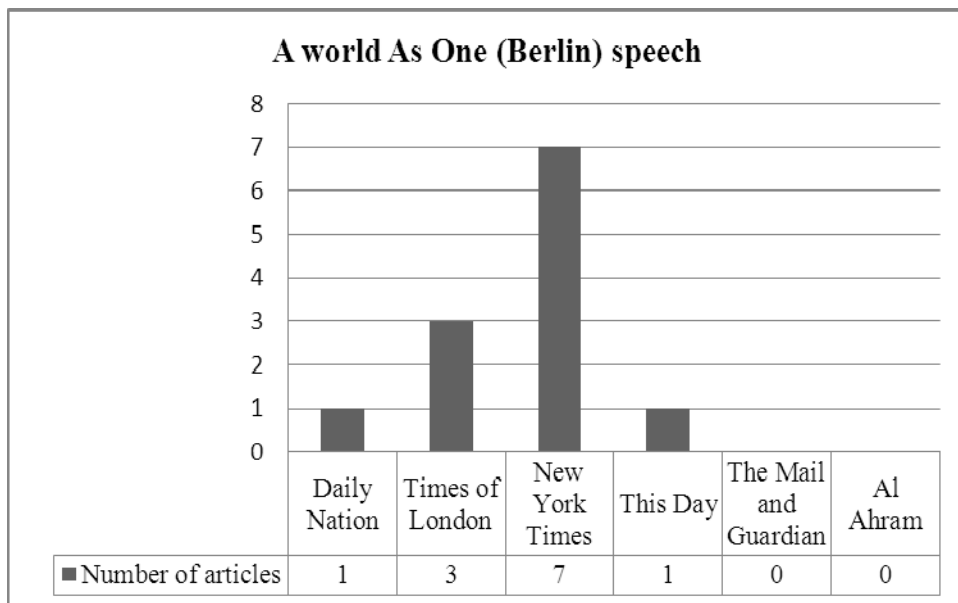
Figure 5. World as One (Berlin) Speech (2008)

Nomination acceptance speech

■ Number of articles	Daily Nation	Times of London	New York Times	This Day	The Mail and Guardian	Al Ahram
	12	4	5	0	0	0
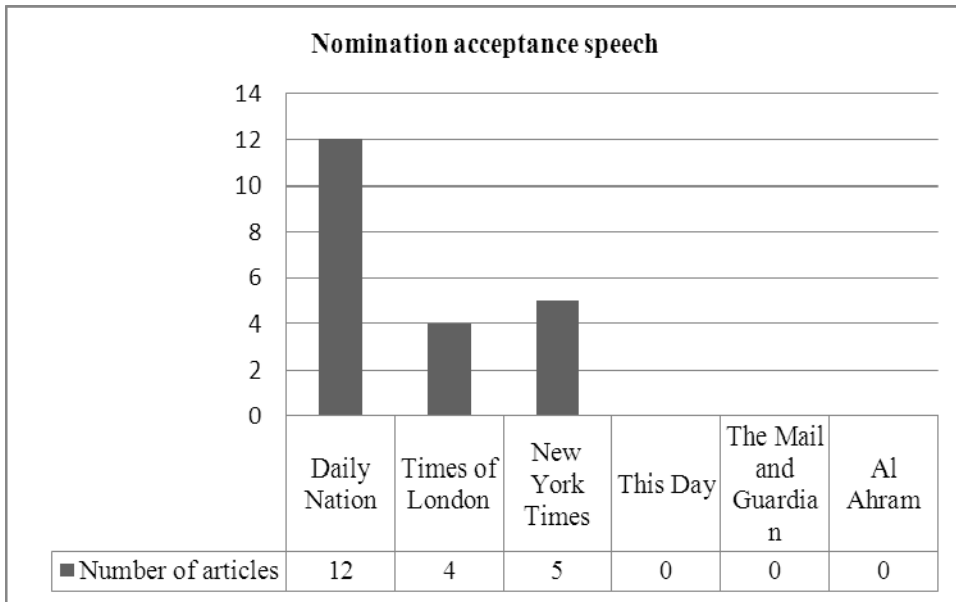
Figure 6. Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech (2008)

Urban League Convention Speech

■ Number of articles	Daily Nation	Times of London	New York Times	This Day	The Mail and Guardian	Al Ahram
	0	0	1	0	0	0
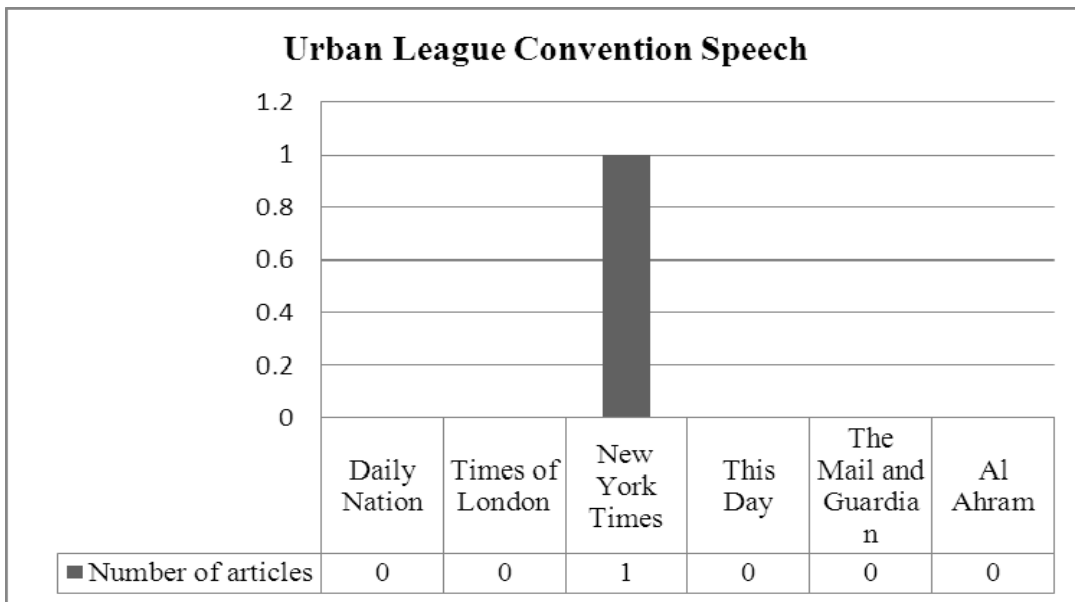
Figure 7. Urban League Convention Speech (2008)
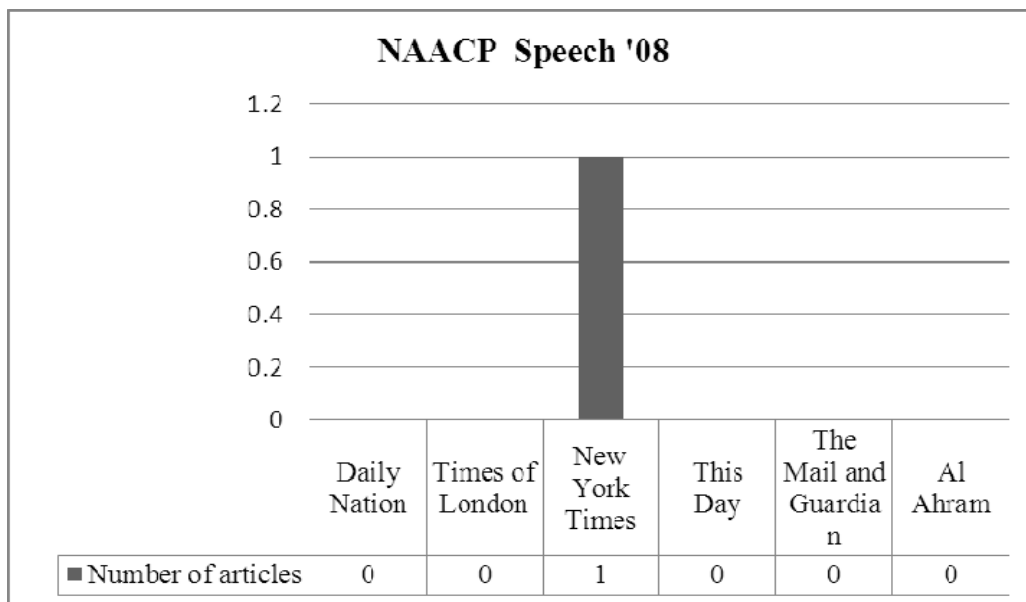
Figure 8. NAACP Convention Speech (2008)

The specific data analytic steps employed are as follows: After identifying the most relevant news articles using the combination of search words listed above, I carefully read each news text to highlight aspects of the articles that were related to Obama's Africanity. A second immersive reading was conducted where I took note of recurrent themes, patterns and discourses of Africa, which were selected and narrated by the newspaper. Next, using the framing protocol developed earlier during the analysis of Obama speeches, I searched for any possible refractions of Obama's Africanity while taking note of other narratives and representations of his African identity or discourses related to Africa. After this, a repeated reading of each text was done where refractions were confirmed, frames firmed-up, unfolding storylines, contextual factors and any underlying meanings noted. I also engaged in constant comparison between the various newspapers in order to take note of any similarities and differences in their various representations.

News articles were also investigated for symbolic devices. These include exemplars, catchphrases or stock phrases, depictions, key words and stereotyped images (Entman; 1993; Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Pan & Kosicki,1993). For example *The Times of London* in an article following Obama's announcement of his run for president used the metaphor of lightning to describe the then Senator Obama, referring to him as "lightning in a jar" (*The Times of London*, 2008, p. 1). *Daily Nation* in its version of reportage of the same event uses certain key words and catchphrases such as "bi-national" and "Kenyan roots" (*Daily Nation*, 2008, p. 1) to describe Barack Obama—a reference which emphasizes his ethnic and Afrocentric connection. Again throughout the entire process constant reference was made to the research questions and theoretical underpinnings in order to keep the study focused.

<div align="center">Validity and Reliability</div>

Based on Kirk and Miller's (1986) definition of reliability as "the degree to which the finding is independent of accidental circumstances" (p. 20), reliability was ensured through the use of deliberate, systematic and dependable search methods applied by previous framing scholars in order to produce articles which were a good "fit" for the subject and issue under study (Dimitrova & Lee, 2009; Entman 1991, 1993; Johnson, 1997). Scott (1990) and Potter (1996) speak of validity in qualitative research as the use of authentic and credible data. That is, the data must be genuine. The method employed also satisfies these criteria because the speeches used are the original written and spoken words of Barack Obama while the newspaper articles were the original versions of texts published by the newspapers and stored in searchable online databases. Additionally the newspapers used are all credible and well-established newspapers of record in their respective countries. Lastly triangulation was ensured through the use newspapers, books and speeches which served as cross check for themes unearthed thereby drawing comprehensive or congruent frames and narratives. Overall framing analysis offered both theoretical and methodological congruence to this study.

CHAPTER IV

AFROCENTRIC FRAMING ANALYSIS OF

BARACK OBAMA'S SPEECHES

This study examined Barack Obama's discursive constructions of his Africanity and how the media represented or refracted this narrative. In order to answer the research questions set forth, a framing analysis was conducted for relevant speeches, books and selected newspapers. This chapter presents the results and analysis of six relevant Obama speeches: the 2004 Democratic Convention speech, the "Race" speech, his speech announcing his candidacy for president, his speech on the anniversary of Selma (Selma speech), his speech to Europe and the world during a trip to Berlin (Berlin speech), and his nomination acceptance speech. These speeches were chosen due to their relevance to Obama's race and identity, and their importance during the campaign season. The framing analytic process described in the previous chapter generally involved close reading of relevant Obama speeches and newspaper articles, noting issues of emphasis and, emerging themes. Connections were made to the guiding conceptual framework of this study, media framing and Afrocentricity, in order to theoretically ground the research and meaningful thematic narratives.

Barack Obama's presidential campaign and his election as the President of the United States marked a significant historic moment for both the United States and the world. The 2008 elections brought issues of identity, race and ethnicity to the forefront of American politics, in major part, due to the election of Barack Obama as the first African American candidate of a major political party in the United States. Winborne (2009) writes that Obama's identity is "complex in a way that confounds many in this country but intrigues many more" (Winborne, 2009, p. 1). Indeed, many scholarly studies have sought to investigate the issue of how race and identity played out in the presidential campaign within the political, media and racial settings of the United States. However, to

date, we have little insights into the discourses or narratives on Africanity in the 2008 election.

More than any other election, the 2008 race brought themes of African ancestry to the forefront of the American presidential election. While most of the rhetoric on identity centered on race politics within the American context, Africa featured as part of the narrative in a way never before seen within U.S. presidential politics due in large part to Barack Obama's direct ancestral connections to the African mainland through the village of Kisumu where his father hailed from. This dissertation analyses Obama's Africanity in his speeches and newspapers by drawing upon two dominant perspectives on framing deemed most appropriate to answer the research questions. First Pan and Kosicki's (1993) view on framing as the process to investigate emergent themes based on what politicians and the news media amplify about issues, personalities and events. Finally, Entman's (1993) perspective delineation of framing as constituting a process where key words, stereotypes, quotes and metaphors help to identify dominant patterns will be drawn upon. The key questions addressed in this study are: How did Barack Obama discursively construct his African identity within the framework of his campaign for presidency of the U.S. in the 2008 presidential election? How did a select group of newspapers worldwide frame Obama's African identity in the 2008 presidential election? This chapter primarily examines key Afrocentric themes in Obama's speeches.

<p style="text-align:center">Afrocentric Framing Analysis of Relevant Obama Speeches</p>

American Exceptionalism

American exceptionalism refers to the unique character of the American social, cultural and political system (Lipset, 1996; Middlekauff, 1994; Tyrrell, 1991; Voss, 1993). Over the past two centuries various terms have been used to describe the exceptionalist character of America "empire of liberty" (Reynolds, 2009, p. 1), "the leader of the free world" (Harrop, 2000, p. 1), and "the last best hope of earth." (Bennette, 2007, p. xiii). When most scholars and Americans speak of American

Exceptionalism they are not only referring to the country's uniqueness but its superiority and difference which is seen as matchless in the global arena (Ignatieff, 2005; McKenna, 2007). According to scholars such as McKenna (2007) what makes America exceptional is that it was founded on a creed which encompasses life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The concept of exceptionalism has its roots in a modified version of Puritanism which is primarily concerned with the belief that Americans are "a people set apart, a people with a providential mission" (McKenna, 2007, p. 6). Much of what is discussed in American exceptionalism is centered on around five core values: liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism and laissez-faire (Gergen, 2012; Huntington, 1982; Lipset, 1996). Indeed American exceptionalism assumes that America's values, social and political culture is not only exclusive but worthy of international admiration and emulation (Lipset, 1996; Madsen, 1998; Reus-Smit, 2004). Exceptionalism, an enduring trope in the United States, has been a major issue of discussion in presidential campaigns (Ignatieff, 2005). After expressing his gratitude for having the opportunity to speak at the convention, Obama immediately summons the theme of American exceptionalism:

> Tonight is a particular honor for me because, let's face it, my presence in this stage is pretty unlikely…I stand here knowing that my story is part of the larger American story, that I owe a debt to all those who came before me, and that, in no other country on earth is my story even possible. (Obama, 2004, p..1)

By this sentence, Obama alludes to the fact that his status as an African American, a minority and the son of an African did not bar him from attaining the heights he had attained, including the privilege of addressing a national political convention of a major party. A central tenet of American exceptionalism is that the country privileges a culture of openness, liberty and individual freedom to all people irrespective of creed or color to aspire to their highest potentials (Gergen, 2012; Gutfeld, 2002; Pease, 2009). Obama's Africanity is ensconced in American exceptionalism because according to him, despite his African background, America–the "magical place"–provided him the unique

opportunity to pursue his ambitions. Another example of the exceptionalism frame

emerges when Obama talks about his name:

> They would give me an Africa name, Barack, or blessed, believing that in a
> tolerant America your name is no barrier to success. They imagined me going to
> the best schools in the land, even though they weren't rich; because in a generous
> America you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential. (Obama, 2004, p. 1)

The paragraph above is a clear example of the American exceptionalism frame

because it speaks to the idea of possibility and opportunity in American society despite

having African ancestry. He refers to such possibilities as "small miracles" or as the "true

genius of America." From a framing perspective, Barack Obama thus decides to select

his African name and emphasizes his African background in order to support the idea of

American exceptionalism. Obama thus through Africanity connects with his American

audience by subscribing to the uniqueness, equality and liberty that America offers him to

pursue his opportunities. For Obama, America is the "city upon a hill" which offers

boundless opportunities to a person of his background and origin to achieve his potential.

In this frame Obama embraces and contextualizes his Africanity through the core theme

of exceptionalism. He further cements this frame when he writes that it is only in

America that:

> the hope of a skinny kid with a funny name who believes that America has a place
> for him, too. The audacity of hope" (Obama, 2004, p.1)

In any presidential campaign the issue of race and identity remain an important

fixture, especially in a multicultural society such as the United States. As a presidential

candidate, the way in which Obama presented his Africanity, and how proactive he was

in constructing his identity was important to how he was defined and perceived in the

public arena. Obama defined his identity by foregrounding not suppressing his African

identity and legitimizing it within the American proposition of exceptionalism. Clearly

Obama's Africanity emphasizes the uniqueness or difference of America as the leader of

the free world where everyone despite the sound of their name can aspire to a better

future. This particular framing of his African name and origins has all the markings of American exceptionalism. He speaks of America's exemplary character, he alludes to its freedoms, he demonstrates his faith in the "American way of life" (McKenna, 2007, p. 6) and he confirms his faith and belief in the country through the use of the word "hope". Taken together Obama certainly espouses the distinctiveness of the United States of America—a basic assumption in American exceptionalism. Thus, Obama resolves the tension between his "funny name" (Obama, 2004, p. 1) and his audience by embracing his Africanity—even if in a self-deprecating way—instead of avoiding, excluding or backgrounding it.

