**“I’m Not the President of Black America”: Rhetorical Versus Policy Representation**

Pavielle E. Haines, Tali Mendelberg, and Bennett Butler

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# Appendix A: Keywords in State of the Union Addresses

*Poverty Words*

* + Bankruptcy
  + Bankrupt
  + (Economic) Assistance
  + (Economic) Dependence
  + (Economic) Dependency
  + (Economically) Dependent
  + Disadvantaged
  + Debt
  + Foreclosure(s)
  + Find a job
  + Find jobs
  + Find jobs
  + Can’t read
  + Disadvantaged
  + Food Stamp(s)
  + Hunger
  + Hungry
  + Illiteracy
  + Illiterate
  + Impoverished
  + In need
  + Income gap
  + Income inequality
  + Jobless
  + Less fortunate
  + Low-Income
  + Malnutrition
  + Needy
  + No job(s)
  + Paycheck(s)
  + Poor(est)
  + Poverty
  + Unemployed
  + Unemployment
  + Vulnerable
  + Welfare
  + Without a job
  + Without jobs

*Race (African Americans & Civil Rights)*

* + Achievement gap
  + Affirmative Action
  + African American(s)
  + Black(s)
  + Civil right(s)
  + Colored(s)
  + Criminal Justice
  + Desegregate
  + Desegregated
  + Desegregation
  + Discriminate
  + Discriminated
  + Discrimination
  + Discriminatory
  + Disenfranchise(d)
  + Disenfranchisement
  + Education(al) gap
  + Enslaved
  + Equal right(s)
  + Minorities
  + Minority
  + Negro(es)
  + Prejudice
  + Profiling
  + Race(s)
  + Racial
  + Racial barrier
  + Racial equality
  + Racial inequality
  + Racism
  + Racist
  + Segregate
  + Segregated
  + Segregation
  + Slave(s)
  + Slavery
  + Subjugate
  + Subjugated
  + Subjugation

*Middle Class Words*

* Average American(s)
* Average families
* Average family
* Homeowner(s)
* Middle class
* Ordinary American(s)
* Ordinary people
* Small-business(es)
* Worker(s)
* Working American(s)
* Working families
* Working family

# Appendix B: Content Analysis Methodology

The State of the Union addresses are located at the American Presidency Project (http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu). In 1970 and 1977, Johnson and Ford (respectively) gave a State of the Union speech *after* a new president-elect had been selected. These speeches are omitted. Nixon did not give a State of the Union speech in 1973.

*Total Words:* Delete any text that is not part of the president’s speech. Count the total number of words in the speech.

*Poverty Words:* Identify each use of the poverty keywords listed in appendix A. Examine the use of each word in the context of the sentence that contains it. Only count the keyword if it used in reference to American citizens or issues in the United States. For instance, the word “debt” is often used when speaking about *national* rather than *personal* debt. In these situations, it should not be counted. Similarly, the terms “economic assistance” and “malnutrition” are sometimes used to refer to foreign nations and should not be counted when used in this context.

*Negative Poverty Words:* Identify each use of the poverty keywords listed in Appendix A. Examine the use of each word in the context of the sentence that contains it. Determine whether or not the word is being used in a negative context.If there are multiple poverty words in a sentence and the context is determined to be negative, then all the poverty words in that sentence should be counted as negative. At least one of the following criteria must be met for a poverty word to be counted as negative:

* 1. The sentence in which the poverty word is embedded suggests that anti-poverty programs are ineffective or deleterious (e.g. “Welfare robs people of independence”).
  2. The sentence in which the poverty word is embedded suggests that anti-poverty benefits should be reduced (e.g. “We need to spend on job creation and not welfare.”)
  3. The sentence in which the poverty word is embedded suggests that poor people have undesirable qualities (e.g. “Some people don’t want to work.”)

*African American and Civil Rights Words:* Identify each use of African American and civil rights keywords listed in Appendix A. Examine the use of each word in the context of the sentence that contains it. Only count the keyword if it is used in reference to American citizens or issues in the United States. For instance, if the word “racism” is used to refer to apartheid in South Africa, it should not be counted. Similarly, if “discrimination” is used to refer to sexism rather than racism, it should not be counted.

