

“The increasing inequality challenges the very essence of who we are as a people”:  
Analyzing political discourse and ideology

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# 1 Introduction

This paper studies a speech by Barack Obama, the president of the United States, on the economic situation of the country (Obama, 2013). The topic was chosen out of personal interest towards politics, sociology and economics as well as the North American culture. The analyzed speech was held on December the 4th, 2013, at THEARC, Washington D.C. The main points that will be examined are the contents of the speech, the ideology behind the words and language use (e.g. the use of pronouns and word choices), which are all linked together. Even though Obama is acting as the leader of the country and he represents all American people, no matter what their political orientation or skin color, his own ideological views are visible in the way he speaks. Moreover, being a democrat means that he most likely has different suggestions for improving economic mobility than a republican president would have. One of the aims of this study is to show how Obama's ideology is visible in the discourse.

For analyzing the data, political and ideological discourse analyses will be used. Political discourse analysis (PDA) can be defined as being "about the text and talk of professional politicians or political institutions" (Van Dijk, 1997, p. 12). However, Wilson (2001) notes that all discourse about the political can also be regarded as political discourse (p. 398), but for the purposes of this study, the aforementioned definition is the most suitable.

Ideology is especially visible in political discourse as discourse is the means by which ideology is expressed (Van Dijk, 2005, p. 732). Ideological discourse analysis focuses on how ideology is conveyed by looking at, for example, the pragmatic and semantic context models, which answer the questions who, how, when and where, of the action that is being analyzed (ibid. p. 733).

When analyzing the contents of the speech, references will be made to studies and reports on economic mobility. According to Sawhill (2008),

economic mobility describes the ability of people to move up or down the economic ladder within a lifetime or from one generation to the next (p. 2).

As Obama remarks in his speech, immobility is a serious problem particularly in the United States, even though not exclusive to.

This thesis is divided into seven sections, the introduction being the first one. In section two I will explain the theoretical framework of the study, i.e. political discourse analysis and ideology, with

reference to earlier studies. In the third section, economic mobility in the US will be discussed. The fourth part introduces the data which will thereafter be analyzed. After the analysis, the findings of the study will be discussed before drawing a conclusion.

## 2 Political discourse analysis

Political discourse analysis (PDA), i.e. the discourse produced by politicians, has been studied quite vastly over the past few decades. It has mostly been investigated by linguists and discourse analysts but as Van Dijk (1997) remarks,

[political discourse analysis] should not merely be a contribution to discourse studies, but also to political science and the social sciences more generally. This means, among other things, that PDA should be able to answer genuine and relevant political questions and deal with issues that are discussed in political science (pp. 11-12).

That being said, there are new and fresh perspectives from which PDA can be studied. There are numerous analyses that have been made on election campaigns, parliamentary debates, political interviews and so on, but few presidential speeches other than inaugural or victory speeches have been analyzed. Presidential speeches by American presidents have been studied, but the focus of most of the analyses has been rhetoric, or they have been conducted using critical discourse analysis, which is not the aim of this study.

PDA takes into account (at least) the political systems, organizations and institutions, political actors and their goals, purposes and ideologies and political relations and actions (Van Dijk, 1997, pp. 16-18). Examples of such categories are, for instance, democracy (political system), the republicans (political organization), government (political institution), politicians (political actors), relations between different parties or the state and its citizens, and campaigning (political actions). Thus, the context defines the entire base for a political discourse analysis.

In reference to topics, "political discourse is at least partly topically about politics itself" (ibid. p. 25). To exemplify, in his speech Obama refers to the unsuccessful policy making of the administration. However, politicians often address some current issue (in the case of this study

economic mobility and inequality) in reference to which they make political suggestions or reflections and give their opinions.

In consideration of time and tense forms, politicians often phrase their speeches as to focus on the future: promises and positive references to the future are common when facing a current issue (Van Dijk, 1997, p. 27).

The semantic structure of political discourse has a great importance in PDA. For example, polarization is typically used, for example, between two parties (ibid. p. 31). This is true particularly in political debates and campaigning where the politicians need to show how “we” are better in contrast to “them”. The in-group vs. out-group presentation will be discussed further in the next section.

## 2.1 Language use in political discourse

Language use in political discourse differs quite vastly from everyday conversation. Speeches in particular are written and rehearsed in advance to give a coherent and considered presentation of a given matter. Moreover, political discourse in general is usually formal. Word choices and how for example negative issues are phrased are of great importance. For instance, it is common that euphemisms are used for mitigation of “our” negative actions/mistakes, in contrast to emphasizing and describing in detail the mistakes of “the others”. (Van Dijk, 1997, pp. 32-33.)