Still on the theme of American exceptionalism, one other speech in which this theme is reflected is Obama's "A More Perfect Union" speech. On March 18, 2008, Barack Obama delivered a speech now popularly known as the "Race" speech at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. The speech was made amidst heightened controversy during the presidential race. In this speech, Obama sought to address comments made by his pastor (the Reverend Jeremiah Wright of the Trinity United Church of Christ) which were deemed "racist" and unpatriotic. As Obama's pastor and friend, some associated the candidate with his pastor's comments. Wright in several YouTube videos and television clips played repeatedly in the news media condemned the United States, its values and actions in language that was generally seen as incendiary and anti-American. Obama himself repudiated Wrights comments and his Pastor would subsequently step down as a campaign advisor. Obama resigned from Trinity United Church of Christ as a result of the controversy (CBS, 2012; Kantor, 2008).

His speech at sought to quell tensions that were building up as a result of Wright's comments. The speech touched broadly on racial tensions in the United States and called on Americans to move beyond "the racial stalemate". Obama's multiple identities enabled him to call on different aspects of his personality.

As already explicated American exceptionalism refers to the unique character of American values and system of life (Lipset, 1997; Huntington, 1980). It is generally understood that one major characteristic of American exceptionalism is the ability for anyone—no matter the creed or color—to achieve the American dream or access to a high quality of life (Gergen, 2012; Ignatieff, 2005; Pease, 2009). Barack Obama was the first African American to be nominated as flag bearer of a major party and among the more interesting aspects of his identity are his close ties to Africa. In his "A More Perfect Union" speech, Obama is much aware of this fact but still enjoins Americans, in the spirit and character of their exceptionalist nature, to nominate him as president. In the first few sentences Obama writes:

> We the people, in order to form a more perfect union. Two hundred and twenty years ago, in a hall that still stands across the street, a group of men gathered and, with these simple words, launched America's improbable experiment in democracy. (Obama, 2008, p. 1)

Obama then goes on to speak of some major challenges that have confronted the American experiment such as "the sin of slavery," (Obama, 2008, p. 1) equality, liberty and justice, which "should be perfected over time" (Obama, 2008, p. 1). After opening his speech with a historical tone and touching on the "improbable" character of America he goes on to say:

> This belief comes from my unyielding faith in the decency and generosity of the American people. But it also comes from my own American story. I am the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas….I am married to a black American who carries within her the blood of slaves and slave owners—an inheritance we pass on to our two precious daughters. I have brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, uncles and cousins, of every race ad every hue scattered across three continents, and for as long as I live, I will never forget that in no other country on Earth is my story even possible. (Obama, 2008, p.1)

The fundamental point here is that Obama is calling on the "unique" and "distinctive" spirit of Americans to do what others may see as improbable. He is calling on America to once again be a leader by electing someone who is different from all other preceding presidents in terms of his racial and ethnic and origins. Once again the hope and abiding faith Obama demonstrates in America as an exceptionalist country is seen

here. The basic idea of news framing involves the notion that discourse provides a lens, frame or narrative through which to view an issue or personality. This normally involves the "advocacy of certain ideas" (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 56). The central organizing idea or story line behind Obama's speech is centered on his multicultural identity, which is substantially and exceptionally Afrocentric compared to other black Americans. Keenly aware of this, Obama refers to himself as an "improbable candidate" who is calling on Americans to live up to their exceptionalist character. Here Obama is clear about his origins directly citing his African heritage. He doesn't hide it but brings it up early in his speech to indicate the centrality of his ethnicity to his identity. This embracement of his heritage is considered theoretically as an Afrocentric act. In view of this, Obama clearly states that his story as the son of an African father from Kenya with a Swahili first name and a Luo given name "hasn't made me the most conventional candidate. But it is a story that 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" (Obama, 2008, p. 1).

Framing is viewed as presenting information in a unique way so that certain elements or themes are emphasized and foregrounded (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Afrocentric constructions recognize culture, multiculturalism and difference from an optimistic perspective with the goal of achieving balance and harmony. Here again, Obama's exceptionalism is rooted in his Afrocentric difference premised on his multiculturalism which he celebrates (in true Afrocentric form) rather than subjugates by affirming a belief in America as a place of possibility or probabilities.

Memories of a Father: Roots/Origin

We can observe elements of Obama's Afrocentric character through discourse about his father and his connections to Kenya. Obama's life story is a major part of his speeches and in the process he reveals his roots, origins or Africanity when he chooses to mention and present the narrative of his father and his African roots to his audience. This

frame was constructed both through Obama's father's immigrant experience and his

African background:

> My father was a foreign student, born and raised in a small village in Kenya. He grew up herding goats, went to school in a tin-roof shack. Through hard work and perseverance my father got a scholarship to study in a magical place… (Obama, 2004)

Barack Obama Senior was born and raised in Kogelo, Kenya, which is often

referred to in public discourse as Obama's ancestral home and is the "small village"

Obama talked about in the above paragraph. It is no surprise therefore that Kogelo was

the site of enormous global attention during the presidential campaign, witnessing visits

from several major local and international news networks. Obama Sr., a member of the

Luo ethnic group, traveled to the United States in 1959 to attend the University of Hawaii

where he later met and married Ann Durham, Obama's mother (Obama, 1995).

Obama's discursive construction of his identity includes using the thematically

reinforcing image of his father, which brings to the fore his Afrocentric background and

the immigrant narrative of his family. Though he identifies as an American and

specifically as an African American, he is conscious of his diverse or transnational

heritage, stating at one point that: "I stand here today, grateful for the diversity of my

heritage…." (Obama, 2008). Part of this heritage is derived from his Kenyan cultural

ethnicity which is a central part of multi-layered or pluralistic identity.

Thus the inclusion of his father's narrative illustrates his Afrocentricity while

Obama Sr.'s status then as a foreign student relates to the trope of immigration present in

America social and political life. It tells us how Obama valued his father and the

historical ties he has with his "small village": Kogelo. This is consistent with Banita's

(2010) view that Obama discourse, though political in a major way, can also be construed

as a "conventional type of ethnic and immigrant writing" (p. 24). Even though Obama

mentions in other settings that he was raised by a single mother, the memory of his father

lives with him, and as we see here has become a major part of his identity.

Another speech in which the "Memories of a father" frame is reflected is his speech in Berlin titled "A World Stands as One". This speech allowed Barack Obama to speak both as an American and also to show how his cultural distinctiveness across several times and spaces which permits him to call himself a "citizen of the world". Such a description satisfies Tutton's (2012) characterization of an Afropolitan as a first generation African immigrant with different ethnic mixes and a global outlook. The constructionist view of framing is seen as the very process of speech or discourse which enables the individual to present racial, ethnic, social and cultural aspect of that individual that foregrounds several aspects of reality to constitute their preferred identity (Van Gorp, 2007). If we assume, as most scholars do, that the social construction of identity can be multiple and shifting (Fair, 1996) and that language and text allow individuals to decide what include and exclude or what to foreground and background (Fairclough 1995) then the discursive highlights of Obama's speech should give an indication of his own identity framing:

> I know that I don't look like the Americans who've previously spoken in this great city. The journey that led me here is improbable. My mother was born in the heartland of America, but my father grew up herding goats in Kenya. His father— my grandfather—was a cook, a domestic servant to the British. (Obama, 2008b)

Africanity is represented here through the memories of his father and grandfather. According to Castells (1997), identity is composed of different units such as race, ethnicity, geography, biology, productive and reproductive institutions, history and collective memory. identity "ensures a unity of the individual's personality overtime; it enables one to be oneself in different situations" (Rimskii, 2010, p. 13). Obama in this speech summoned the history of his persona through his ethnic connections to his goat-herding Kenyan father while at the same time admitting the coexistence of different identities, thereby making him an "unconventional" candidate. It is a balancing act that is important in the political process but which Obama has repeatedly not shied away from in most of his speeches as he seeks to emphasize and consciously constructive a narrative

about his identity which is rooted in his father's African origins. Working through his diverse identity make up can be confusing and often winding but one can make the case that Obama refuses to background his African ethnicity and actually revels in the heritage of this identity. To put it another way, Obama celebrates his Afrocentricity. This act has theoretical backing as one can identify it as an Afrocentric act—that is the appreciation of Africa as a primary component of identity construction. In addition it needs to be pointed out that Obama used the memory of his father and the sufferings experienced by his grandfather in colonial Africa to create a commonality of suffering with African Americans.

Through the selective process of framing we are able to gain insights into the prominent aspects of Obama's identity. He underscores the importance of his father for part of his identity message by not just mentioning where he came from but how his father's story brought him to America and his own (Obama Jr.'s) birth. Such biographic representations generate an individual awareness of self with respect to multiple realities and finally bring a deeper theme to one's identity which in the case of Obama is that of pluralism, unity, hope and ambition all which can be traced to the "dreams" and "audacity" of his African father.

The third speech in which the frame of Obama's father and Kenyan roots is evident is his speech delivered to commemorate the 42nd anniversary of Bloody Sunday in Selma, Alabama. Obama's "Selma" speech paid tribute to and honored the memories of the civil rights movement and the "giants" who contributed to fighting for equality and justice particularly within the black community. However, in a political year, the speech also had some political undertones: to cement his stature within the African American community as a credible black politician. In this sense the speech that Obama gave to commemorate the civil rights march was heavily tilted towards African American voters. For the purposes of this dissertation, the present analysis discusses recognizable elements

of Afrocentric discourse present in his text. Here again, the memory of his father is identified as an Afrocentric frame.

In Obama's speech at Selma, Obama strikes a common thematic unit between African-American and African history by speaking of discrimination, and segregation; sufferings that both communities have undergone as a result of slavery and colonialism. Obama himself recognizes his atypical African American background based not just on his white parentage but his Africanity as well. He states that:

> …a lot of people been asking, well, you know, your father was from Africa, your mother, she's a white woman from Kansas. I'm not sure that you have the same experience. (Obama, 2008).

This statement indicates that Obama is acutely aware of his difference even among the African-American community. The importance of his direct Africanity through his socialized and Luo clan affiliations epitomizes the Afrocentric component in this speech. Herein, Obama tries to reach out to black America while relying on the colonial experience of his Kenyan Grandfather in what in the Weberian sense of identity (lineage, ancestral and heritage connections) will be the inextricable connection between the experiences of blacks in Africa and the United States:

> And I tried to explain, you don't understand. You see, my Grandfather was a cook to the British in Kenya. Grew up in a small village and all his life, that's all he was -- a cook and a house boy. And that's what they called him, even when he was 60 years old. They called him a house boy. They wouldn't call him by his last name. Sound familiar?

The discourse in this portion of Obama's speech is Afrocentric because it brings together the enduring symbolic relationships between both communities with Barack Obama proceeding directly from an Afrocentric standpoint as the son of an African father. More specifically the productive lens of Afrocentrism is used to emphasize historical, social and identitarian linkages between Africa and African Americans.

The frame of Obama's father and his roots is yet again reflected in his speech (titled "The American Promise") delivered at the 2008 Democratic National Convention in Denver, Colorado. According to Stewart (2011) "Afrocentric discourse contributes

intellectually to the world's history as a component of multicultural realities and

promotes community by celebrating diversity" (p. 275). In this speech, Barack Obama

once again referred to his multicultural background rooted in his Kenyan father's image

and his current achievement as the Democratic Party's standard bearer:

> Four years ago I stood before you and told you my story—of the brief union
> between a young man from Kenya and a young woman from Kansas…

Once again the central element of Afrocentricity in Obama's speech is linked to

the memories of his father. Pan and Kosicki's (1993) framing definition adopted for this

study perceives the concept as one where subjects cite events or biographical episodes to

support a thesis or storyline when conveying messages. In regard to identity construction

therefore, Obama's framing of his identity includes a constant reference to the memory of

his "Kenyan father". This is perceived as an Afrocentric act because Obama clearly

foregrounds the memory of his Kenyan father as part of his identity.

Africanity and African Cultural Values:

Community/Communality

While Barack Obama's primary audience was American—and he constantly tied

his speech to enduring American values—he achieved this by sometimes grounding his

rhetoric in what can be seen as the Afrocentric version of the American dream. He often

did this using rhetoric that can be labeled communitarian: language that recognizes

collectivism, togetherness and the importance of community. This is consistent with other

observations by scholars such as Rowland and Jones (2007) who believe that Obama's

address at the 2004 convention, for instance, was both a moment of re-enactment and a

reconstitution of the American moral voice. One of the major frames to emerge from this

Afrocentric analysis of Obama's speeches is one that seeks to bind people together

through an emphasis on collectivism or communitarianism, which is a major feature of

Afrocentrism. Communalism in Africa embodies a sense of community or collectivism,

Obama acknowledges this basic idea in his address when he speaks of "another

ingredient in the American saga". The paragraph which is most representative of this

frame can be seen when Obama says that Americans wield:

> A belief that we are connected as one people. If there's a child on the south side
> of Chicago who can't read, that matters to me, even if it's not my child….I am my
> brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper. It's what allows us to pursue our
> individual dreams yet still come together as a single American family. (Obama,
> 2004, p. 2)

In this frame Obama tries to appeal to his audience by using a frame of

collectivity and unity either to show that he is no different or that he will work together

with them to achieve a common purpose. This type of rhetoric is in line with some of

Asante's (1998) elements of Afrocentricity such as the recognition of community as a

living principle. For instance the sense of living as a community of brothers and sisters—

a prevailing characteristic of most African societies is also reflected in Obama's

discourse. Similar examples of communalism include his call on Americans to look out

for senior citizens:

> If there's a senior citizen somewhere who can't pay for her prescription and has to
> choose between medicine and rent, that makes my life poorer, even if it's not my
> grandmother. If there's an Arab American family being rounded up without
> benefit of an attorney or due process that threatens my civil liberties. (Obama,
> 2004, p. 2)

The use of such inclusive language in Obama's speech was a pragmatic way of

appealing to Americans to join his campaign and participate in solving the country's

problems. In fact, the word "we," which denotes inclusiveness, is used more frequently

than "I". In so doing he gave a voice to voters and called on them to work together to

build stronger communities.

The next example of the Africanity and African values of community frame can

be found in Obama's "A More Perfect Union" speech. In general, several Afrocentric

studies have validated the idea that most African societies are based on a collectivist

culture associated with a spirit of togetherness and unity (Asante, 1998, 2002; Badejo,

1992; Stewart 2011). According to Asante (1998), nothing is more beautiful in African

societies than "the ecstasy that occurs when a group of people have got on the same road

to harmony…that is a true manifestation of spirituality, the true materiality of life which can only be determined when the person joins in the collective expression of power" (p. 203).

Barack Obama clearly expressed this collectivist spirit through his emphasis on unity and togetherness:

> I chose to run for the presidency at this moment in history because I believe deeply that we cannot solve the challenges of our time unless we solve them together—unless we perfect our union by understanding that we may have different stories, but we hold common hopes; that we may not look the same and we may not have come from the same place, but we all want to move in the same direction—towards a better future for our children and our grandchildren (Obama, 2008)

According to Kinder and Sanders (1990) frames are embedded in political discourse and unearthed by deciphering common themes, patterns or story lines which are inherently related to meaning. The above quote points to the mainstreaming of unity as a dominant narrative in Obama's speech. Obama, due to his difference and multicultural identity uses the theme of unity to bring the country together. While individual agency seems to be a major theme in his opponent's speeches, a close look at the speech indicates an emphasis on collectivity and unity. This, according to him was a result of "how hungry the American people were for this message of unity." With regards to Reverend Wright's comments, Obama's overriding concern was to condemn the pastor's comments and focus on his call for unity rather than divisiveness:

> As such Reverend Wright's comments were not only wrong but divisive, divisive at a time when we need to come together to solve a set of monumental problems—two wars, a terrorist threat, a failing economy, a chronic health care crisis and potentially devastating climate change…(Obama, 2008)

In his speech Barack Obama's stance on togetherness is evident and seemed to be derived from his experiences with communitarian societies outside the United States. He is clear in his concern for working together. Thus Obama demonstrates the need to limit the role of race and ethnicity as a tool for politics and treat it more as a means to social unification despite the differences. This collectivist take on American society gives rise

to a whole new take on the American dream: one that is based on a near perfection of the union based on a communal coherence as the engine of development, governmental interventions and social equality.

Additionally examples of the "community" frame are also present in Obama's speech announcing his candidature for the presidency. These were fundamental referential statements or nods to the symbols of Africanity in Obama's speech. To be specific, the Afrocentric element of Obama's speech announcing his candidacy for president centered on his call for unity and inclusiveness. Afrocentricity is widely viewed as discourse that pays attention to togetherness and community (Asante, 1998, 2002; Schiele, 1998; Stewart, 2011). In his announcement of his candidacy for the presidency, Obama relies on a basic narrative of togetherness, making conscious efforts to couch his run for the presidency as an undertaking done on behalf of, and with the people. Obama contended that America's problems cannot be solved by individuals but by Americans working together. Candidate Obama (2008 p.1) calls on the electorate to "…begin by working together" in order to transform America. He believes that government intervention and efforts at forging a better society for the communal good should not be ignored. Instead it can be harnessed for the benefit the whole community. Here again the basic theme underlying Obama's worldview subscribes to the principle of community as the primary means of solving society's problems. The approach is right in tandem with the tenets of Afrocentricity:

> And that is why, in the shadow of the Old State Capitol, where Lincoln once called on a divided house to stand together; where common hopes and common dreams still…I stand before you today to announce my candidacy for President of the United States. (Obama, 2008).