*Negative African American and Civil Rights Words:* Identify each use of the African American and civil rights keywords listed in Appendix A. Examine the use of each word in the context of the sentence that contains it. Determine whether or not the word is being used in a negative context.If there are multiple African American and civil rights words in a sentence and the context is determined to be negative, all of the African American and civil rights words in that sentence should be counted as negative. At least one of the following criteria must be met for an African American or civil rights word to be counted as negative:

* + 1. The sentence in which the keyword is embedded suggests that civil rights and racial equality programs (school integration, affirmative action) are ineffective or deleterious (e.g. “Affirmative action prevents employers from hiring the best.”)
    2. The sentence in which the poverty word is embedded suggests that civil rights or racial equality programs (affirmative action) should be cut or eliminated (e.g. “Affirmative action should be eliminated”)
    3. The sentence in which the poverty word is embedded suggests that African Americans have undesirable qualities (e.g. “African Americans could get ahead if only they were willing to work harder.”)

*Middle Class Words:* Identify each use of the middle-class words listed in Appendix A. Examine each use of the word in the context of the sentence that contains it. Only count the keyword if it is used in reference to American citizens or issues in the United States. For instance, if the word “workers” is used to refer to labor in another country, it should be removed from the total keyword count.

*Instructions for Content Analysis:* Calculate the frequency of total poverty words, negative poverty words, total African American and civil rights words, negative African American and civil rights words, and middle class words. For each speech, subtract the total number of negative poverty words from the total number of poverty words to get total positive/neutral poverty words. Repeat this for African American and civil rights words. For each speech, divide the total number of words in each category (total poverty, positive/neutral poverty, negative poverty, etc.) by the total number of words to get a percentage. Then multiply each percentage by 10,000 to get keywords per 10,000 words.

# Appendix C: Inter-Coder Reliability

Roughly 10% of the speech data (six speeches, the second odd year from each decade of data) were selected for a second coder to analyze as outlined in appendices A and B. The first and second coders’ agreement is assessed using percentage match and Krippendorff Alpha, for each category. The results in table below show that inter-coder reliability meets an acceptable standard for every category of word.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Category of Words** | **Percentage Match** | **Krippendorff Alpha** |
| Poverty Words | 83% | .94 |
| Negative Poverty Words | 83% | .92 |
| Race Words | 83% | .87 |
| Negative Race | 100% | 1 |
| Middle Class Words | 83% | .97 |

# Appendix D: Details for Budget Data

We use budget proposals from 1970 to 2017. Earlier presidential budgets were not examined because the structure of contemporary anti-poverty programs was not finalized until approximately 1970. The budget is formulated and proposed nearly year in advance of its implementation, meaning the president’s first budget is not enacted until the end of their first year. Similarly, their final budget remains in place for almost a year after they have left office.

There are three categories of budget proposals: (1) spending on existing discretionary programs, which the president may freely cut or expand; (2) spending on existing mandatory programs and tax expenditures, which are automatically set by current law; and (3) the president’s proposed changes to discretionary and mandatory programs that produce an addition or deduction in spending. For example, the president may propose $10 million for the existing Pell Grant Program (category 1). He may also propose increasing the size of grants, adding a cost of $1 million (category 3). This brings total proposed spending for the Pell Grant Program is $11 million.

We exclude proposed spending on existing mandatory programs and tax expenditures (category 2) because they are set by law and do not reflect presidential preferences. As such, our data does not include total spending on the largest anti-poverty programs: Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security. It also does not include Obama’s 2009 American Recovery Act or 2010 Affordable Care Act, because these programs originated in Congress (rather than as budget proposals) and were classified as mandatory spending in subsequent budgets. Finally, we do not include loan-based programs because they are a complicated mixture of mandatory and discretionary spending. Our data reflects proposed discretionary totals plus the cost of proposed changes.

Obama proposed larger amounts for both discretionary programs and program changes compared to other presidents. We include both proposed discretionary spending and program changes in our analyses, but the results are similar when each category is examined separately (available from authors). Moreover, Obama’s spending proposals were not driven by any one program. In 2017, the largest programs were: Pell Grants, which took up less than one-fifth of proposed anti-poverty spending; and the Equal Opportunity Commission, which took up less than one-fourth of proposed civil rights spending.

# Appendix E: Obama’s Public Positions, Vetoes, and Executive Orders

A review of all 1,180 roll call votes conducted in either the House or Senate in 2011 shows that fewer than eight were primarily or secondarily related to poverty or civil rights.[[1]](#footnote-1) In any given year, Obama had relatively few opportunities to offer public positions on legislation related to poverty or civil rights, or to issue vetoes in these areas. Obama only issued twelve vetoes during his time in office. Of those vetoes, only onemight be considered tenuously related to poverty relief (“HR 3762—the Restoring Americans' Healthcare Freedom Reconciliation Act of 2015,” which undermined key components of the Affordable Care Act). None were clearly related to civil rights. Most were related to the environment and defense.[[2]](#footnote-2)

As to executive orders, Obama issued only four at all related poverty relief or civil rights, and most are minor. For instance, in 2012 Obama issued Executive Order 13620, establishing the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans. This initiative helped connect individuals and organizations to local educational programs for African Americans, but provided no direct benefit itself. With few exceptions, efforts by presidents to address poverty or civil rights are similarly infrequent and constrained. For instance, Carter issued only five executive orders related to these issue areas. Two of these orders merely transferred enforcement of existing non-discrimination policies to different agencies.[[3]](#footnote-3)

In sum, public positions and executive actions related to the relevant policy areas are too scarce and inconsistent for a reliable, systematic comparison across presidents.