For example, Matic (2012) found in her study about Obama and McCain’s speeches in their pre-election speeches in 2008 that McCain attacked Obama, i.e. his main rival, with accusations of Obama being hypocritical and wasting the nation’s wealth, and talked in detail about Obama’s mistakes. However, McCain talked scarcely about the then-governments mistakes or shortcomings being part of the governing administration. (p. 61)

Euphemisms can also be used to avoid harsh and direct language in formal situations. Metaphors, on the other hand, are often used as a persuasion device. They are also used to concretize sometimes remote and complex political jargon (Van Dijk, 2005, p. 738). Matic (2012) exemplifies the use of euphemisms and metaphors in her study about the 2008 presidential elections where McCain negatively presents his opponent. McCain uses metaphors like “Senator Obama is more

interested in controlling who gets your piece of pie than he is in growing the pie” and “we’re gonna drain the swamp, my friends”. McCain uses metaphors for both positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. (Matic, 2012, pp. 61-65.)

McCain uses the metaphors to enhance meaning and get more emphasis to his words. When he talks about Obama’s interest in controlling how the pie is divided, he talks about the distribution of income and wealth, and with the metaphor “growing the pie” McCain is referring to growing the economy and consequently growing the income and wealth to be distributed. In economics, a well-known metaphor is how the cake is divided, and McCain is referring to this metaphor to possibly make the words more convincing and to concretize the abstractness of growing the economy and dividing the income. McCain uses positive self-presentation by using the metaphor “drain the swamp”, which refers to his own actions positively to improve the government’s actions and policy making. As Matic (2012) remarks, McCain refers to

‘the swamp’, the place of filth and rot that has to be drained. Obviously, the speaker has to resort to a rhetorical device in order to avoid naming those that have brought about this state (p. 62).

Therefore, in addition to euphemisms, metaphors can also be used to avoid harsh and direct language. As exemplified above, metaphors function as persuasive devices and they are used to enhance meaning and enrich the language. Political discourse is usually full of metaphors, both to enrich the language and appeal to the listeners, but also to polarize between different ideologies.

When it comes to lexical choices and style, Van Dijk (2005) remarks that

similar meanings may thus be variably expressed in different words, depending on the position, role, goals, point of view, or opinion of the speaker (p. 737).

Political ideologies in particular affect the way politicians speak and perceive for example other people’s views (ibid. p. 733). Ideologies and their effects on the language in political discourse will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

What is common in political discourse, especially in debates, is the contrasting of in-group and out-group, i.e. polarization. Polarization can be made between different political parties, ideologies, nations and so on. There is a certain pattern which political discourse often follows, a so-called ideological square:

emphasize Our good things - emphasize Their bad things - de-emphasize Our bad things – de-emphasize Their good things. (Van Dijk, 2005, p. 734)

Polarization between in-group and out-group is often displayed by the use of pronouns “we” and “they”.

Implications are often used in political discourse; not everything that is thought or believed is said out loud, but instead implied with certain word choices or tone of voice. It is up to the recipient to read between the lines. Implicitness is also used to save face and not to give, for example, a racist image of the speaker. (Van Dijk, 2005, p. 737.)

## 2.2 Ideology

As most of the theoretical framework of this thesis, the ideological discourse analysis is also mostly based on Van Dijk’s earlier research. Van Dijk (2005) defines ideology as follows:

Ideologies are structured by a social schema consisting of a number of categories that cognitively represent the major social dimensions of groups, such as their distinguishing properties, membership criteria, typical actions, goals, norms and values, reference groups, and basic resources or interests (p. 730).

Political ideologies can be demonstrated in discourse in multiple different ways. As explained in the section 2.1, polarization is commonly used in political discourse to distinguish between different political ideologies. This can be done, for example, by the use of pronouns “we” and “they”. There are, however, various other ways, too, to display ideology and ideological differences. Such categories are, for example, actor description, euphemisms, illustration, metaphor, national self-glorification, number game (e.g. statistics), populism and vagueness. (Van Dijk, 2005, pp. 735-739.)