Consistent with the Afrocentric element of community or working together towards common aspirations, Obama summons Americans to "converge" and work together to achieve their "common" or shared goals. This theme is a powerful one (despite its negative connotations in certain quarters) as Obama signals his belief in

communalism as a basic premise for his announcement. There were other examples of Obama's Afrocentric tenets of unity and togetherness. In the quote below the basic framework underlying Obama's worldview is one that subscribes to the principle of community as the primary means of solving society's problems. The approach is one that is right in tandem with the tenets of Afrocentricity.

> In the face of a politics that's shut you out, that's told you to settle, that's divided us for too long, you believe we can be *one people*, reaching for what's possible, building that *more perfect union*. (Obama, 2008).

According to Pan and Kosicki (1993), one way to decipher frames through storylines or narratives is through the use of key words that indicate a politician's preferences and proactivity in foregrounding certain images or frames. The quote above contains two key phrases that characterize Obama's frame of communality. The second phrase "more perfect union" (Constitution of the United States, 1854) is significant here because of the underlying meaning of unity associated with it. We realize as well that Obama relied on this idea of a "perfect union" to make the case for his cross cutting identity and solidly uniting the different aspects of American society by using it as the title of his future speech on race ("A More Perfect Union").

There are further examples of Obama's Afrocentric frame in his speech announcing his candidature for the White House in February 2007. Because Afrocentricity is premised on a philosophical African tradition of interconnectivity and interdependence—all characteristics of the "communality" frame— it is not hard to decipher symbols, words and elements of Afrocentricity in Obama's speech. Again the rhetorical strategy that Obama depends on to achieve this goal is repetition of phrases that allude to the Afrocentric language of interconnectivity. In the middle of his speech Obama makes a clarion call to Americans. He repeatedly uses the phrase "Let us" to start the next six sentences right in the middle of his speech, sometimes using it twice in the same sentence.

So let us begin. Let us begin this hard work together. Let us transform this nation. Let us be the generation that reshapes our economy to compete in the digital age. Let's set high standards for our schools and give them the resources they need to succeed. Let's recruit a new army of teachers, and give them better pay and more support in exchange for more accountability. Let's make college more affordable, and let's invest in scientific research, and let's lay down broadband lines through the heart of inner cities and rural towns all across America. (Obama, 2007, p.1)

This repetitive discourse and the continuous use of the words 'us" supports the frame of unity and a conceptual grounding of Afrocentricity in Obama's speech. Given the importance of the communal system and group membership in African societies one can certainly say this pattern reflects of Afrocentric discourse.

In this speech Obama frequently uses the word "we" instead of the first person to indicate group membership and all-inclusiveness. In fact throughout the speech Obama uses the word "we" 52 times compared to "I" which he uses 29 times. There are also several parts of the speech where Obama effectively uses repetition to frame his inclusive discourse:

Let us the generation that ends poverty…Let's do this. Let us be the generation that finally tackles our health care crisis…..Let's be the generation that says….Let's be the generation that finally frees America….Let's be the generation that never forgets what happened on that September." (Obama, 2007, p.1)

Other examples of Obama's belief in a culture of inclusiveness and community can be traced to his narration of how his experience as a community organizer in Springfield awaked him to the sense of shared responsibility and working together:

It was here, in Springfield, where I saw all that is America converge -- farmers and teachers, businessmen and laborers, all of them with a story to tell, all of them seeking a seat at the table, all of them clamoring to be heard. I made lasting friendships here -- friends that I see in the audience today…I came to understand that our cherished rights of liberty and equality depend on the active participation of an awakened electorate….we can assume the best in people instead of the worst. It was here in Springfield, where North, South, East and West come together that I was reminded of the essential decency of the American people— where I came to believe that through this decency, we can build a more hopeful America. (Obama, 2007, p.1)

Clearly Obama's experiences had shaped his sense of shared responsibility and the dominant role that government must play in people's lives. He is a community man, a people's man, a community organizer. His idea of the American dream is not solely

based on individual agency but an equal emphasis on shared communal goals. Framing

constitutes how an individual makes sense of the world, most often denoted "by quotes,

events citied, propositions implied and evidence presented to support a thesis of a

storyline when conveying messages" as suggested by Pan and Kosicki (1993 p.61). We

can safely point that Obama's worldview—as presented and implied in his speech— is

not at variance with African philosophical thought, which stresses communal values as an

important component of individual identity.

Thus far, I have focused on examples of the Afrocentric frame in Barack Obama's

speeches. As we have seen, this frame is present in his 2004 Democratic Convention

speech, his announcement for president speech and his "A More Perfect Union" speech.

At this point, it is necessary to point out that this frame was the most dominant in

Obama's speeches as it emerged in four other speeches which are also discussed here.

Evidential support of Obama's theme on community is seen in his Berlin speech

which he titled "A World as One." Barack Obama gave that speech on a trip to Europe to

bolster his foreign policy credentials. In his Berlin speech, Obama uses the opportunity to

speak about his belief in working together to achieve common goals, stability, and

unanimity, cooperation instead of unilateralism and partnerships instead of individualism.

Based on Pan and Kosicki's (1993) definition of framing operationalized in this study,

key words, quotes and similar phrases tend to construct a frame or theme in discourse.

The key quotes, words and phrases or phrases Obama repeatedly used to generate a

theme of collectives and togetherness include:

> Look at Berlin where Germans and Americans have learned to work together,
> ….Look at Berlin where...we never forget our common humanity…People of the
> world—look at Berlin, where a wall came down, a continent came together, and
> history proved that there is no challenge too great for a world that stands as
> one….And if we're honest with each other, we know that sometimes, on both
> sides of the Atlantic, we have drifted apart, and forgotten our shared destiny…The
> walls between races and tribes; natives and immigrants; Christian and Muslim and
> Jew cannot stand. These now are the walls we must tear down. (Obama, 2008,
> p.1)

Obama's discourse moves beyond the mere political rhetoric of calling for unity and seeks to patently focus on the need for a new world order of internationalism and reconciliation where the U.S. acts as a partner in the spirit of building a shared world community.

Further support or examples of this frame is found in Obama's 2008 Democratic Convention speech in Denver, Colorado. While recognizing the role of individual responsibility, Obama makes sure to emphasize the salience of the community to significantly project his idea of the American dream or American Promise with a major emphasis on communal ideals or in modern terms the role of government (which can be viewed within an Afrocentric frame) while not forgetting the American value of individual responsibility:

> That's the promise of America—the idea that we are responsible for ourselves, but that we also rise or fall as one nation; the fundamental belief that I am my brother's keeper; I am my sister's keeper. (Obama, 2008c)

An analysis of Obama's speeches to the NAACP and the Urban League Convention also discovered the Afrocentric frame of community. An analysis of these two speeches revealed that he mostly touched on domestic issues and current issues specifically related to the African American community in the United States. In scholarly studies, it is well known that framing includes what is excluded as well as what is included. We can thus interpret this to mean that Obama was discursively operating within the racial and ideological confines of identity politics as defined by his audience in order to fruitfully create a connection. Obama's NAACP and Urban League speeches were aimed at establishing his bona fides as a product of the civil rights movement and the promoter of its ideals. During the presidential primary, virtually the entire African American establishment supported Hillary Clinton (AP, 2008; *Chicago Tribune*, 2008; Hearn, 2008). He wanted to graft himself into the civil rights narrative in order to allay African American skepticism that he was not black enough. As a result Obama used the memory of his grandfather's experiences with, slavery, discrimination and subjugation to

connect with the sufferings and experiences of the African Americans and the civil rights movement in America. He writes that his grandfather had to: "…carry a passbook around because Africans in their own land, in their own country, at that time, because it was a British colony, could not move about freely. They could only go where they were told to go. They could only work where they were told to work." (Obama, 2008). Having said all this it must be acknowledged that the major frame of Afrocentricity in Obama's NAACP and Urban League Convention speeches focused on community. The quote selected was used in both speeches:

> I wanted to do my part in the ongoing battle for opportunity in this country. So I went to work for a group of churches to help turn around neighborhoods that were devastated when the local steel plants closed. And I reached out to community leaders – black, brown, and white – and together, we gave job training to the jobless, set up after school programs to help keep kids off the streets, and block by block, we helped turn those neighborhoods around. (Obama, 2008)

> Clearly, the ensuing discussion shows that this sense of community—of a core

identity belief and worldview which was first expressed during his national political career launching 2004 Democratic convention speech and which he's repeating four years later as a national party candidate—is an important part of Obama's beliefs and discourse. Obama, as seen in most African cultures, inherently believes that the community, the government, must play a major role in the life of people:

> Our government should work for us not against us. It should help us, not hurt us. It should ensure opportunity not just for those with the most money and influence, but for every American who's willing to work. (Obama, 2008c)

> According to Emaka (2012):

> Communalism in Africa is a system that is both suprasensible and material in its terms of reference. Both are found in a society that is believed by the Africans to be originally "godmade" because it transcends the people who live in it now, and it is "Man-made" because it cannot be culturally understood independent of those who live in it. Therefore, the authentic African is known and identified in, by and through his community.

> In sum, through a critical analysis of Obama's rhetoric, we can identify elements

of Afrocentric values in his speeches. From an Afrocentric standpoint, then, Obama's

Afrocentricity is not only evident through his lineage or memory of his father, but his rhetoric also qualifies as Afrocentric due to its emphasis on community.

Subtheme: Rights and humanism frame. A related subtheme within the frame of communalism in Obama's speech is that of humanism or human rights. The idea of communalism encompasses a devotion to considering the needs of others, a focus on human values, rights, justice and the other human needs and interests. Obama touches briefly on these issues as he seeks to connect the frame of rights in his autobiography to that of the American historical experience of equality and rights advocacy. He does this by using the experience and memory of his paternal grandfather by saying: "…my grandfather was a cook, a domestic servant…" (Obama, 2004). He later links this to the broader narrative on slavery in America, its abolishment as well as the struggles and hopes that are embodied this issue: "…the hope of slaves sitting around a fire singing freedom songs…" (Obama, 2004). This may be a relatively minor frame or subframe but it is significant for the purposes of this study because it reveals how Obama had to rely on experiences of his African grandfather, who was a domestic servant under British colonial rule, to illustrate his personal family experiences with slavery.

To conclude, this chapter set out to analyze frames of Afrocentricity in relevant Obama speeches. In all, three major frames were unearthed: "American exceptionalism," "Memories of a father: Roots/origin," and finally "African cultural values of community or communality." A minor or subframe on "Rights" was also found. The themes of exceptionalism was found in his 2004 Democratic Convention speech and his "Race" speech titled "A More Perfect Union." The frames containing "Roots and memories of a father" were found in four speeches: the Selma speech, his speech to the 2004 Democratic Convention, his 2008 Democratic Convention speech, and his speech in Berlin (A World as One). The last frame on African values of community/communality was found in all the speeches analyzed, making this the predominant frame in Obama's

speeches. The chapter that follows contains a similar Afrocentric framing analysis

Obama's two bestsellers: *Dreams from My Father* and *Audacity of Hope.*

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF OBAMA'S *DREAMS FROM MY FATHER*

AND *AUDACITY OF HOPE*

The previous chapter examined six relevant Obama speeches with regard to the framing of his Africanity. Three Afrocentric frames emerged from the ensuing analysis: "American exceptionalism," "Memories of a father: roots/origins," and "African values of community." This chapter primarily examines two of Obama's books to unearth any existing frames of Afrocentricity. The two books analyzed are *Dreams from My Father* and *Audacity of Hope*. Obama's identity construction did not only occur in speeches and media reports but in his books as well. A candidate's speech may give snapshots but his books could also give us more insights into the identity construction and framing process. This chapter analyzes themes of Africanity in Obama's books.

The book *Dreams from My Father* details Obama's life in his own words from birth until he entered law school. Launched in 1995, the book helped Obama not only narrate his experiences with race while growing up, but how it affected him and shaped his identity as a multiracial (Obama, 1995). *Dreams from My Father* was named by TIME Magazine as one of the top 100 books written since 1923 (*The New York Times*, 2006; Washington Post, 2006). After it was launched it immediately climbed to *The New York Times* bestseller list and stayed there for 270 weeks. The audio version of the book won the 2006 award for best spoken word album in the Grammy awards (Bookweb, 2006). In the 4, 650, 000 copies of the book have been sold (*The New York Times*, 2006; *Washington Post*, 2006). The book, written in a reflective tone gives insights into Obama life journey, the absence of his father, his childhood, his unusual race and how that affected how he viewed himself as well as how others viewed him. Though the book seeks to tell about Obama's life story, the overriding theme rests on how Obama navigated challenges surrounding his race and identity through relationships with his family and friends from both within and outside the United States. Divided into three

parts, his childhood, life in Chicago and trip to Africa Obama presents how his he coped with an issue which lied at the heart of his person and place in the world: his identity (Obama, 1995).

Obama's second book *Audacity of Hope* was published in 2006. After it was launched the book quickly rose to No. 1 on the *New York Times* best seller list and on Amazon.com ahead of other authors such as John Grisham and Bob Woodward. Obama received a total of $1.9 million book advance and remained on the New York Times best seller list for 30 weeks (Scott, 2008; *The New York Times*, 2008; AP, 2008). In 2008, the audio version of the book also won the Grammy award for best spoken word album (Bookweb, 2008). The book reads more as a political biography with Obama interposing his analysis of political issues with his own personal life story focusing on his mixed and foreign heritage. Divided into nine chapters the book focuses on themes such as family, race, and faith, values, Republicans and Democrats, opportunity and the world beyond our borders. Most of the ground covered in this book relate to domestic U.S. policy, however this study by reading and re-reading of the text, analyzed those aspects of the book related to his Africanity (Obama, 2006).

<u>Afrocentric Analysis of Obama's *Dreams from My Father*</u>

"My name belonged and so I belonged…"

Obama, 1995, p. 305

Roots and Memories of a Father: Distance and Shame

The first thematic grouping of Obama's Africanity in his book was one of distance from and shame of the continent. This frame was arrived at by pulling together Obama's depiction of his father at an early stage of his life. The first mention of Obama's father in his book came in the early parts of the first chapter where he writes of him:

> He was an African, I would learn, a Kenyan of the Luo tribe, born on the shores of Lake Victorian in a place called Alego. (p. 9)

The central problem of identity formation for Obama at this stage of his life was not just dealing with the absence of his father but the scorn, stereotyping and public shame involved with just not being black but an African. Obama suffered double stereotyping as a result of this. The shame and malignancy that Obama's African name brought him was experienced right from his first day of school in America (Punahou Academy, Hawaii) when his teacher took attendance. "When she read my full name, I heard titters break across the room" (p. 59). The situation gets worse when the teacher inquired further about Obama's tribal connections.

> Her question brought out more giggles…and I remained speechless for a moment. When I finally said Luo, a sandy-haired boy behind me repeated the word in a loud hoot, like the sound of a monkey, The children could no longer contain themselves, and it took a stern reprimand from Miss Hefty before the class would settle…I spent the rest of the day in a daze. A red headed girl asked to touch my hair….a ruddy-faced boy asked if my father ate people. (p. 60).

It can thus be said without any doubt that from the earliest times Obama's name and his African ethnicity were framed just as it occurred to him: a matter of public shame, mockery and opprobrium. Nyong'o (2009) aptly interprets this as the "acoustic image that is instantly mimed in a thrilling whoop of racist pleasure" (p.1). Conceptually this episode is reflective of the old European theorization of Africa which Obama himself quotes later on in the book when he says "The way Conrad sees it, Africa's the cesspool of the world, black folks are savages, and my contact with them breeds infection" (p. 102). Thus the place and space of Africa as it was represented in this section of Obama's book was one which was more akin to the old European myths and archetypes as a "vast dark continent…made up of primordial chaos" (Mbembe, 2001 p. 3). For a long time he used the name "Barry" instead of Barack saying of his father's adoption of this version:

> He probably used Barry because it was easier to pronounce. You know it helped him fit in. Then it got passed on to me. So I could fit in. (Obama, 1995, p. 104).

Obama attacked the shame frame head on in order to dispel it publicly but in his reflections contained in his book, he narrates how prominent it was in his early years. The shame frame concerning Obama's Africanity was even more pronounced in his own

narrative as contained in the book. The visit by Barack Obama Sr. to junior Obama's elementary school was clearly his worst nightmare. In order to steer away from the "primordial" image of his father's ethnicity Obama admits that he lied about his tribal royalty: " a part of me knew that it was a lie" (p. 63). Despite his apprehension, his mother encouraged him to be calm. He went to the library to learn more about the Luo but was disappointed because there wasn't much to find. When his teacher, Miss Hefty told him his father will be speaking to their class, Obama wrote:

> I couldn't imagine worse news. I spent that night and all of the next day trying to suppress thoughts of the inevitable: the faces of my classmates when they heard about mud huts; all my lies exposed, the painful jokes afterward. Each time I remembered, my body squirmed as if it had received a jolt to the nerves. (p. 69).