# Appendix F. Robustness Check Using Presidential DW-Nominate Scores



Appendix Figure F presents 1st dimension common space presidential DW-Nominate scores on poverty and civil rights issues for each president. Negative scores indicate greater liberalism and positive scores indicate greater conservatism. DW-Nominate scores are derived from presidential positions on congressional bills on which there was a roll-call vote. We use the subset of bills related to our policy areas of interest.[[4]](#footnote-4) [[5]](#footnote-5) Nominate codes every roll-call vote taken through the 113th Congress by its primary and secondary issue areas.[[6]](#footnote-6) We identified roll-call votes related to poverty with the following issue codes: (1) Welfare and Medicaid; (2) Food Stamps/Food Programs; (3) Unemployment/Jobs; (4) Minimum Wage; or (5) and Housing/Housing Programs/Rent Control. We identified roll-call votes related to civil rights with the following issue codes: (1) Slavery; (2) Voting Rights; or (3) Civil Rights/Desegregation/Busing/Affirmative Action.[[7]](#footnote-7) We pooled poverty and civil rights roll-call votes to maximize the number of observations for each president.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Appendix Figure F suggests that on poverty and civil rights, Obama was substantially more liberal than any president in the past half century. He was almost twice as liberal as any Democrat. He was also much more liberal than the most conservative president (Reagan) was conservative. No matter the comparison point, Obama took unusually liberal actions in issues of particular concern for African Americans.

These results highlight the utility of disentangling presidents’ overall ideology from their efforts on behalf of a specific social group. DW-Nominate scores generated from votes across all issue areas show Obama to be among the least liberal Democrats of the post-1960s era.[[9]](#footnote-9) However, these scores mask variation in presidents’ positions on race-related and poverty issues.

We caution that the race and poverty scores are based on a small number of observations for most presidents, and especially for Obama (who took only 35 positions on these issue areas, and not many more on others). Nevertheless, Appendix Tables F1 and F2 below suggest that the scores for poverty and civil rights are generally as accurate as the official overall scores.[[10]](#footnote-10) This suggests the policy-specific DW-Nominate scores serve a useful robustness check against our primary policy effort measure of budget proposals.



**Appendix Table F1. Accuracy of Scaling Models**



**Appendix Table F2. Accuracy of Nominate Predictions for Presidential Roll-Calls**

# Appendix G: Anti-Poverty Programs in the Analyses

* Criterion I: At least 30% of the benefits or beneficiaries are in the bottom income quintile.
* Criterion II: At least 50% of the benefits or beneficiaries are in the bottom two income quintiles.
* Criterion III: Scholarly research shows that it reduces the poverty rate by upwards of five percent.

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# Appendix H: Standardizing Project-Based Housing Assistance Proposals

The Project Based Housing Assistance Program contracts with private landlords to subsidize rent for a set number of low-income housing units. In the 1970’s, spending proposals for 40-year contracts were the norm. Between 1980 and 1995, the lengths of housing contracts were successively shortened. From 1996 onward, all housing contracts were renewed for only one-year terms. The varying length of housing contracts between 1970 and 2017 severely biased our anti-poverty data. Later presidents looked as though they proposed significantly less for housing than earlier presidents, even though the number of housing contracts remained stable or increased for most years in our dataset. To address this, we standardized spending proposals for housing contracts as follows:

* + - 1. We isolated proposed spending for the renewal of housing contracts with private landlords from other types of housing programs.
      2. We identified standard contract length for each year by referring to appropriation reports and hearings. From 1970-1979: 40 years; from 1980-1989: 20 years; from 1990-1995: 15 years; from 1996 onward: 1 year.
      3. We divided proposed spending by standard contract length to find per annum spending on contracts. We included the standardized proposals in our dataset. We also tried removing housing proposals from the dataset entirely, but this had no meaningful effect on our conclusions (available from authors upon request).