Matic (2012) presents the political speeches of two opposing candidates, where Obama is a democrat and McCain a republican. Ideological differences are visible in actor description as McCain and Obama describe each other negatively and opposing their own ideologies. Euphemisms and metaphors are also used, which were discussed in the previous section, and even vagueness, when McCain cannot blame his own government for their actions, so he talks vaguely and scarcely about the republican government. (pp. 64-65)

Van Dijk (1995) suggests that semantically there are certain features present in ideological discourse. These include for example descriptions of self-identity, action and goal. Self-identity is usually described positively and in contrast to others. (pp. 147-149)

According to Van Dijk (1995), self-identity is often displayed by answering the questions “who are We, where do We come from, how are We different from others” and so on (p. 147). Activity descriptions include questions such as “what do We do” and “what are Our tasks” (ibid. p. 147). Goal descriptions are especially typical for political parties and politicians. They emphasize the positive goals their actions will have, whether or not they will actually come true.

Matic (2012) presents typical goal descriptions in Obama and McCain’s speeches, in which they make promises and present the positive goals that their actions will have. McCain states that he is “gonna make sure we take care of the working people” and Obama who wants to “help rebuild the middle class”. (pp. 63-68)

### 3 Economic mobility in the United States

Economic mobility depicts the ability and opportunities that people have to move up or down from the socio-economic class that they were born in. Economic mobility can be measured either within one’s lifetime or between generations. According to Sawhill (2008) economic growth has slowed in the United States, which means that upward mobility has also slowed. Slower economic growth and upward mobility means that people born into a lower socio-economic class do not have the same possibilities to move to a higher class as their parents or grand-parents had when economic growth was faster. Economic growth results in higher income, enables new jobs and innovations, which in turn create jobs and better possibilities to move upwards in the socio-economic ladder. In addition to slower economic growth, income inequality has also increased in the United States, which means that income and wealth is not divided equally across all social classes. Even though lower classes are doing worse than their previous generations, the wealth of the top class has been increasing for almost 30 years. There is an even bigger gap between the top class and lower classes because of the unequal distribution of wealth and income. (Sawhill, 2008, pp. 3-4.)



Sawhill (2008) remarks that the growing inequality does not matter so greatly to Americans because they still believe in the American Dream, where everyone has the same opportunities to make their own luck with hard work and diligence. However, the social class that one is born in affects greatly the possibilities to move to a higher or a lower social class. Nearly half the people that are born into the bottom social classes stay there, whereas people born into the middle class have better possibilities to move either up or down. (p. 4)

In comparison to other developed countries, the United States has lower relative mobility, i.e. the extent to which opportunity affects economic mobility over a lifetime and what kind of abilities people have to move up in the economic ladder. In the same time that income and wealth inequality have increased, opportunity to economic success seems to have declined. (Sawhill, 2008, pp. 5-6.)

There is a clear controversy among researchers and studies. Some have found that economic mobility has stayed somewhat the same for over forty years (Chetty et al., 2014), whereas some studies have found that economic mobility has declined (Aaronson & Mazumder, 2007). However, as economic growth is slowing in the United States (Trading Economics, 2016) and income and wealth inequalities are increasing, these factors support the studies that economic mobility has slowed, especially because economic growth is an important indicator to economic mobility.

According to a recent study by Chambers et al. (2015), people from different ideologies perceive social mobility differently. Politically liberal people seem to think that social mobility has decreased more than politically conservative people do. Liberals seem to think that mobility has slowed more than it actually has, whereas conservatives seem to think that the problem is not so serious and that there actually is greater economic mobility between classes than there is in reality. In addition, the politically liberal regard economic inequality and social hierarchies more negatively than the conservatives do. According to Jackson & Jackson (2013), there are also differences of opinion for the factors which affect economic and social mobility. Democrats believe that education has a greater effect on mobility, whereas republicans emphasize the importance of family and parents, which in their opinion is the decisive factor for social mobility.

## 4 Analysis

In this section I will first introduce the context in which the analyzed political discourse takes place, and then present the outline of the speech, after which the speech will be analyzed. Political context defines the situation in which the political discourse takes place and where and how ideology is visible. When Obama is giving his speech, he is acting as the president of the United States and people will perceive him as the leader of their country. In addition to being the president, Obama is also a democrat and an American. All these characteristics define the way people perceive him, and also the way Obama thinks and the kind of suggestions he makes. Being a democrat, Obama has different kinds of suggestions for improving economic mobility than republicans have, which he also remarks in his speech, and which will be discussed in the analysis.

In this analyzed context, the following elements will be taken into account in the political discourse analysis: democrats and republicans as political organizations, government as a political institution, Obama as a political actor and his goals, purposes and ideologies, and relations between the different political parties (i.e. democrats and republicans) as political action.