Africanity also involves a search for one's roots (Asante, 1998; Mazama, 2001). Here, Obama's framing of his Africanity is in terms of his search for his roots based on the memory of his father. Coming to terms with his roots is an important part of Obama's identity formation, and it is therefore not surprising that this frame is often refracted in his speeches. For example, Alex Haley's "Roots", which brought African American history and culture to mainstream America, was part of his own journey of discovering his identity and personal heritage. Tracing of one's roots is a legitimate part of identity framing because identity formation involves selecting and emphasizing those parts of one's identity and heritage that one seeks to foreground in order to form an image or conception of "self" (Gardiner, 2003).

Roots and Memories of a Father: Negotiation, Confusion
and Emptiness

> "What did Marcus call you just now? Some African name, wasn't it?"
>
> Obama, 1995, p. 104

For Obama to come to terms with his identity was never an easy task. Aside from the shame that his name and Africanity brought him in his early years, Obama grew up still confused and haunted by a feeling of emptiness. This is because, despite being black

he still felt a sense of alienation from the Black community because of his mixed race and because his black lineage was not directly from the African American community in the United States. Resigned to his fate, he commented: "the only thing you could choose as your own was withdrawal into a smaller and smaller coil of rage…" (Obama, 1995, p. 104). Far from solving his identity conundrum, Obama's association with the Black community when he went to college provided other concrete examples of his instability when he compared himself to other black colleagues. He said of Marcus, one of his closest friends in college:

> His lineage was pure, his loyalties clear, and for that reason he always made me feel a little off balance, like a younger brother who, no matter what he does, will always be one step behind. (Obama, 1995, p.101)

When Marcus called him Barack in front of Regina, another African American student leader, (instead of Barry) she said: "What did Marcus call you just now? Some African name, wasn't it?" (Obama, 1995, p. 104).

Perhaps, by virtue of his name, Obama appeared first and foremost to his friends as "African" more than "black" or African American. There was an insatiable quest from Obama to achieve a sense of belonging in the black American community during his college years. This was evident whenever he described meetings with his black colleagues and leaders. Of Regina, again Barack wrote: "Her voice evoked a vision of black life in all its possibility, a vision that filled me with longing—a longing for place, and a fixed and definite history" (p. 104). In no uncertain terms Obama concluded this episode and the feeling of identity emptiness he felt by admitting: "I envied her." (Obama, 1995, p. 104). Basically in terms of his identity framing, Obama was still searching.. It was at this stage then that he began to consider his African ancestry as well. He remembers a line (related to his Africanity) from a letter his father once wrote him:

> Barry, even if it is only for a few days, the important thing is that you know your people, and also that you know where you belong. (Obama, 1995, p. 114)

Obviously Obama's father, schooled in the paternal lineage of his Luo ethnicity, saw Obama as an African first. Scholars such as Marcia (1980) see one's identity as their source of belongingness and individual history. As previously laid out in the dissertation's conceptual framework, ethnicity is also perceived by Waters (1999) as encompassing groups that share common ancestral origins. Obama's framing of his identity assumes an Afrocentric tone here because at this point his "frame" or window of thought, as Bateson (1972) postulates, is cued by his father's memory or letter concerning his belongingness to an African heritage. At this point, Obama does not come around to accept his Africanity wholly but this letter was a major contributing factor for his eventual decision to visit Kenya. However tragedy struck when Barack Obama Sr. died before his son could make the long awaited trip. This further postpones Obama's quest to reconnect with his African ancestry and does little to solve his identity puzzle.

From a framing perspective, frames are used to manage, to negotiate and to comprehend information and identities. Obviously Obama's framing of his identity here was one of distance and emptiness. However it opened the door for him to explore his Africanity by considering and eventually visiting Kenya. One could make the case that

Obama's decision to go to Chicago as a community organizer after his graduation from Harvard Law School was based on a sense of altruism but was also very much an attempt to achieve a sense of connection to the black community. This lingering worry is never openly admitted by Obama, but his unconscious acts and language sometimes betrayed him, leading one of his colleagues at the organization he worked for in Chicago to comment: "You don't need to prove yourself to us, Barack. We love you, man. Jesus loves you!" (Obama, 1995 p.226). The point here is that Obama was in search of his identity (or group belongingness), and this particular journey, as we will see in the next thematic frame, includes his acceptance of his African ancestry as part of his multicultural identity.

African Lineage: Africanity and Acceptance

"A circle was beginning to close so that I might finally recognize myself."

Obama, 2006, p. 377

The major significant point of this frame after a holistic reading of Obama's book is that Obama's trip to Africa, and his reconnection with his ancestry not only accentuated his Africanity but brought his search for identity full circle. It was not forced, it was not mechanical, but it was not clean or methodical either. It was as instinctive as it was spontaneous. It just happened. Several instances in his book prove this point. Even before Obama landed in Kenya, on the stop-over in Spain, Obama wrote of the discord in his feelings:

> It wasn't that Europe wasn't beautiful; everything was just as I'd imagined it. It just wasn't mine. I felt as if I were living out someone else's romance; the incompleteness of my own history stood between me and the sites I saw like a hard plane of glass…. (Obama, 1995, p. 301)

He then talks about a stranger from Senegal he met during the stop and the feeling of attachment he felt despite their unfamiliarity. He even admits that he cannot even remember the name of the Senegalese man but "yet as we walked toward the Ramblas, I had felt as if I knew him as well as any man; that coming from opposite sides of the earth we were somehow making the same journey…" (Obama, 1995, p. 303).

It has to be remembered that it did not take long for Obama to begin to achieve that deep sense of belonging once in Africa. It was not long search. It was not a ritual that needed to be fulfilled in the sense that African Americans see their return to Africa. It was a purified sense of identity, which provided a sense of satisfaction formed by the link between his father and the rest of his ancestors and transmitted by a present experience of heritage and inheritance. His experience at the airport provides support for this suggestion. After reporting the loss of his baggage to an airport official, the lady asked "You wouldn't be related to Dr. Obama, by any chance?" (Obama, 1995, p. 305). Obama told him that was his father after which the lady offered her condolences and spoke of her

family's relationship with the senior Obama as family friends. The younger Obama's response says it all:

> That had never happened before, I realized; not in Hawaii, not in Indonesia, not in Los Angeles or New York or Chicago. For the first time in my life, I felt the comfort, the firmness of identity that a name might provide, how it could carry an entire history in other people's memories, so that they might nod and say knowingly, "Oh, you are so and so's son". No one here in Kenya would ask how to spell my name, or mangle it with an unfamiliar tongue. My name belonged and so I belonged, drawn into a web of relationships, alliances, and grudges that I did not yet understand. (Obama, 1995, p. 305)

The major result of this experience is that it gave Obama the experience of Afrocentricity which embraces the philosophy of African cultural and identity completeness (Asante, 1998; Gikandi, 2011; Stewart, 2011). Within the context of framing, certain keywords words cannot be underestimated: "firmness", "identity", "comfort" all point to the recognition and validation of an authentic black cultural experience. In terms of identity, it granted Obama a "membership of a social group" (Rimskii, 2010, p. 7) in this case, African. Following Obama's experience in Kenya was a process of steady engagement with the land of his father, which brought about fluidity, consciousness and in his words "firmness of identity" (Obama, 1995, p. 305) gradually leading to acceptance." There are data to prove this:

> For a span of weeks or months you could experience the freedom that comes from not feeling watched, the freedom of believing that your hair grows as it's supposed to grow and that your rump sways the way his rump is supposed to sway…Here the world was black, and so you were unique to your life without living a lie or committing betrayal. (p. 311)

Obama's stepmother confirms this wholeness of identity that Obama begins to feel when the first thing she says upon meeting Barack was: "My son has come home" (p. 316).

In Africa, community is indispensable to one's definition of who one is. A person's identity is defined by that person's connection to the wider society and that person's ancestry. It is not surprising therefore that both Obama and his step-mother see

his coming "home" as a major step in solidifying his identity—a move which had remained elusive despites his efforts in the United States.

To be sure, the discourse shows that no event presented Obama with more identity consolidation than his visit to his father's grave right at their family compound. Here again, Barack Obama's words speak for themselves: "I dropped to the ground and swept my hand across the smooth yellow tile. Oh Father, I cried" (p. 429). Of his feelings, Obama wrote: "This was it, I thought to myself" (p. 427).

It needs to be emphasized that this homecoming journey and Obama's experience with his Kenyan relatives and African roots is an integral part of Obama's Afrocentric identity framing. His experience conforms to the basic constructions of the Afrocentric project, which recognizes a tradition and philosophy predicated on family, heritage and collectivism as a source of identity. This frame thus comes to life when Obama writes:

> It wasn't simply the joy that I felt in each of these moments. Rather it was a sense that everything I was doing, every touch and breath carried the full weight of my life, that a circle was beginning to close so that I might *finally* recognize myself as I was here, now in one place. (p. 377)

The key word here is "circle". Clearly, the "circle" of Obama's identity was starting to look complete with his visit to the land of his ancestors. This visit and the interactions he had provided meaning to himself and granted him a sense of belonging.

Afrocentric Constructions in Obama's *Audacity of Hope*

In this section I discuss constructions of Africanity in Obama's second book, *Audacity of Hope*. To start with, the analysis indicates that Africanity did not feature prominently in this second book. As a matter of fact, even where it was referenced, it was done more in tune with the overall tenor of the book, which the *New York Times* refers to as a "political document". Still, Obama would write about or make references to certain words, phrases, persons or textual constructions, which would be useful in this current Afrocentric framing exercise. In the framing approach adopted for this study frames are

seen as aspects of an issue or personality that is selected emphasized and advocated (Pan and Kosicki, 1993).

African Roots

Obama selected certain words and approaches which can be analyzed within the context of Afrocentric discourse or at least inform us of the role his Africanity played in his personal and political life. The first appearance of any theme or narrative on Africa appears in the prologue to the book when Obama speaks of the problematic nature of his African name during campaign stops:

> And everywhere I went, I'd get some version of the same two questions. "Where'd you get that funny name?" (Obama, 2006, p. 1)

This type of question reflects of the problematic expressions associated with the Luo origins of his name. The result is that such a purely African naming identity might elucidate different meanings, stereotypes, thoughts, biases and expressions among his audience. Because Obama's name is outside the U.S. mainstream it calls attention to his difference. During the early part of his political career, an individual to whom Obama refers as "a media consultant" did not mince words on Obama's "problematic" name when he said during a lunch meeting that:

> Really bad luck. You can't change your name, of course. Voters are suspicious of that kind of thing. Maybe if you were at the start of your career, you know, you could use a nickname something. (Obama, 2006, p. 3).

Thus this frame might generally be construed as negative since both culturally and politically it seems to be a critical challenge to Obama's American identity. However it can also be suggested that Obama's name helped to frame his exotic or immigrant background. America's history and exceptionalism is one of immigrants and their ability to aspire towards a higher life contained in the notion of the American dream (Lipset, 1996). His first name is a Swahili word with Arabic origins which means "blessed", and his last name is a Luo ethnic name meaning "crooked or slightly bending". Though Obama was initially referred to as Barry, his switch back to Barack shaped his exotic

image as the son of an African immigrant. On the political side, the use of his foreign

Swahili name combined with his successful life story as a Harvard trained lawyer

symbolizes the American dream. It is not surprising therefore that Obama declares during

his 2004 address that "in no other country on Earth is my story even possible" (Obama,

2004). In this way Obama's name enables him to ground himself within the American

psyche and socio-political values (Catalano, 2011).

This frame shows that an individual's naming category or name and the images it

evokes can be just as important as the self-construction of that individual.. For the

purposes of this dissertation and from the Afrocentric standpoint, it is worth noting that

African traditional societies often give names to children as a way of carrying on a family

tradition, lineage or to signify certain events. Names can also signify certain values. Of

all Barack Obama Sr.'s children, the junior Obama was the only one who directly took

the name of his father. This probably signifies his father's goal to maintain an African

identity on Obama in the light of his mixed parentage. In his first book, Obama recalls

what his father once told him in a letter: "…know where you're from" (Obama, 1995

p.114). There is no doubt therefore that Obama's father wanted his son to maintain an

Afrocentric identity and possibly not ignore the African values that come with such an

identity. The name, however, represents a visible validation of Obama's African lineage

and a symbol that continues to bind him to the continent of his Father.

Afrocentric Values: Community/Communality

This theme is yet another area in which we observe a strain of Afrocentric

framing in Obama's *Audacity of Hope*. The original argument of Afrocentricism and

subsequent foundational works of the concept points to themes of unity, harmony and

communality. In many ways this helps us understand Obama's politics. From a framing

perspective, one of the central underpinnings of Obama's discourse is that of communal

living and interdependence. In the book Obama calls for a political "tradition based on

the simple idea that we have a stake in one another, and that what binds us together is

greater than what drives us apart, and that if enough people believe in the truth of that proposition and act on it then we might not solve every problem, but we can get something meaningful done" (p. 23). One of the central values of African traditional society is the sense of community. According to Emeka (2011):

> The authentic African is known and identified in, by and through his community….In another sense, the community offers the African the psychological and ultimate security as it gives its members both physical and ideological identity. It must be noted that in the African mentality, the community as an entity remains, while individuals, as persons, come and go. Therefore the African emphasizes community life and communalism as a living principle of which the basic ideology is community-identity. (p. 1)

Taking both positions together, we can deduce that the communal spirit that has influenced Obama's politics may not necessarily have originated from Alego or any village in Kenya. Rather but from analytic perspective it can be described as an Afrocentric act. There are several elements which help us locate one's framing of an issue: the language, attitude and direction. According to Pan and Kosicki (1993) themes are determined among other things by issues of emphasis and propositions implied. Writers convey their feelings and positions on issues through texts from which we are able to ascertain their major themes and framing of debates, events, issues or identities. There is thus a connection between Obama's suggestion for "a tradition based on communal living" (p. 23) and the African cultural system that values community and a tradition of interdependence.

These are not the only depictions of communalism in Obama's book. Obama calls for a new kind of politics where "despite all our differences, just how much we share: common hopes, common dreams, a bond that will not break" (Obama, 2006, p. 25). This serves to further establish the narrative of unity and "common" purpose which are found in the textual expressions of Obama and which underlie the tenets of Afrocentrism. As a framing strategy one observes that Obama relies on repetition as he's has often done to get across his message here: "common hopes, common dreams…" As has been

established by previous scholars, repetition is a "characteristic feature of oral cultures, including those of traditional Africa." (Ejizu, 2011, p. 1). At his core, Obama thus believes in politics centered on a collective identity and social responsibility in which, as he said in his 2004 Democratic Convention Speech, "I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper…" (Obama, 2004)

How representative are Afrocentric ideals in Obama's rhetoric? I will argue that such a collectivist ideology seems to permeate Obama's foreign policy philosophy where he writes that: "I am convinced that it will almost always be in our interest to act multilaterally rather than unilaterally when we use force around the world" (Obama, 2006 p.309). It is a policy position which recognizes "the painstaking process of building coalitions," which viewed through an Afrocentric or cultural lens is not at variance with closely knit, reciprocal, inter-communal and consensual nature of African traditional societies. There's further evidence of such inter-communal strains in Obama's text:

> Our individualism has always been bound by a set of communal values, the glue upon which every healthy society depends. We value the imperatives of family and the cross-generational obligations that family implies. We value community, the neighborliness that expresses itself through raising the barn or coaching the soccer team. (p. 55)

If language or text helps in the process of reality and identity construction, then the above quote gives us insight into some of the ideas governing Obama's thinking, what he believes and who he is. This is because individuals and the positions they advance privilege certain constitutive elements of their identities and by so doing they illustrate how these positions offer important insights into their persona.

Summary

In sum, the analysis demonstrates the presence of Afrocentric frames in Obama's books: *Dreams from My Father* and *Audacity of Hope*. Although it is not certain whether Obama had the presidency in mind while writing the two autobiographies, they both played important roles in his political career. Indeed in retrospect, it seems reasonable to assume that once he launched his candidacy for the White House, the books helped to

provide more insight into Obama's history and background beyond the snapshots in his speeches. In general, we realize that the theme of "Roots and memories of a father" present in both books is also reflected in his speeches. The other emergent theme in Obama's book, *Audacity of Hope*, which is again present in his public speeches, is that of "African values and communality". Hence, his African roots—which he traces through the "memory of his father" and "communality"—are the two predominant themes found in his books that are also echoed in his speeches. We can therefore assume that Obama's roots, which he traces to the memories of his father and the framing of his worldview in social or communal terms, are significant frames which are central to his persona and identity because these same frames appear in his books and are subsequently refracted in his public speeches. The next chapter explores frames of Afrocentricity in six newspapers across the world.

CHAPTER VI

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF NEWSPAPER

REPRESENTATIONS OF OBAMA'S AFRICANITY IN

THE CONTEXT OF THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

Newspapers play an important role in many aspects of democratic governance (Johannigsmeier, 2002; Martin & Copeland, 2003). During presidential campaigns, they have traditionally provided information on candidates, their policies and events (Weaver, Graber, McCombs, & Eyal, 1981). The way in which these papers frame candidates is important to their overall image and identity in the public domain (Mwesige, 2004; Stone, 1987). Indeed the prominent role played by newspapers in public discourse especially during national events such as presidential elections have led many to call them the "first rough draft of history" (Barth, 1942; Stone, 1987; Slate.com, 2012). Another key goal of this study was to analyze newspaper framing of Obama's Africanity. To accomplish this, I analyzed how six newspapers from different world regions framed Obama's Africanity. All of these newspapers are considered dominant newspapers of record in their respective countries. They include *Daily Nation* (Kenya), *ThisDay* (Nigeria), *Al-Ahram* (English edition, Egypt), *The New York Times* (The United States), *The Times of London* (Great Britain), and *Mail & Guardian* (South Africa).