# Appendix I: Civil Rights Programs in the Analysis

* Criterion I: It offered cash or non-cash benefits to racial minority groups
* Criterion II: It offered cash or non-cash benefits to racial minority-serving institutions or organizations
* Criterion III: It promoted racial diversification, including the integration of African Americans, in workplaces and communities[[11]](#footnote-11)
* Criterion IV: Its primary purpose was to promote and enforce civil rights while guarding against their infringement
* /var/folders/p_/01n99qpn2szgvzbt3h4nzkmc0000gn/T/com.apple.Preview/com.apple.Preview.PasteboardItems/Civil Programs (dragged).pdfCriterion V (necessary for all): It did not meet the criteria necessary to be classified anti-poverty spending.

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# Appendix J: Details for Alternative Spending Measures

To calculate spending per poor, unemployed, and African American person, we use demographic data from the year the budget was proposed. For example, demographic data from 2016 is used to calculate per person spending for the 2017 budget (since the 2016 poverty rate had not yet been released at the time this paper was written, we used data from 2015 for 2017 budget). Using data from the budget year in the analyses yields similar results (available from authors). Proposed spending per person should *not* be understood as the actual dollar value received. Being below the poverty line or unemployed does not clearly translate into eligibility for anti-poverty benefits. Additionally, while African Americans have historically been the largest minority and among the most likely to access programs that exist for the protection of civil rights, these programs can also be used by other racial, ethnic, and gender minorities.

To calculate spending as a percentage of the discretionary domestic budget, we include only spending on discretionary programs. Program changes are excluded from the measure. The proposed discretionary domestic budget includes all non-mandatory spending except defense.

# Appendix K: T-Tests for Obama’s Poverty, Civil Rights, and Middle Class Rhetoric

We compare Obama’s rhetoric to individual Democratic predecessors using two-tailed, two-sample *t*-tests (d.f. = NPredecessor + Obama – 2). We also compare his rhetoric to all Democratic or Republican predecessors using two-tailed, one-sample *t*-tests (d.f. = Predecessors – 1). In the latter tests, rhetoric is likely to be correlated within presidential terms, biasing the standard errors. To correct for this, we calculated the average for each president and compared Obama’s mean to the mean of his predecessors’ averages.

Obamas’ overall average for poverty mentions was 10.64 words per 10,000. This was significantly less than Johnson’s (17.52, *p* < .05, d.f. = 10,); substantially, though not significantly, less than Carter’s (24.41, *p* = .41, d.f. = 9); and significantly less than Clinton’s (25.99, *p* < .01, d.f. = 14). Obama’s average was also significantly less than the average for his Democratic predecessors (22.64, *p* < .05, d.f. = 2) and his Republican predecessors (19.92, *p* < .05, d.f. = 4).

Obama’s overall average for civil rights mentions was 3.60 words per 10,000. This was similar to Johnson (5.37, *p* = .46, d.f. = 10); Carter, (8.46, *p* = .29, d.f. = 9); and Clinton (5.64, *p* = .16, d.f. = 14). It was also similar to the average Democratic predecessors (6.49, *p* < .10, d.f. = 2) and Republican predecessor (3.72, *p* = .78, d.f. = 4).

Obama spoke about the middle class at an average frequency of 29.23 mentions per 10,000 words. This was significantly more than Johnson (5.08, *p* < .001, d.f. = 10) and Carter (9.45, *p* < .05, d.f. = 9), and marginally more than Clinton (19.44, *p* < .10, d.f. = 14). Obama’s average was marginally more than his Democratic predecessors (11.32, *p* < .10, d.f. = 2) and significantly more than his Republican predecessors (9.56, *p* < .05, d.f. = 4).

# Appendix L: Yearly Rhetoric Analyses

**Appendix Table L. Regressions for Yearly Poverty, Civil Rights, & Middle Class Rhetoric**

# Appendix M: Yearly Proposed Anti-Poverty and Civil Rights Spending

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# Appendix N. Regressions for Alternative Spending Measures

**Appendix Table N1. Regressions for Alternative Anti-Poverty Spending Measures**



**Appendix Table N2. Regressions for Alternative Civil Rights Spending Measures**

The alterative spending measures analyzed in Appendix Tables N1 and N2 are not the most direct tests of presidential efforts. Spending per person is influenced by demographic and economic changes that are beyond presidential control. Similarly, the percent of the domestic budget devoted to each type of spending is influenced not only by the priority a president places on helping the poor and minorities, but also his efforts on other programs independent of these categories. The substantive implications of the Obama dummy should be interpreted cautiously.