Pan and Kosicki's (1993) view on framing with regard to information being amplified through selection, word choice, quotes, background information, narratives or episodes will be used as an entry point. In their view, news articles tout certain aspects of a person's identity through selection, descriptions or key words and in the process contribute to the process of identity construction. The role of news discourse during the electoral process cannot be underestimated. In Chapter IV, three Afrocentric frames were discovered in Obama's speeches: "American exceptionalism," "Roots and memories of a father," and "African communitarian values." Two of these frames: "Roots and memories of a father" and "African communitarian values" were refractions of themes found in

Obama's best sellers, *Dreams from My Father* and *Audacity of Hope*. The aim of this chapter is to analyze how newspapers framed Obama's Africanity, and to ascertain any probable refractions of this aspect of his identity with his own speeches and books.

<div align="center">African Roots, Ancestry, and Memories of a Father</div>

In analyzing newspaper representations of Obama's Africanity, one of the major frames to emerge was the memory of his father and African roots. As it will be recalled, this was one of the strong themes that appeared in previous analysis of Obama's speeches and books. The present analysis also found the presence or refraction of this frame in newspaper reportage of Obama's speeches. Refraction as used in this dissertation refers to a repetition of frames present in previous Obama narratives in other textual artifacts such as newspapers. This section presents a discussion of the chosen frames governing Obama's Africanity in selected newspapers.

Daily Nation, of Nairobi, Kenya, the country of birth of Obama's father, foregrounded Obama's Afrocentric roots by offering a lead in its major story after the convention speech that clearly focused on Obama's Afrocentricity:

> Offering his own life as an example of uniquely American possibilities, Mr. Obama cited his Kenyan ancestry at the outset of his rapturously received keynote speech to the Democratic National Convention. (Kelley, 2004, p. 2)

When examining Afrocentric discourse from a framing perspective, quotes directly taken or refracted from the speaker are important in revealing the centralization of certain aspects of an issue, event or personality. Afrocentric discourse projects a person's ethnic roots through narratives on that person's background and parental lineage (Asante, 1988; Schilles, 1998; Stewart, 2011). To cite another example, during Obama's address at the convention, he said: "My father was a foreign student, born and raised in a small village in Kenya. He grew up herding goats, went to school in a tin-roof shack. His father, my grandfather, was a cook, a domestic servant to the British" (Obama, 2004, p.

1). This quote was refracted by the *Daily Nation* making it another portion of Obama's

Kenyan origins culled directly from his speech:

> "My father was a foreign student, born and raised in a small village in Kenya. He grew up herding goats, went to school in a tin-roof shack. His father, my grandfather, was a cook, a domestic servant who worked for the British," Mr. Obama said in his address to Democratic delegates gathered in Boston and to a national television audience in the United States. (Kelley, 2004, p. 2)

> Framing choices are created by such quotes which are selected and thus seem to

sensitize readers towards Obama's difference rooted in the memories of his Kenyan

father. Here again, we can adequately conclude that the frame of "father, origin or roots"

outlined during the Afrocentric analysis of Obama's speech has been refracted. There

were other quotes in the *Daily Nation* that reflected this frame:

> Mr. Obama's father went on to study at Harvard University, not far from the Democratic Convention site, and to become an economist who advised Mzee Jomo Kenyatta….The elder Obama, who died in 1982, left his white American wife when Barack was two years old. But the 42 year old candidate makes frequent references to his Kenyan descent and identifies…." (Kelley, 2004, p. 2)

The New York Times also refracted the theme of African roots and origins through

spot articles and feature pieces that focused on Obama's ethnicity. Perhaps it was due to

its resources or history of in-depth journalism, but whatever it was the Times had in-

depth news pieces on Obama with certain aspects reflecting his Africanity that went

beyond the keynote speech. These articles did not necessarily focus on the 2004 DNC

speech but were follow-up pieces resulting from his prime appearance at the convention.

For example in one such article, *The New York Times* published the following comments

from a Kenyan interviewee concerning Obama's Senate run at the time:

> In Kenya, a half-black, half-white person like Mr. Obama - his mother is white, born in Kansas - is known colloquially as a "point five." Such mixed-raced people, black Kenyans say, frequently turn their backs on their African roots, particularly those who have spent substantial time in the West. But Mr. Obama's relatives say that he has impressed them during his two visits to Nyang'oma with his interest in his ancestry, his love of local food and his ability to speak a few words of Luo, the language of the people around here. (Lacey, 2004, p. 1)

The key aspect of *The New York Times* reporting is that it largely reflected the general feeling of closeness that Africans felt towards Obama. A similar quote employed by the paper highlights this strain of Afrocentric discourse in *The New York Times*' coverage: "When he wins, we all win. It's not all that easy for an African to go so far. We consider him our man" (Lacey, 2004, p. 1).

Clearly there is a strong identity link between Obama and Kenyans in Africa based on a common and direct ancestry. In another feature on Obama's grandmother, Sarah Ogwel Onyando and the Nyang'oma village in which she lived, *The New York Times* provides circumstantial evidence of Obama's Africanity. The paper emphasizes that the connection between Obama and Nyang'oma was not loose or passive but real:

> It is a feeling of extended family: those who make it help those left behind. Mr. Obama may have never lived in Nyang'oma, or elsewhere in Kenya for that matter, but he is one of them in the popular imagination and surely, relatives say, he will want to share his great success with his kin. (Lacey, 2004, p. 1)

These observations indicate to us, in the strongest forms yet, the role of group referencing, ethnicity and belongings in the crafting of identity. In the above sentence, the words "family," "relatives," and "kin" are used in the most direct sense to validate Obama's ethnic identity. The theory on social identity suggests that one's identity is based not just on one's individuality but on kinships and extended relationships. Obama's Africanity therefore indicates a mobility of interrelated identities across space and time. The phenomenon of Africanity and identity indicates mobility across space and time (Asante, 1988, 2002).

Also, to understand the nature of Africanity operating here, it is important to recall Farley's (2000) postulate of ethnicity which touches on the universalistic and collective symbolism operating within an individual's connection to a larger unit based on shared ancestry and historical past. A similar argument is made by Gikandi (2011) in his treatise on Afropolitanism where he describes the term as embracing "movement across space and time as a condition of possibility of an African way of being…" (p. 10).

In answering the question, "who is Afropolitan?" Gikandi (2011) speaks of these

individuals as the products of African immigrants, calling them "Africans of the world"

(p. 2). A necessary component of both concepts is an assertion of personal, group interest

and kinship affiliations, all of which are present in *The New York Times*' reportage:

> The pride and excitement surrounding Mr. Obama's candidacy extends far beyond the Obama homestead. Kenyan newspapers run regular dispatches on the campaign… Local people say that numerous baby boys have been named Barack in recent months, a tribute to their favorite son. (Lacey, 2004, p. 2)

> Clearly the image of a kinsman making strides in one of the most powerful

nations in the world engenders a sense of pride and connection in the African mainland.

This representation of Obama can be characterized as Afrocentric.

Comparatively, *The Times of London* similarly highlighted Obama's roots with

references to his "Kenyan father" (Monaghan, 2004, p. 1) who was a "goat herder"

(Monaghan, 2004, p. 1) and the improbability of his presence as a keynote speaker. Thus

The Times of London, just like *Daily Nation* and *The New York Times,* refracted the frame

of father/roots/origin.

In line with the focus of this dissertation, additional examples of this frame are

found in other news reports on Obama. For example in reporting on the issue regarding

the "Reverend Jeremiah Wright controversy," certain aspects of newspaper reporting

examined was identified as Afrocentric. To be specific, these were references to the fact

that Obama's pastor and his church were decidedly Afrocentric in their outlook. *The New

York Times* points out that Wright is one of few black pastors to still maintain close ties

with the African continent:

> Still, Mr. Obama was entranced by Mr. Wright, whose sermons fused analysis of the Bible with outrage at what he saw as the racism of everything from daily life in Chicago to American foreign policy. Mr. Obama had never met a minister who made pilgrimages to Africa…. (Kantor, 2007, p. 1)

> The paper made the case that "the Christianity that Mr. Obama adopted at Trinity

has infused not only his life, but also his campaign." And the religion it eludes is

decidedly Afrocentric based on the Church's close and continuous relationship to Africa.

There is no doubt that as a first generation child of an African father, Obama himself found greater resonance in this church despite several years of encountering Christianity. *New York Times* writer Jodi Kantor (2007) notes that:

> He had sampled various faiths but adopted none until he met Mr. Wright, a dynamic pastor who preached Afrocentric theology…. (p. 1)

Wright is known to have repeatedly called on the black church not to turn its back on Africa, called on the churches to renew their commitment to Africa as the homeland of black people scattered all over the United States and the world. Jodi Kantor reports that Obama's experience with Afrocentric theology began with his visit to Kenya, where he encountered family members who were "Christian Kenyans". Kantor asserts that Wright's sermons, which addressed equality, justice and poverty among blacks in the U.S. and Africa, also helped to draw Obama closer to the Church. Obama she maintains linked the struggles of characters in the Bible to those of black people:

> …I imagined the stories of ordinary black people merging with the stories of David and Goliath, Moses and Pharaoh, the Christians in the lion's den, Ezekiel's field of dry bones….those stories—of survival, and freedom, and hope—became our story, my story. (Kantor, 2007, p. 1)

In essence the point here is that while many of the newspaper stories following the race speech addressed the "controversial aspects" and how the speech called for open discussions on race in the United States, for the purposes of this research, the above aspects of the *New York Times* article helps to bring out themes and aspects of Afrocentricity in this speech. A major theme emanating from the *New York Times*'s coverage of Obama's speech is that of an "Afrocentric Christian faith" or, as Kantor put it, a Christian faith based on "Afrocentric theology" (Kantor, 2007, p. 1).

Similar to all the newspapers analyzed so far, the theme of roots or origins was present in the *Mail & Guardian's* framing of Obama's race speech. As scholars have noted, the role of frames is to link aspects of coverage that are likely to resonate with an audience. In so doing the paper made sure to include Obama's African origins in its reportage:

In the speech, the 46-year-old Illinois senator, the son of a black father from Kenya and white mother from Kansas, appealed to Americans to break "a racial stalemate we've been stuck in for years." (*Mail & Guardian*, 2007, p.1)

The popular assumption within much of Africa throughout that election cycle was that, despite his other identity components, Africans saw a clear link to Obama through his Kenyan father.

Identities need a medium to exist and are mediated by social reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1996; Brubaker & Cooper, 1999). In discussing variants of Africanity in another African newspaper, *Al-Ahram* (Egypt), it is necessary to state that there were also references to Obama's blackness as well as his Islamic background in an editorial—something which was conspicuously missing from media coverage by Sub-Saharan African papers:

> …the election of a black man with a Muslim father in a country that practiced racial segregation not so long ago and that has an administration that is currently engaged in "holy war" against Islam and Muslims…. (Nafaa, 2000)

It has been demonstrated that often times writing and communication do not occur in a vacuum but within a given cultural and identity context (Entman, 1993; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Van Gorp, 2007). The mention of Obama's "black father", the exclusion of his white parentage and the particular mention of his Muslim background is both a reflection of Africanity and religious identity (Islam) taking place within the Egyptian newspaper.

The Times of London also had a feature, albeit a shorter one, on Obama's African roots in order to introduce the candidate to an audience who had most likely read his books. Africanity thus featured as a major theme in their reporting when Obama's African family and connection was talked about:

> Obama's moment of self-discovery came with a trip to Africa in 1988, at the age of 27. In Kenya he found numerous half-brothers and half-sisters….the dead father led him home, his Africa kin and explored a shared past, rituals, disputes and hopes, discovering a "joy of human warmth" absent in cold America. At his father's grave he wept: "I realized who I was, what I cared about, was no longer just a matter of intellect or obligation, no longer a construct of words. I saw that my life in America—the black life, the white life, the sense of abandonment that

I'd felt as a boy—was all connected with this small plot of earth an ocean away, connected by more than the accident of a name or the color of my skin". (Macintyre, 2004, p. 2)

Though the quote was taken from Obama's book, it was done to address the issue of his broader race and ethnicity resulting from the Reverend Wright controversy and Obama's speech thereafter. Thus, through this feature piece, Africanity or Obama's African ethnicity became a major part of news discourse. What this demonstrates is that the theme of Father/Origin/Roots present in Obama's narrative was patently refracted in subsequent newspaper coverage in both *The New York Times* and *The Times of London.*

However, the refraction of quotes from his book and the presence of themes from his speeches also bring to the fore the role of journalism in society. According to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001), "the primary purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with the information they need…." (p. 17). Through their reporting, newspapers help to create a common understanding of an issue or personality, and by directly refracting Obama's quote they were contributing to this process of identity construction which was much in tune with Obama's own identity frames. There are some who will contend that the newspapers were only performing their journalistic role of objectivity by neutrally reporting what was said, though the analysis also demonstrates that by quoting directly from Obama, the newspapers certainly helped in Obama's efforts to construct his identity within the public domain. The frame of father/roots/origins was present in newspaper coverage of other Obama speeches such as his announcement for president, his Selma speech and his nomination acceptance speech. Examples of such Afrocentric framing are presented in the ensuing discussion.

In line with Afrocentric discourse, the *Daily Nation's* coverage of Obama's convention speech centered on the theme of African roots. The Afrocentric elements of the newspaper's coverage emphasized Obama's connection to Kenya. The literature suggests that ethnicity straddles both symbolic and formal relationships based on claims of kinship and history (Blumer, 1986; Brubaker, 2004). It is therefore not surprising that

the *Daily Nation* offered a range of discourse with implicit meanings indicating a shared

or group based relationship with Barack. An article in the *Daily Nation* related to

Obama's 2008 convention speech states that "while he is black, Obama is also in many

ways bi-national, given his Kenyan roots…." (Harbeson, 2008, p. 1). A day after

Obama's Denver speech, the *Daily Nation* also led with the following news lead:

> Many people in Kenya must have woken up in the early hours of Friday to catch a
> live broadcast from the United States of Sen. Barack Obama's acceptance speech
> for the Democratic Party nomination. The whole world already knows of the links
> the first black man to have a realistic chance at the U.S. presidential election has
> to Kenya.
>
> They will have seen Sen. Obama deliver a rousing and inspiring speech in one of
> the most seminal moments in the American political history. The son of a
> Kenyan, who could be the next occupant of White House, has already shifted
> American politics in ways unimaginable…. (*Daily Nation*, p. 1)

These introductory frames leave no doubt regarding the *Daily Nation's* attempt to

lay Kenyan claim to Obama by invoking culture or kinship thus occasioning or capturing

an Afrocentric theme. News articles often need a form of social or cultural reference in

order to be relevant, informative and expressive to the audience, and so the *Daily Nation*

touched on these socially productive elements in order to construct an Afrocentric-based

rubric receptive to their target audience. In doing so we realize that news discourse

carries with it strong, deep and an implicit meaning through what is selected and

emphasized. Other ways in which the *Daily Nation* framed Obama's ethnicity include a

feature story on Obama's grandmother in which they referred to his father's village

Kogelo as his "ancestral home" (Kelley, 2008, p. 1) and references to his identity as his

"Kenyanness" (Kelley, 2008, p. 1) and "African heritage" (Kelley, 2008, p. 1). Clearly

the *Daily Nation* was performing its journalistic role of information provision, but it

grounded it within a historical, ethnic and Afrocentric frame which sometimes made it

seem to directly involved with the subject of Obama.

Next, further illustration of the dominance of the frame of roots/father/origin is

seen in the *New York Times*' reporting on Obama's Selma speech. The Afrocentric aspect

of their reporting is observed when the paper talks about Obama's need to introduce himself to black candidates since there were prevailing sentiments that he was not black enough. In fact according to *The New York Times*, Representative Lewis and many black leaders were still neutral at time. The newspaper writes that:

> Selma gives Obama a chance to demonstrate that his candidacy stems from the history of the civil rights movement….With surpassing irony, no American politician has expressed more revealingly the agonizing conflicts of race—or, in his case, the biracial conflicts—than his account of his African father, "black as pitch," and Kansas mother, "white as milk." (Balz & Johnson, 2008, p. 1)

Obama's difference is not just linked to his biracial identity but specifically his blackness can be traced directly to Africa and not the typical African American experience. This prevailing sentiment was acknowledged by Obama in his speech and this inner contestation with his race and ethnicity resulting in the need to prove his blackness to the African American community has been refracted by *The New York Times*. And in another direct refraction of Obama's explanation of how his own birth and identity is linked to the civil rights movement, the *Times* writes: "Mr. Obama relayed a story of how his Kenyan father and Kansas mother fell in love because of the tumult of Selma" (Healy & Zeleny, 2007, p. 2).

Certain elements of news reporting in *The Times of London* (based on the Selma Speech) can also be subsumed under this refracted frame:

> Mr. Obama is still seeking to refute claims from some activists that as the son of a …Kenyan immigrant, he is somehow not black enough. At a breakfast prayer meeting, where some supporters had "Alobama" T-shirts on, Mr. Obama explained that he would not have been born without the civil rights struggle. The impact of those marches had, he said, reverberated across the world to Africa, enabling his goat-herding father to win a scholarship to study in America….To loud applause he said: "So this is the site of my conception. I am the fruit of your labors. I am the offspring of the movement." (Baldwin, 2007, p. 1)

In addition the paper referred to Obama as the son of a "Kenyan immigrant"(Baldwin, 2007, p. 1), a key word that brings to presence Obama's African roots.

The *Daily Nation* in a feature piece on the Kenyan airlift also refracted Obama's narrative on his African roots. During his speech Obama made a clear reference to how

the Selma marches inspired U.S. foreign policy action to initiate and expand multicultural programs both at home and abroad. This led to the setting up of the American Committee on Africa which led to the airlift of students from Kenya to the United States for foreign studies—a program Barack Obama Sr. benefited from and which Obama cites as a key dynamic in his conception. Context and cultural relevance constitute some of the important elements of news and framing. In selecting information to present to its readers, the *Daily Nation* highlighted aspects of Obama's speech related to Kenya. The article published in the paper following Obama's speech was thus a feature article discussing the Kenyan airlift that led to Obama Sr.'s foreign studies, and the Kenyan figure involved Tom Mboya. The article generally recounted how Mboya, a prominent Kenyan politician and independence activist, traveled to the United States to seek funding for educating "new African elites". In its opening paragraph, Kevin Kelley (2008), author of the article writes:

> Tom Mboya, one of Kenya's founding fathers, played a figurative midwifery role in the birth of Barack Obama, the Kenyan-American….It was Mr. Mboya who organized the September 1959 airlift that brought 81 Kenyan students to the United States including Barack Obama Sr. While subsequently studying in Hawaii through a program made possible by Mr. Mboya, the elder Obama married an American woman, Ann Dunham. Barack Obama Jr. was born to the couple in August 1961. (Kelley, 2008c, p. 2)

By selecting, tracing and throwing more light on the Kenyan connection to Obama's identity, something which was a thematic narrative in Obama's own speech, the *Daily Nation* refracts in its own way Obama's African roots. While *The New York Times* and *The Times of London* selected and refracted this frame, the *Daily Nation* even went further to detail the role of key Kenyan figures that offered a detailed understanding and clear connections that drew attention to Obama's direct Kenyan ethnicity.

Thus, through the use of key words, a series of sentence paraphrasing, feature pieces, direct quotes and recounting historical narratives, *The London Times*, *The New York Times,* and the *Daily Nation* refracted the theme of Obama's African roots and its connection to the civil rights movement in their reportage of the Selma speech.

Obama's nomination acceptance speech served as another important opportunity to observe Afrocentric framing of Obama's identity in relation to the specific theme of Obama's roots and memories of his father. The reporting of *ThisDay* (Nigeria) highlighted the sense of interest and connection the paper had in the U.S. presidential race due to Obama's candidacy. Africa's interest in the U.S. elections in 2008 is illustrated in Nigeria where in fact an Obama support group had been formed with the goal of making financial contributions to the democratic nominee's campaign. The group published newspaper advertisements by a group "Africans for Obama '08" and reported on the implications of such a move. Though U.S. campaign finance laws made such an endeavor impossible, it nevertheless helped to portray the level of interest among the paper's audience during the presidential contest and to recognize this close sense of association Africans felt to Obama because of his ancestral lineage though the fact of the probable campaign contributions were controversial:

> The advert was signed amongst others by Dr. (Mrs.) Ndi Okereke-Onyuike OON, as chairman, Africans for Obama. The Dinner has since been held but the effects and implications are just about to unfold especially since the objectives of the Group and the dinner/concert is to raise funds for the Barack Obama Campaign in the United States of America. (*ThisDay*, 2008, p. 1)

The *Daily Nation* also wasted little time in establishing the Kenyan connection to Obama's identity, noting in their very first sentence of a news report covering Obama's inauguration: "Of all the industrial democracies, the one whose politics could be most recognizable to Africans right now is the USA…." (Onyango-Obbo, 2008, p. 1). There are other examples of quotes from news sources centered on Obama's roots: "A president who is an American with African roots would make a huge statement not only to Africa but to the entire world…." (Onyango-Obbo, 2008, p. 2), the paper quoted African American Congressman John Coyers.

Africanity and African Values of Community, Unity,

and Togetherness

Another Afrocentric theme that was reflected in newspaper coverage of Obama's speeches is that of African communitarian values. Again these are refractions from Obama's speeches and books. Examples of how this theme was articulated in the various newspapers are presented below.

The *New York Times'* coverage of Obama's "Race speech" demonstrated narratives of togetherness and unity—ideas or prevailing philosophies that lie at the heart of many Africans belief of community. Jeff Zeleny (2008) in covering Obama's speech states that: "It was the most extensive speech of his presidential campaign devoted to race and unity…." In another paragraph, Zeleny (2008) writes that:

> He spoke about his diverse upbringing, a black father from Kenya and a white mother from Kansas. He noted that his candidacy had been successful in predominantly white states and black states…. (p. 2)

These quotes reveal certain broad narratives or discourses present in the newspaper's reportage, which are much in tune with the general tenor or overall tone of Obama's aim of bringing people together through a communal approach to politics. African value systems are predisposed to rendering the community and bringing people together in a way that substantially supplants individualistic elements in favor of the general or communal good in order to achieve balance and equity in society. More evidence of this frame is available. Jodi Kantor, another *New York Times* writer, actually titled her feature piece on Obama's race and ethnicity as "An Effort to Bridge a Divide". Her opening paragraph or lead sentence, in and of itself, is an apt representation of a cultural outlook and orientation that is grounded in Afrocentric belief systems: a concern for upholding balance, equity, consideration and humanism in the wider society:

> Since he was young, Senator Barack Obama has been something of a mediator of racial concerns…trying to translate the concerns of one to the other. (Kantor, 2008b, p. 1)

The New York Times also had other such examples in follow-up articles on

Obama's Berlin speech:

> Senator Barack Obama stood before a sea of cheering admirers on Thursday and sought to inspire fresh cooperation among American allies to defeat terrorism and other threats, introducing himself as a leader who could summon other nations to join the United States in confronting the world's next challenges. (Zeleny & Kulish, 2008, p. 1)

This quote speaks to Obama's philosophical belief in cooperation as a foreign

policy approach which is much different from Bush's idea of American leadership and

centrality in the community of nations. There were direct refracted quotes from Obama's

speech to underscore this point:

> "The walls between old allies on either side of the Atlantic cannot stand," Mr. Obama said, putting a new twist on the Cold War calls to bring down the barrier that divided Berlin. "The walls between the countries with most and those with least cannot stand. The walls between tribes, natives and immigrants, Christian and Muslim and Jew cannot stand. These now are the walls we must tear down… The Berlin blockade was thwarted because people came together. Apartheid ended because people came together and walls tumbled…history proved that there is no challenge too great for a world that stands as one." (Zeleny & Kulish, 2008, p. 2)

The basic point here is that one of the major Afrocentric themes in Obama's

speech—community, cooperation based on working together—was refracted. It signaled

the preparedness of America under an Obama administration to significantly work

together rather than assume a unilateralist position or claim leadership in global affairs.

Notably, as far as the focus of this research is concerned, *The New York Times* was not

the only paper to have covered Obama's Berlin speech with elements of Afrocentrism

detected.

In essence, *The New York Times* clearly refracted Obama's belief in mediation,

harmony and togetherness. Asante (1987, 1992) clearly identifies this approach or style

of unity, harmonization and balance in society as characteristics of communalism— an

Afrocentric tenet.

One of the African newspapers employed in this research—Egypt's *Al-Ahram*—

also refracted Obama's frame of community though with an Islamist twist. It did not

directly address the issue of Obama's race as it applied to the U.S. but rather refracted Obama's broad theme of diversity and reconciliation—both of which are elements of the Afrocentric idea of communality. The literature on Afrocentrism is governed by a belief in multiple elements which include diversity, community and unity (Asante, 1987; Kabale 2011). The expression of Afrocentricity is achieved when text demonstrates an awareness of collectivism, cultural heritage and interconnectedness. News is influenced by context and *Al-Ahram's* articles were governed by local variables such as Islam and U.S. policy towards the Middle East. Asante's (2007) position with respect to Afropolitanism is for the researcher to bring out narratives that reveal multiplicities and evidence of community and humanitarianism in a way that "advances human engagement" (Asante, 2007, p. 74). An editorial published by a respected professor from Cairo University, Hasan Nafaa, demonstrated some of these elements:

> The U.S. uses its international leverage to establish a "new humanitarian world order" that promotes the safety of humans everywhere, regardless of their race, nationality, or creed – thus making the safety of the human race a collective responsibility of the international community. This scenario is what draws the line between someone like you and someone like McCain. Obviously, Mr. President, it is the one I wish to see you pursue. (Nafaa, 2008, p. 2)

This quote reminds us that Afrocentricity comes into existence when there is an appeal to a discourse of community, humanitarianism, balance and harmony, all of which are present in Nafaa's (2008) piece. Here it is useful to mention Schiele's (1988) theory of Afropolitanism which recognizes a theory on humanity from a standpoint of commonality and community despite the presence of individual identities.

Also the inclusion of his "Muslim father" as part of Obama's characterization in the North African paper marks a conspicuous difference in identity framing when compared to other sub-Saharan African papers such as the *Daily Nation* and *ThisDay*. It is also necessary to state that while Obama's otherness might have been problematic in the United States, it was viewed positively in the Egyptian press:

> I have no doubt that more of such slander and worse will be leveled against you as the day of the elections draws near. But I am confident that victory will be yours

in the end. In its heart of hearts, America knows that you are a Christian and American through and through and that the color of your skin and your middle name can only be assets in your quest to clear the name of the United States abroad. I think too much of the American people to believe that they would put someone like John McCain in the White House – a man who's committed to George W Bush's criminal policies – just to spite a black man whose middle name is Hussein. (Nafaa, 2008, p. 2)

Thus I will put forth that while Obama's race was an issue of intense political controversy in the United States, Nafaa (2008) describes it as an "asset" and thus symptomatic of the general warmth and appeal that Obama held globally. Clearly there is a pro-Obama frame underpinning this paragraph. The writer also makes attributions to Obama's middle name, something uncommon in other African newspapers. One can imagine that this genial overture towards Obama may be moderated by his African and Arabic connection. This viewpoint has theoretical and philosophical support based on Seliger's (1976) and Snow's (2000) viewpoint that when people write they are influenced by social values, traditions, ideologies and political realities.

Further this frame was also recurrent in *The New York Times* with the paper refracting a quote from Obama's speech on working "together". Another similar quote on the theme of unity and working collectively includes the following statement from the paper:

Mr. Obama invoked a speech Lincoln gave here in 1858 condemning slavery-"a house divided against itself cannot stand" as he started his campaign to become the nation's first black president. (Nagourney & Zeleny, 2007, p. 1)

Together these references to collectivity can be placed under the Afrocentric theme of communality and serve as a refraction of themes present in Obama's speech. They also serve as a primer for audiences in terms of the shaping of Obama's political rhetoric and identity.

Positive African Framing: Africa Outside the Trope of Crisis

(The New Idea of Africa/Redemption)

So far Obama's rhetoric on a "communitarian values" and "African roots and memories of a father" has been identified as the two major Afrocentric themes in

newspaper coverage of Barack Obama's speeches. The third and final frame identified

from the present analysis of news reporting from selected newspapers is that of

"redemption" or "positive framing of Africa". Afrocentric discourse views Africa not

from a prism of conflict or doom but from a new positive frame (Asante, 2002; Mazama,

2001; Mbembe, 2001). As denoted earlier in the theoretical section of this dissertation,

Afrocentricity is a term that does not just recognize black African ethnicity but denotes a

new positive frame of blackness "outside the trope of crisis" (Gikandi, 2011, p. 3). Based

on the present analysis of news coverage of Obama's speech, I posit that news

representation falls within this Afrocentric frame of African positivity and redemption.

Several examples from the news texts examined support this frame.

      After Obama's 2004 keynote address, *The New York Times* began its coverage of

the event with a positive review of Obama's speech:

> On Tuesday, at about 9 pm, Barack Obama was an Illinois state legislator running
> for senate. A half-hour later, after he had given the keynote address at the
> Democratic National Convention, he was the party's hot ticket. Pundits even
> predicted he would be the first black president. (Malcomson, 2004)

      This rubric within which *The New York Times* represented Obama's persona is

deemed Afrocentric because it deviates from the old view of Africa which is negative,

primordial, dark, a land of barbarians and savages (Mudimbe, 2001; Lule, 2001). This

view has often provided an "inferior" and stereotypical template within which the

Western media reported Africa. In Afrocentric discourse, Africanity is viewed within a

positive and redemptive frame (Mbembe, 2011). Thus, one of the key elements of

Afrocentric frames is discourse about African heritage outside the trope of crisis. In this

way, the *New York Times'* framing of Obama is deemed Afrocentric because of the

purely positive and affirmative discourse used to report his appearance at the Democratic

National Convention. There are other similar examples in the paper.

      As someone with direct African roots, Obama naturally introduced African

ethnicity into the presidential race through his biography. Though not a citizen of Kenya

or any country on the continent, the association of positivity with Obama's identity as the son of a black African does depart from previous denotations of the continent or anything associated with it in stereotypical ways and presents a new image or idea of Africa through a positive rubric/frame. There are several examples of such complimentary reporting. Nicholas Kristof of *The New York Times* wrote:

> Barack Obama this week gave the best political speech since John Kennedy talked about his Catholicism in Houston 1960, and it derived power from something most unusual in modern politics: an acknowledgement of complexity, nuance and legitimate grievances on many sides. It was not a sound bite, but a symphony. (Kristof, 2008, p. 1)

The New York Times (2008) referred to Barack Obama as a "star congregant" (p. 1) while Jodi Kantor (2008a), a *New York Times* reporter, in laying out contrasts between Obama and his pastor, portrayed Obama positively: "But he developed a tone very different from his pastor's. In contrast with Mr. Wright—the kind of speaker who could make a grocery list sound like a jeremiad—Mr. Obama speaks with cool intellect and on-the-one-hand reasoning. He tends to emphasize the reasonableness of all people; Mr. Wright rallies his parishioners against oppressors" (Kantor, 2008a, p. 2). Selected quotes from sources also painted a positive picture of the president: "It was a superb speech," *The New York Times* quoted a reaction from Republican strategists Whit Ayres. The paper also reported that: "In interviews, Democratic and Republican strategists, scholars, and voters all agreed that Mr. Obama had given a brave, inclusive speech about one of the topics most difficult to address in American life." Through selected quotes, emphasis and news tone, *The New York Times* refracted Obama's speech positively and thus portrayed a new redemptive image of blackness, which is theoretically interpreted as an Afrocentric act.

Also, like *The New York Times,* the Afrocentric frame or portrayal of Africa based on a redemptive/positive rubric was also highlighted by *The Times of London*:

Democrats also found a new star in Barack Obama, son of a Kenyan father and a Kansan mother who was brought up in Hawaii and who is poised to become only the fifth black senator if he wins Illinois in November. (Watson, 2004, p. 1)

Here the son of an African immigrant with Luo ethnicity is being referred to in one of the major newspapers of a former colonial master as a "star". Another key phrase that signifies the framing of Obama within a positive black redemptive image—an element of Afrocentrism includes references to him as "the Democrats' newest political superstar" (Reid, 2004, p. 1). Considering the old Eurocentric and Greco Roman tendency to frame anything African in negative and stereotypical terms, this is a significant departure.

After Obama's "More perfect Union Speech," the UK paper wrote in an editorial:

Like John Kennedy's speech addressing his Catholicism or Lyndon Johnson's addressing civil rights, this speech will live. It will make the history books, in the chapter addressing the first serious presidential run by an African-American. Why? Not because it is necessarily a turning point itself, but because it will stand as the best expression of the idea that made Obama's candidacy possible, that made it viable. (Finkelstein, 2008, p. 1)

The paper also asserted that "the Illinois senator demonstrated yet again his eloquence in his address in Philadelphia on Tuesday" (Hames, 2008, p. 1).

Beyond that, *The Times of London* praised Obama for the unusual amount of input he gave to the speech instead of relying solely on speech writers: "for nothing is more personal to him than his strategy for dealing with his racial identity" (Finkelstein, 2008, p. 1) .

Similar depictions are present in the *Daily Nation*: "The Illinois senator is acknowledged as perhaps the most charismatic American politician since John F Kennedy" (Kelley, 2008d, p. 1). The newspaper also had one of the more positive and redemptive frames of Obama as well drawing on the metaphor of rain to describe Obama's widespread presence on the American political scene in an editorial:

Barack Obama…has come like rain on American politics. His campaign theme – "the source of new hope on a parched land" is a cleansing agent in a land weighed down by crusted blood of Iraqis murdered in their own territory by Americans who came to save them from "weapons of mass destruction". Obama has come as

rain from a Kenyan cloud that seeded in the plains of Iowa and fell in Hawaii, but refuses to be tied down as just another "black candidate" pushing primarily for the restoration of justice for African-Americans by reminding white America of its guilt…. Like rain, Obama must rouse new winds that will blow away drought, which drought will not depart without a fight. (Oculi, 2008, p. 1)

The key words and phrase here are "rain" and "from a Kenyan cloud" which are metaphors used to discursively frame Obama. This is yet another example which exemplifies how Obama was evaluated in the African press: as a celebratory and ubiquitous figure.