# Appendix O. Robustness Checks for Proposed Spending

**Appendix Table O1. Robustness Checks for Proposed Anti-Poverty Spending**

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**Appendix Table O2. Robustness Checks for Proposed Civil Rights Spending**

# Appendix P. Regressions Comparing Obama to Democrats and Republicans

**Appendix Table P. Regressions for Spending Controlling for Partisanship**

# Appendix Q. T-Tests for Obama’s Proposals Under a Republican vs. Democratic Congress

We compare Obama’s spending proposals under a Democratic versus Republican Controlled Congress using two-tailed, two sample *t*-tests. Obamas’ average spending proposal for poverty relief when the Democrats controlled both the House and Senate during his first two years in office was $185,782 million. His average spending proposal for poverty relief when the Republicans controlled one or both chambers during his remaining years in office was $168,633 million. These means are not significantly different (*p* = .65). Obama’s average spending proposal for civil rights under Democratic control of Congress was $1,689 million. His average spending proposal for civil rights when the Republicans controlled one or both chambers was $1,737 million. These means are also not statistically different (*p* = .30).

# Appendix R. Placebo Tests for Spending by G.W. Bush

**Appendix Table R1. Spending Proposals for G.W. Bush Versus Obama**

In Table R1, with a control for GDP (almost perfectly correlated with time), Obama proposed two or four times more than Bush for civil rights and poverty, respectively. Only the Obama effect is statistically significant, while the Bush effects do not reach their standard errors. Table R2 more fully tests the Bush placebo hypothesis, with parallel models to those used for Obama in Table 2 (but omitting Obama’s data): the Bush dummy on its own (1A, 2A); the Bush dummy plus significant controls (1B, 2B); the Bush dummy plus the controls that generated the highest adjusted R2 (1B again, 2C); and the Bush dummy plus a full set of controls (1C, 2C again). The Bush dummy fails to reach statistical significance in half the models, which are also the three best specified models (those with the best fit or only significant controls: 1B, 2B, and 2C). By contrast, Obama’s dummy was significant in all equivalent models and his effects roughly double Bush’s.

# Appendix S. Regressions Used to Predict Obama’s Spending

**Appendix Table R2. Regressions for G.W. Bush's Proposed Spending**

**Appendix Table S. Predictors of Spending Proposals for Obama's Predecessors**

# Appendix T: Out-of-Sample Predictions for G.W. Bush



**Accuracy of Anti-Poverty Spending Predictions for G.W. Bush**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| In-Sample Mean Absolute Percentage Error for Predecessors | 16.83% |
| Out-of-Sample Mean Absolute Percentage Error for W. Bush | 17.26% |
| G.W. Bush’s Actual Total Poverty Spending | $972 billion |
| Predicted Total Poverty Spending | $801 billion |
| Predicted Total vs. Actual Total | ∆= -$171 billion, *p* > .05 |

**Accuracy of Civil Rights Spending Predictions for G.W. Bush**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| In-Sample Mean Absolute Percentage Error for Predecessors | 18.90% |
| Out-of-Sample Mean Absolute Percentage Error for W. Bush | 7.41% |
| G.W. Bush’s Actual Total Poverty Spending | $11,503 million |
| Predicted Total Poverty Spending | $10,861million |
| Predicted Total vs. Actual Total | ∆= -$642 million, *p* > .05 |

1. Roll-call data is available at https://voteview.com/data (accessed October 29, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See https://ballotpedia.org/Barack\_Obama:\_Vetoed\_legislation (accessed October 29, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/executive\_orders.php (accessed October 29, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The parameters of the scaling model for minority issues were identical to those used to generate standard, overall DW-Nominate scores. Although only presidents Johnson through Obama are presented here, the analysis included every legislator from the 1st through the 113th Congress. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Roll-call data can be downloaded from https://voteview.com/data (accessed October 29, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Issue codes can be found at https://legacy.voteview.com/readmeb.htm (accessed October 29, 2018). Issue codes have not yet been produced for Obama’s last two years in office. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Although roll-call votes related to slavery are not relevant to the time-period we are interested in, they allow for ideological scaling on racial issues across all 113Congresses, with those legislators who voted on both slavery and civil rights legislation acting as the connective glue between earlier and later years in the dataset. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Given the relatively small number of observations for some presidents, we generated a single ideological point estimate for each president rather than each presidential term. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See https://voteviewblog.com/category/presidential-square-wave/ (accessed October 29, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See https://legacy.voteview.com/dwnomin\_joint\_house\_and\_senate.htm (accessed October 29, 2018) for the measurement properties of the overall DW-Nominate scores released by Nominate. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Funding for school integration programs was eliminated under Reagan and never restored. Since school integration funding is not comparable across presidents and represents a large program with the potential to bias the results, it is not included. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)