The theme of positivity was also refracted in Nigeria's *ThisDay* newspaper. Against the backdrop of Barack Obama's "Race Speech," a relevant aspect of an editorial published in Nigeria's *ThisDay* deserves full and careful consideration:

He took clear, unmistakable stands on policy issues and when he came under pressure to renounce his pastor for making seemingly unpatriotic comments about his country, he steered a more rational course, even while not agreeing with the comments of the clergyman. His mature handling of that explosive issue showed the kind of leader that Obama is and the kind of president he would be. He is certainly not the type who would compromise his moral convictions for political expediency. (*ThisDay*, 2008, p. 1)

The above statement is an affirmative and complimentary review of Obama's speech thereby fitting into a broad positive coverage of Obama. Here Obama is evaluated as a man of reason and "political expediency". He is viewed as "mature" and stoically patriotic; a much different narrative from discussions within the U.S. conservative press where Obama's patriotism and political maturity or "readiness" were questioned. With such an evaluation, Obama's exotic blackness is celebrated. The frame is much in tune with the discourse on Afropolitanism where blackness is viewed positively, emancipated from the boundaries of geography and ensconced in a post-ethnic, multicultural, redemptive or more progressive framework. Further quotes from the same article seem to support this position:

…one thing that may stand in good position to win the race: the colour of his skin. Although the candidate himself does not appear to personally push this as a unique selling point! One international newspaper says his face offers "an effective potential rebranding of the United States". In other words America's unpopularity around the world can be fixed with a black face. Hence what Americans need at this time is a black president. (Agunbiade, 2007, p. 1)

Once again the choice of framing is telling. The discursive force with which *ThisDay* projects Obama as a new face of America is strong. It draws upon a positive framing reserve linked to a cultural and ethnic heritage, which Africans on the continent identify with. Similarly the other key word that helps to support this point is "black face" which according to the paper can be used to fix "America's unpopularity around the world". Of course, this statement is sweeping and exaggerated, but it is significant because it evokes an image not of savagery or darkness as Africa is often portrayed in the Western press but one of liberation, redemption and praise.

The New York Times' reportorial decisions came together to construct a frame of Obama that was highly complimentary. The paper employed several key words that provide evidence of this frame. They called Obama "an agent of generational change", "fresh", "charismatic" with a "compelling life story" (Nagourney & Zeleny, 2008, p. 1). On his delivery, the paper said Obama spoke "smoothly and comfortably" (Nagourney & Zeleny, 2008, p. 1). It repeated the idea of Obama as a candidate offering a "generational call to arms". As early as 2007, *The New York Times* described Obama's candidacy as one which could build up into a "movement" (Nagourney & Zeleny, 2008, p. 1). The paper refracted Obama's portrayal of himself as a fresh and new voice in politics by casting him as "an agent of change". There are more examples:

> Mr. Obama has glided to his position in his party with a demeanor and series of eloquent speeches that have won him comparisons to the Kennedy brothers and put him in a position where his status as a black man with a chance to win the White House is only part of the excitement generated by his candidacy. (Nagourney & Zeleny, 2007, p. 1)

In similar tones, the redemption frame can also be applied to *The Times of London* as the paper avoided, excluded or cast aside the negative image of blackness to report Obama's candidature in terms that can generally be seen across board as positive. Its lead sentence on the main news story following Obama's launch read: "Barack Obama's candidacy is generating extraordinary levels of excitement and expectation as the Democratic presidential process begins in earnest…." (Baldwin, 2007, p. 1). They also

referred to Obama's eloquence as "magic" and "brightest new star" (Monaghan, 2004, p. 1) or "Democrats' newest political superstar" (Reid, 2004, p. 1). Also strikingly similar words such as "charismatic" (*The Times of London*, 2008b) and "champion of a new generation" (*The Times of London*, 2008b) were also used to describe Obama in *The Times of London*.

There are additional examples from *The Times of London*. The paper reported in a feature following the Selma speech that Obama has come along with:

> …his jazz-cool looks, exotic name and caramel skin. Though virtually unknown—not yet even to the Senate—his speech was, by all accounts, one of the best anyone had heard in years. As good as Bill Clinton, they said, but fresher. (Baldwin, 2007, p. 1)

It also referred to Obama in the same report as "gifted". The explicit praise and positive representation of Obama is right in lockstep with the candidate's own goal of endearing himself to Americans. This portrayal of Obama as one with a "public persona defined more by his biography and charisma" (Baldwin, 2007c, p. 1) is definitely an affirmation of Obama's diversity and blackness in a positive and redemptive frame. The preceding examples demonstrate that this redemptive frame more clearly in *The Times of London's* reporting following the Selma speech.

From Nigeria, *ThisDay* provides more examples of this frame. *ThisDay* reported Obama's identity in glowing and global terms:

> Obama's heritage and experience…gives him a unique capacity to lead America's increasingly diverse nature and restore the country's image abroad. (Ikokwu, 2008, p. 1)

The newspaper's depiction of Obama in such a positive tone contributes to the new frame or idea of Africa which is right in alignment with Afrocentric theory which is seen as a frame of redemption or in Asante's words: the frame of "centeredness or location as opposed to dislocation" Another African newspaper, *Al-Ahram,* also painted Obama's achievement in praiseworthy and racial terms: "Perhaps Americans are colour-blind after all. What a relief. The world, for once, watched an America to be proud of.

The Democratic Party Convention in Denver, Colorado, that took place this week, was the acceptable face of America" (Nkrumah, 2008, p. 1). Another quote from *Al-Ahram* which fits into this frame includes: "Obama, who at many times in his career, has been challenged to deliver 'the speech of his life' did not disappoint. What he was expected to do, he did….concluding with soaring rhetoric that has become his trademark, echoing John Kennedy, Obama inspired the nation to be confident that the many challenges facing it could be met" (Nkrumah, 2008, p. 1)

All in all, by adopting such a positive tone with direct inferences to Obama's Africanity and by deploying this frame of redemption, these media re-presentations of Obama are consistent with his own rhetoric as being symbolic of a new era for America. In addition, they also offer a chance for the image of Africa to be represented in positive terms.

Subframe: The Old Idea of Africa: Marginality and
Stereotypes

The preceding discussion centered on frames of "redemption" or depictions of Obama and Africanity within a positive framework. However to provide a full picture of newspaper reporting on Africanity, this section presents an alternative, broadly negative, though less prevalent account of Obama and Africanity in the selected newspapers.

Africanity featured in the pages of *The New York Times* through a column specifically related to Obama's race and ethnicity titled "Tribalism Here and There". Roger Cohen (2008), a reputable columnist whose commentary holds sway within the discursive space of American politics, adds further evidence of an Afrocentric frame or twist to the newspaper's (refraction?) coverage of Obama. Based in Kenya at the time, Cohen writes that:

> The joke going around here, after a rigged vote, is that it may be easier to elect a Luo president in the United States than in Kenya….Barack Obama is an American delivered by birth from the fissures of his father's land. But it is through the charged tribal prism that Kenyans view the U.S. presidential race after

a spasm of post electoral ethnic killing and cleansing that left more than 1,000 dead and a half-million people uprooted. Because Obama's paternal family is Luo, the Luos love him without reserve. By contrast, Kikuyus, the largest tribe, are cool to him. (Cohen, 2008, p. 1)

This particular representation of Obama's ethnicity, Africa and Kenya, is not particularly positive. It is a frame that is reminiscent of the old idea of Africa as one buried in tribal conflicts and civil strife. The rest of the article explains the tribal battles between both tribes and how it has affected politics in Kenya. It recalls Obama's father's role in government and how tribalism affected his fortunes: "History is prologue. Back in the 1960s, Obama's father, shaped by his American experience, warned that "tribalism was going to ruin the country," according to the senator's memoir. Kenyatta, a Kikuyu, punished the "old man" for his frankness" (Cohen, 2008, p. 1). While this article gave the paper an opportunity to focus on Obama's ethnic roots and offered some political backdrop to the dynamics between politics and tribalism, it resurrected the negative image of Africa.

There are other closely related examples in *The New York Times*. Perhaps because of its position as a local U.S. paper (as compared to international publications), there were moments when the paper either struggled with interpreting Obama's blackness or had to do it alongside the racial permutations operating within the United States in terms of the "black-white" dichotomy:

Mr. Obama, 42, was not raised by black parents. His mother, who is white and from Kansas, split with his father, a Kenyan economist, when he was just a toddler. His father returned to Africa—and visited his son just once, when Barack was 10. Meanwhile, Mr. Obama's mother and her parents raised him mainly in Hawaii. He did not grow up in a black world and his family had no particular connection to the black experience in America. Yet Mr. Obama had black skin…. (Malcomson, 2004)

The narrative of an exotic African paternity is missing in this frame. When they mentioned his father it was within the frame of an absentee Dad, deciding to highlight his White upbringing by his mother and maternal grandparents. Identity as some scholars note is a constructed and structured representation which achieves meaning in relation to

other groups. As Hall (2002) notes, "It has to go through the eye of the needle of the other before it can construct itself" (p. 21). *The New York Times*, while praising Obama's rhetoric (considered with the operative framework of this dissertation as an Afrocentric act), at the same time introduced a subframe that was not entirely complimentary of Obama Sr. In other words the "redemptive image of Africa" was only partially present even though the "Father/roots/origins" frame was an overarching frame that was refracted by the paper.

However, *ThisDay's* framing of Obama's Africanity was balanced with some skepticism about Obama's chances at the polls. In the midst of the controversy surrounding Obama's race and ethnic background the paper asks:

> Is America ripe for a black man to occupy that most powerful seat in the world? Are Americans truly ready for a Black first family? Has white America truly purged itself of its notorious resistance to interracial harmony?... His father was African from Kenya and he grew up in Indonesia and Hawaii. These are not the usual credentials of candidacy for the Anglo-Saxon White House.… (Agunbiade, 2008, p. 2)

The newspaper certainly makes mention of Obama's Kenyan ethnicity instead just mentioning his blackness reflecting his Africanity. The rhetorical questions that follow are suffused with undercurrents that point to the tensions that Obama's blackness might cause him in the United States. There are interesting differences here between this theme and Obama's own race speech: While Obama addressed issues of his racial and ethnic background in an optimistic manner by encouraging both blacks and whites to overcome their own fears, the loaded rhetorical questions in *ThisDay's* reportage is governed by a twinge of suspicion. This shows that his post racial, conciliatory, hopeful and generally positive outlook on race in America was not completely refracted by *ThisDay*.

Subframe: Obama Within the Context of African Politics

One of the major dimensions of Africanity which some of the African newspapers examined was the placement of Obama's achievement as the first black nominee of a major U.S. party within the context of Africa's politics. The African idea of governance

is predicated on cultural values of community and the role of the government in taking

care of its people socially. In Africa government is expected to instill in people a sense of

community by offering both a tangible and intangible sense of security, social support

and identity. The paper praises the tone of Obama's speech, which it surmised was

populist, compassionate, demonstrated that he felt the "pains" of the electorate and in so

doing and connected with the needs of Americans. *ThisDay* thus praised Obama's

humane connectedness and through their critique of leadership in Africa called on the

continent's leaders to do same:

> Perhaps the above is the reason why most of the crowd at the Invesco Field
> Stadium became so emotional at the end of the night. Because, not only in
> America, but particularly in Africa and most third world countries, the biggest let
> down of leaders to their citizens had always been in the area of being in touch. …
> No example of that beats the recent one in Nigeria when a serving president said
> no Nigerian was living on one dollar a day. (Olaleye, 2008, p. 1)

> The paper then says of Obama, "It is this kind of being disjoint with the society

by past leaders, and the promise that he is one with the lower and middle class Americans

that is making the electorate to feel they may have found a savior in Obama" (Olaleye,

2008, p. 1). The *Mail & Guardian* also considered what an Obama presidency might

mean for Africa calling him a foreign policy pragmatist who will not condone with

Africa's failed leadership:

> ….this pragmatism may not find favor in Africa. During his visit to Kenya he
> attacked corruption and ongoing ethnic rivalry, which drew both condemnation
> and a measure of support. (*Mail & Guardian*, 2007, p. 1)

> In a similar manner, the *Daily Nation* in one paragraph showed how Kenyans

claimed ownership of Obama as having a "Kenyan streak" and framed it under the

existing political situation in Kenya at the time:

> Look at it this way. Barely two months ago, Kenya, as *The Economist* put it, was
> an admirable example for Africa. After the disputed polls, many have been quick
> to write it off as another African basket case. But now there are the Kofi Annan-
> mediated talks between the Government (Party of National Unity) and the
> opposition ODM, to resolve the post-election impasse through a power or
> "responsibility" sharing deal. A settlement that allows Kenya to get back to work
> and to exorcise the demons that plunged it into crisis might see the country being
> touted as the comeback African nation by the end of the year. It might look

unlikely today, but it's not impossible. One would have said the same thing of Obama a year ago. A first-time senator with no experience in government or foreign policy; a black man in a country with a history of racism that is still fresh in the memory of civil rights activists, running against a Clinton. It looked like his goose was cooked…. if the country bounces back and gets on a high roll, and Obama wins the American presidency, it will be hard to deny that the Illinois senator has a Kenyan streak in him. (Oyango-Obbo, 2008, p. 2)

Clearly the *Daily Nation* is relating Kenya's post-election violence of 2007 and the power sharing settlement that was reached, to Obama's own successes under trying conditions. The central goal of the newspaper was to discuss politics and current affairs in Kenya but the quote supports this frame because it draws on the image of Barack Obama within the space of African politics. Indeed, the reassertion of the "Kenyan streak" in Obama within the internal politics of his father's country is worth mentioning in this examination of how he featured in news discourse across the continent.

This chapter was particularly concerned with frames or representations of Obama's Africanity in media discourse from six newspapers across the globe. All in all, the analysis contained in this chapter provides *prima facie* grounds that suggest that the selected newspapers examined contained frames of Afrocentricity in their reportage. In all, three Afrocentric frames were identified and analyzed: (a) African roots, ancestry and memories of a father, (b) positive African framing: Africa outside the trope of crisis, and (c) Africanity and African values of community and togetherness. Two sub-frames also emerged from the analysis: (a) the old idea of Africa: marginality and stereotypes, and (b) Obama within the context of African politics. Out of the three major frames analyzed, two were refractions from Obama's speeches: "Roots and memories of a father" and "African value of communality." The two sub-frames were not refractions but were new and separate frames discovered in the analysis of newspaper reporting. The next chapter summarizes the main conclusions of this comparative framing analysis of Barack Obama's discursive construction of his Africanity against the backdrop of his campaign for the presidency in 2008.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation was to critically investigate Barack Obama's discursive construction of his Africanity against the backdrop of his campaign for the presidency in 2008. Rooted in theories of framing (e.g., Entman 1991; Gamson, 1989; Gurevitch & Levy, 1985; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Tankard 1997) and Afropolitanism (e.g., Asante, 2007; Schiele 1980, 2009), this dissertation also examined newspaper re-presentation of Obama's narrative in their coverage. Framing analysis was employed as the methodological strategy. The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the findings while laying out major conclusions, contributions, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

The first research question was concerned with whether Barack Obama appropriated or drew on his African identity in his speeches. The analysis reveals that Obama did draw on this aspect of his identity during his campaign for the presidency. The in-depth analysis revealed three major frames: (a) American exceptionalism, (b) African roots and memories of a father, and (c) African values of community. One subframe on "Rights and humanism" (Obama's use of his grandfather's colonial story to narrate his family's experience with slavery and subjugation) was also identified. The frame on exceptionalism focused on how Obama defined his improbable run for the White House as a testimony to American possibilities/exceptionalism. In other words, this was identified as an Afrocentric frame because his story of American possibility and exceptionalism is ensconced in his life story as the son of an African immigrant. The frame of "African roots and memories of a father" focused on Obama's narrative of his father and his Kenyan lineage, while the last major frame, "Afrocentric value of communalism," centered on the collective and communitarian sense of togetherness emphasized in his speeches.

The second research question was concerned with how Barack Obama discursively constructed or framed his Africanity within his two bestselling books, *Dreams from My Father* and *Audacity of Hope*? Here, the analysis revealed four major frames: (a) "Roots and memories of a father: Distance and shame," which was concerned with Obama's search for his roots as a teenager and the distance he felt from his father's continent; (b) "Roots and memories of a father: Negotiation, confusion and emptiness," which addressed Obama's sense of detachment from the African American community, the vacuum it created; (c) "African lineage: Acceptance of Africanity," in which Obama finally felt the circle of his identity close by fully accepting his Afrocentric roots and identity; and (d) "Afrocentric values of community." This frame as previously described centered on Barack Obama's message on collectivity and togetherness. With regard to the third research question we can conclude from the ensuing discussion that Obama's themes of Africanity in his books later informed his campaign rhetoric.

The fourth research question asked whether the newspapers under study echoed Obama's Africanity in their reportage. An examination of these newspapers across the board yielded the following frames: (a) African roots, ancestry and memories of his father, (b) Afrocentric value of community, and (c) Africa outside the trope of crisis or "redemption." Two subframes were also identified: Obama in the context of African politics, and the old idea of Africa. The first two frames in the newspaper analysis were refractions from Obama's speeches and books while the additional frame of "Africa outside the trope of crisis or redemption" constructed the image of Africa in positive and complimentary terms as these newspapers reported on Obama and his African roots. The first subframe, "Obama within the context of African politics," portrayed Obama's meteoric rise as an example for other sons/politicians from the continent to emulate. The last subframe, "the old idea of Africa," referred to the limited characterizations of Africa that were in tune with the old Western depictions of the continent in backward and

negative terms. A tabular representation of the major frames identified and analyzed is presented below:

Table 3. Major Frames

Speeches	Books	Newspapers
American exceptionalism	Roots and memories of a father: distance and shame	African roots, and memories of a father
African roots and memories of a father	Roots and memories of a father: negotiation, confusion and emptiness	Africa outside the trope of crisis: redemption
African value of community	African lineage: acceptance and Africanity	Afrocentric values of community
	Afrocentric values of community	Obama in the frame of African politics
		The old idea of Africa

Taken from a broader perspective, the results of this in-depth framing analysis suggest a few conclusions. One of the major conclusions from this study is that Africanity featured as a major part of Obama's identity construction process. Next, and perhaps more importantly, it demonstrated the effectiveness of Obama's political messaging and skill as a politician. Barack Obama used his exotic biography as the son of an African immigrant to portray himself as a totem of the American dream—something which was sure to resonate instantly with his audience. At a time when the country was experiencing a period of economic quagmire and war weariness, candidate Obama portrayed himself as a break with the past; a fresh-faced candidate who was interested in

building bridges, cooperating, and working collectively for a common purpose. Obama's ability to fearlessly use his biography—which included his Africanity as part of his distinct life story—garnered broad-based appeal. In essence, his two best-selling books as well as his speeches contributed to the shaping of his identity during the 2008 presidential race. To be sure, his Afrocentric frame based on the memory of his father and his Kenyan roots, and his language of togetherness, community, and working collectively ran through his books as well as his speeches. In other words, his speeches and books laid the foundations for his successful run for America's highest political office.

As we have seen, these frames were refracted by the selected newspapers. The analysis demonstrates that there were no major differences in media framing of Obama's Africanity and newspaper representations. Specifically, Obama's African roots, the memory of his father and his communal identity present in his speeches and books were refracted by the newspapers (both western and African). Even where the less complimentary or negative frame of "the old idea of Africa" arises, examples are found in both one western newspaper (*New York Times*) and another African newspaper (*This Day*). In sum, it is clear from the analysis that, Obama's narrative as the son of an African immigrant and his meteoric rise in politics was so stunning, so distinct, and very much symptomatic of the American dream/exceptionalism, that the media tended to reflect as well as boost this narrative. In this regard, the newspapers may be seen as refracting or regurgitating Obama's discourse, but it can also be argued that Obama's story was so refreshing, so stunning, so interesting that the news media could not ignore this "uniqueness." This is especially so because uniqueness, novelty, or singularity is identified in journalism as a news value (UVAMedia.com). It tells us that at the core, journalists have some fundamental values that resonate across board. In this case Obama was such an unusual figure that there were no major differences in the way newspapers represented his Afrocentric identity. The ideal position for most politicians is for the

media to tell their stories the way they want it told. This, from the analysis, is exactly what happened in terms of the media's refraction of Obama's Africanity.

Something has to be said, though, for the *Daily Nation*, which more than any other paper acted as a "griot" (traditional African praise singer) for Obama with its excessive praise of the candidate. The position adopted by this paper raises questions about its journalistic role. Fundamentally, the paper abandoned its journalistic role of objectivity by engaging in uncritical media reportage of Barack Obama based on a nationalist and jingoistic twist. However, this is not surprising considering the unprecedented nature of his candidacy as the first American president with direct Luo ancestry.

With regard to his "communitarian" frame which emphasized togetherness, community, and working collectively, there is no doubt that this kind of rhetoric was almost contrary to the idea of individualism and capitalism to which Americans were accustomed. Again, in political terms, this was perhaps one reason why his candidacy and speeches sounded so refreshing to Americans who might have been looking for a break from the rhetoric of unilateralism. However, in communicative terms, the explanation here is that Obama was able to juxtapose his frames of inclusion and working collectively for a common purpose with the American value of individualism. He showed that the two are not incompatible in an America of inclusion, freedom, and compassion.

The last major frame contained in the newspaper analysis is that of "redemption" or the framing of Africa in positive terms. This frame is profound because it represents a clear departure from the old primordial ways of representing Africa or its ethnicities in the media. While there were limited strains of the old representations of Africa identified as a subframe, the depiction of the continent of his father was, by and large, positive. In an important sense, Obama's candidacy presented an opportunity to view Africa outside the trope of crisis, and this may very well explain the abiding enthusiasm people from his father's country, Kenya, and the continent of his ancestors had for the presidential race.

Framing, Afrocentricity, and Identity

In summary, this dissertation does not argue that Obama is an African or a "Kenyan anti-colonial" (*The Huffington Post*, 2008) as D'Souza or Gingrich submit. As the son of a Kenyan with a multicultural make up, external experiences and mixed ancestry, Barack Obama has been the subject of numerous studies. This dissertation argues that one way to understand Obama's identity is by considering his Africanity—an area which has received little attention in the academic literature. Since discourse and text are important artifacts contributing to the shaping of one's identity, this study examined relevant Obama speeches and subsequent newspaper reportage to decipher elements of Afrocentricity. As previously explicated, Afrocentricity is a term that is relevant for this dissertation because (a) it covers people of black descent irrespective of geographic location, particularly Africans or children of Africans who are "new embodiments of inter-cultural or inter-racial unions between Africa and the rest of the world" (Makokha, 2011, p. 16); (b) it is a way of espousing Africanity or African ideals in the rest of the world; (c) it represents someone with African ancestry and roots, "raised by the world" (Tutton, 2012), but who still embraces and foregrounds his African ancestry without playing down his other identity components; and (d) it also represents a new black cultural experience where Africa and its subjects are viewed in a redemptive frame that is outside the trope of crisis. Asante (1998), one of the pillars of Afrocentric theory, identified other elements of Afrocentricity as discourse that reflect community/communalism, collectiveness, and unity while celebrating diversity, discourse that traces and recognizes one's African heritage; discourse that brings about harmony and reconciliation; and discourse that "contributes intellectually to the world's history as a viable and distinct component of multiple realities" (Stewart, 2011, p. 271).

In addition, framing was employed as both a theoretical and methodological tool. Theoretically, framing offers important ways to identify issues of selection, emphasis, and elaboration in the construction of meaning, social reality, and identities. This

dissertation employed the constructionist view of framing which enabled analysis of discourse and text that was related to the construction or shaping of Obama's Africanity. As a research approach, framing permits researchers to analyze communication messages, textual content, and other forms of informational presentations to ascertain how communicators and the media present issues to audiences. All of this contributes to the construction and understanding of events or personalities in order to meaningfully comprehend messages or identities in a constantly changing and highly interconnected world. Frames manifest themselves in different sites including speeches and newspapers. Methodologically this research adopted Pan and Kosicki's (1993) view of framing, which offers an important approach to decipher how politicians and the media "take an increasingly proactive approach to amplify their views of what an issue is about" (p. 55). According to Pan and Kosicki, frames also function as themes because they help to ascertain how issues of selection and identities are labeled through key words, descriptions, issue narratives, quotes, patterns, and grouping. Van Gorp (2007) has argued that constructionist framing can be applied to various forms of presentations including speech and news articles because writing speeches or news reports constitute an act of framing due to the choices that are made. After an initial reading and re-reading of texts, a protocol was developed that was then applied as a useful guide throughout this qualitative framing analytic process. This helped to firm up Afrocentric elements or themes that were present while noting similarities and differences and the emergence of any new frames. Reliability and validity was also ensured through the use of credible and authentic data (Scott, 1990).

In the end, this dissertation submits that Barack Obama's identity, discourse, and worldview can be interpreted through an Afrocentric lens. The evidence for this is overwhelming. Results from the data analysis point to frames which fit into the basic elements of Afrocentrism as outlined by previous scholars (Asante, 1998, 2002; Stewart, 2011): community, togetherness (or collectivism), balance, harmony, African roots,

unity, and recognition of African heritage. It also fits into Mbeme's view of Afropolitanism as the new redemptive image of blackness and Tutton's (2012) take on Afropolitans as "people of African descent but with a very global outlook" (p. 1) which Obama himself augments when he declares in front of the Berlin audience that he is a "citizen of the world" (Obama, 2008). This is right in tandem with the basic assumptions of Afrocentricity which speaks to people of African descent who are not necessarily African citizens but "Africans of the world."

The framing analysis undertaken shows that although Obama believes in individual responsibility, from an Afrocentric standpoint, his core philosophy and view of the world is communal. He intrinsically believes—just like the basic tenets of African traditional life assume—that the community is indispensable to our definition of who we are. This is reflected in various quotes and statements that support the frame of communalism in Obama speeches, for example, "I am my brother's keeper; I am my sister's keeper" (Obama, 2004). *Al-Ahram* said a key standout in Obama's campaign was his belief in "collective responsibility" both locally and in the "international community"(Naaf, 2008). Out of all the Afrocentric frames presented in Chapter IV, the theme of communalism was one of two frames that were seen in all three textual artifacts: his speeches, his books, and the newspapers that covered his journey to the U.S. presidency. The present study concludes that at the core, Obama believes that (a) the community and the individual are intrinsically linked and (b) communal authority or in a modern sense the government has a dominant role to play in society and in shaping people's lives.

Barack Obama believes that the government should not be an isolated unit or government intervention is not a bane but one that can be harnessed for the benefit of the people. In fact in its more recent (2012) endorsement of Obama for president, *The New Yorker* notes that Romney's criticism of Obama is largely because of suggestions that "Obama's liberalism is in conflict with a uniquely American strain of individualism." In

the same piece, the paper writes that an Obama administration "will bolster the ideal of good governance and a social vision that tempers individualism with a concern for community" (*The New Yorker*, 2012). It is my contention also that this underlying communal belief might explain some of Obama's political ideals and approach to politics both locally and internationally: co-operation instead of unilateralism, post-partisanship instead of stolid ideology, and working together and consensus-building instead of isolation. Clearly Obama's candidacy and his communal vision has reshaped and redefined the idea of America in a major way. Thus as we have seen that Obama did not only succeed in changing the old idea of Africa (redemptive frame) but also recast the American idea or the idea of America (American exceptionalism) within a communal frame.

Through this dissertation, I suggest that Obama's idea of America is so different, the personhood of Obama is so different, his policies and inherent belief in society are so different from what America is used to. This is mainly because of his basic belief in shared society, collective responsibility, common aspirations, and a transcendental persona which goes beyond the individual to find itself within a communal identity.

The notion of Africa outside the trope of crisis and the frame of redemption are key Afrocentric elements (Schiele, 1996, 1998). Again this was a major theme unearthed in the analysis of both Obama's speeches and newspaper refractions. The newspaper refractions of Obama were also largely positive (e.g., "Democrats have found a new star in Barack Obama son of a Kenyan father," Watson, 2004). Also, he may not necessarily have been conscious of it, but through his actions and speech, Obama's portrays a cultural identity which is directly steeped in Afrocentric roots. In the African newspapers in particular and to a large extent even in the Western newspaper, Obama's color was positively refracted. This is definitely a key component of Obama's Afrocentricity because through his candidacy he has been able to construct a place and space for Africa in newspaper discursive constructions in a way never before seen in American politics.

More importantly, the image he elucidates is one patently different from the old Western myths and archetypes of Africa: that is, one of hope and not doom, one of reconciliation and not conflict, one of recognition instead of subjugation, one that is central instead of peripheral, one of equality instead of inferiority, and one of pride instead of shame.

Another source or frame of Obama's Africanity is his father. Obama was not a descendant of American slaves like most African Americans. As he himself admits, he does not have the typical African American experience. The source of Obama's blackness can be traced directly to his Kenyan father. Although Obama's father was physically absent from his life, he is a constant presence in his rhetoric—both his speeches and books. Obama does not reject his African roots but embraces them. This was refracted by the newspapers with many referring to Kenya as his "ancestral home" (Kelley, 2008, p. 1) and the African newspapers referring to Obama as their "son" (Kelley, 2008, p. 1). There were many feature stories written on Obama's roots that did not trace his lineage to Alabama, Mississippi, or Louisiana but to his father's village in Kogelo which became a symbol of Obama's Africanity and where his stepmother offered countless interviews. In Obama's own words, it was in Africa that HE felt the "circle" (Obama, 1995, p. 377) of his identity finally "close" (Obama, 1995, p. 377). It was only through the journey to discover his father and his lineage that Obama finally firms up his identity saying: "For the first time in my life, I felt the comfort, the firmness of identity….My name belonged and so I belonged" (Obama, 1995, p. 305).

Obama's father and Africa gave Barack Jr. an authenticity in terms of identity, a sense of location and a firmer sense of belonging. By framing his African roots as a central part of his identity and subsequent newspaper refraction of this frame, Obama's identity can be explained in Afrocentric terms. The newspapers also refracted this frame with *The Times of London*, for example, writing that "Obama's moment of self-discovery came with a trip to Africa" (Macintyre, 2008, p. 1). This is theoretically grounded or supported by Asante's (2002) definition of the term which states that Afrocentricity is the

"conscious process by which a person locates or relocate African phenomena within an African subject content or agency and action. It is therefore location as opposed to dislocation, centeredness as opposed to marginality" (Asante, 2002, p. 97). Lastly, in placing the findings within notions of identity, I revisited Castells (1997) notion on identity which outlined several markers as part of the identity-building process. These include history, geography, and personal experiences. Rimskii (2010) also discussed the possibility of multiple identities or the "coexistence of different identities" (p. 12).

From the present analysis, geography did play a major role in Obama's journey to discover his identity or roots. His immediate space was America, but it took a journey back to a different geographical space, the continent of his father, for him to fill a void he had spoken openly about in his personal life.

Obama looked to Africa to fulfill his own emptiness. And so in Kogelo, even as if knelt by the tomb of his father, Obama narrates how he felt: "It wasn't simply joy that I felt in each of these moments. Rather it was a sense that everything I was doing, every touch and breath and word carried the full weight of my life that a circle was beginning to close so that I might finally recognize myself as I was here" (Obama, 1995, p. 377). Without doubt, the Kenya chapter of his life is transformative for Obama and grounds the uncertainty of his identity prior to his visit within a tangible geographical space. As has already been discussed, there was also a noticeable historical connection to the African ancestry both by Obama and through newspaper refractions. The last of the three identity building elements, personal experience, is relevant because it permits us to recognize how Obama straddles his personal experience and collective belonging to accept his Afrocentric lineage. Obama's identity is therefore socially constructed because it is developed within both personal and communal spaces.

From a framing standpoint, people's words greatly inform us about themselves and their identity. Naturally political authors like Obama use speeches, books, and other forms of text to introduce themselves and create a narrative of who they are. Obama's

textual accounts are one of self-discovery which fits into Giddens' (1991) conception of identity as that of "self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of his/her biography" (p. 53). Weeks' (1990) thesis on identity is also relevant here: "Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others" (p. 32). Obama's visit to Kenya and his Africanity gave Obama a sense of location and a certain core identity which satisfied a void in his life. However, that is not the entire picture: Any reasonable assessment of Obama's identity should take cognizance of the multiplicity of his identity. However since this dissertation is devoted to the Afrocentric aspect of his persona, this study suggests that the place and space of Africa granted Obama a moment of identity reconciliation which goes beyond the boundaries of the United States by engaging in the ancestral, ethnic, historical, and social sphere of his identity.

<div align="center">Contributions and Limitations of the Study</div>

An overriding goal of this project was to explore the presence of Africanity—an often understudied subject— within Obama's personal narrative and the news media from a comparative perspective. The study is significant for a few reasons. First, from an Afrocentric standpoint it is tempting to argue that Obama's identity claims and media refraction during the election was decidedly pan-African, but I suggest that his candidacy provided an identity template which transcended the normative divisions within American identity or racial politics that called for introspection. One of the major contributions of this study was to call attention to his African background and connection without which a complete understanding of his persona will not be possible. Obama is keenly aware of and schooled in the civil rights movement; however, unlike most African Americans, it is not the only source of his black identity.

Secondly, this study potentially enriches the field of media and communication studies because it adds to existing body of knowledge by qualitatively investigating Obama's Afrocentricity in the media centric theoretical and methodological concept of

framing. Generally, it increases our understanding of a national and global phenomenon such as Barack Obama. Additionally, by including media from Africa, this study extends research in general and the concept of framing in particular to a region whose press has received limited attention in scholarly studies. The comparative nature of this study holds immense benefits to the field as it enables us to ground the study in the geographic, media, social, political, and historical conditions that contribute to frame construction and identity building. In addition this research also concludes with the conviction that the delineation of the aforementioned Afrocentric traits/elements provides justifiable optimism for a continental identity and Afrocentric renaissance based on common values.

In terms of limitations the dependence on a qualitative approach meant quantitative or statistical analysis of data was absent from the research. Also, future projects might also consider citizen participation through interviews and focused groups in order to generate some feedback from African subjects on the ground. Nevertheless, the dissertation offers some insights into the appropriation of Afrocentric values within an American context. Surely, similar applications can be made to the African mainland. The long and short of it is that returning to core and enduring African values grants the possibility of reviving and restoring an authentic and culturally relevant African identity.

The suggestion here is that the presence of Africa in Obama's text cannot be taken for granted for two reasons: (a) It provides space and presence for Africa in a way never experienced in U.S. presidential politics, and (b) because of Obama's historic achievement as the first black candidate of a major political party in a dominant nation such as the United States, it grants Africa a more positive, refreshing, or redemptive image. It is thus no exaggeration to say that by claiming his Africanity, Obama contributes to the production of knowledge on Africa and in the process contributes to overcoming what scholars call "Afro-pessimism" (Asante, 1998; Mazama, 2001; Mudimbe, 1994)—the negative and stereotypical view of Africa. More than that, newspaper coverage gave this unmistakable message: Thanks to Obama we are all

Afrocentric! Overall this dissertation has provided productive ground for opening up discussions, deconstructing narratives, and examining the communicative functions of text in our attempt to account for the Afrocentric aspect of Obama's identity.

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