### 4.1 Outline of the analyzed speech

An outline of the speech “Remarks by the President on Economic mobility” will be given loosely based on Wang’s (2010) example of the outlines of inaugural speeches, as cited by Horváth (2013). President Barack Obama held the speech on December the 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at THEARC, Washington, D.C. In the speech, he addresses the major problems of income inequality and economic immobility that prevail in the United States. The speech is structured as follows:

1. The expression of gratitude and honor
2. Reflection to Washington (administration and congress)
3. Recognizing the crisis
4. Historical glimpse on the past
5. Present situation with facts
6. Displaying and defending the government’s actions
7. Plans and promises for the future
8. Addressing and challenging the Republicans

9. Appealing to the people

10. Positive views about the future and resorting to God for blessing

Keeping in mind this outline of the speech, the speech will be analyzed in the following sections.

## 4.2 American ideology

American ideology can be seen all around the speech. Self-identity and national glorification are important to Americans, not just ideologically but patriotically and historically as well. Self-identity answers questions such as who are we and where do we come from (Van Dijk, 1995, p. 147). Throughout the speech Obama talks about the American Dream and the deeply rooted idea that America is the land of opportunity. Obama argues that he ran for president to make sure that America's "economy works for every working American", and that this drives everything that he does in the office.

Obama uses the pronoun "we" to refer to the American people and to appeal to the patriotism of the audience. He refers multiple times to America as a great nation and Americans as a great people:

### (1) Obama's speech: American ideology

This increasing inequality is most pronounced in our country, and it challenges the very essence of who we are as a people; We aspire to [success in America]; We are a better country than this; We're greater together than we are on our own; The combined trends of increased inequality and decreasing mobility pose a fundamental threat to the American Dream, our way of life, and what we stand for around the globe.

Obama emphasizes the American ideology and national glorification in order to appeal to the people, persuade them emotionally and to shorten the distance between himself as the president and the ordinary Americans, who the economical difficulties concern the most. Obama concretizes the issue by talking profoundly about the average working-class American and their dreams for better future for their children in "the land of opportunity" (this metaphor will be further discussed in section 4.4). Exemplifying and talking in detail about the everyday struggles of Americans, Obama gets the audience on his side and gets applauses multiple times during the speech. It is effective and gives the impression that he knows and understands what the everyday

struggles are like for the ordinary Americans. Political speeches in general persuade people and try to win their trust by getting them to believe that the speaker understands the real-life problems and not just pretends to.

Religion is also an important part of American ideology. When Obama talks about the opportunity gap between the rich and the poor, he mentions that “isolation from church”, among other things, also affects the growing inequality between children from upper and lower social classes. In addition, Obama says that “[expanding opportunity] requires religious leaders who mobilize their congregations to rebuild neighborhoods block by block”. Obama believes that religious institutions are also important in order to decrease inequality and help expand the poor’s opportunity. Furthermore, religion as part of the American ideology is represented in most, if not all, presidential speeches as they end with the words “God bless you. God bless (the United States of) America”.

#### 4.3 Polarization of democratic and republican views

Even though Obama emphasizes the greatness of the American people and speaks as an American president, he also speaks as a democrat with opposing views to the republicans. Obama does not hide his or the democrats’ disagreements with the republicans, and he addresses and challenges the republicans openly. When Obama talks about the Americans, he includes everyone regardless of their political views. However, he also makes remarks about the differences of ideological views between the democrats and the republicans, and with so doing he uses negative other-presentation and out-groups the republicans:

(2) Obama’s speech: Addressing the republicans

**A reckless shutdown by congressional Republicans** in an effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act --- **If the Senate Republican leader still thinks** he is going to be able to repeal this someday, he might want to check with the more than 60,000 people in his home state who are already set to finally have coverage that frees them from the fear of financial ruin, and lets them afford to take their kids to see a doctor --- **If Republicans have concrete plans that will actually** reduce inequality, build the middle class, provide more ladders of opportunity to the poor, let’s hear them. I want to know what they are. If you don’t think we should raise the minimum wage, let’s hear your idea to increase people’s earnings. If you don’t think every child should have access to preschool, tell us what you’d do

differently to give them a better shot. If you still don't like Obamacare -- and I know you don't -- even though it's built on market-based ideas of choice and competition in the private sector, then you should explain how, exactly, you'd cut costs, and cover more people, and make insurance more secure. **You owe it to the American people** to tell us what you are for, not just what you're against.

There is clear ideological polarization between the democrats and the republicans. Obama uses the metaphor "a reckless shutdown" to emphasize what he thinks about the republicans' actions and attacks the ideologically different views of the republicans, at the same time trying to appeal to the people with his word choices to oppose republican views. The metaphor "reckless shutdown" is full of ideology and ideological differences as the word choices imply. While accusing the republicans, Obama is at the same time defending the democrats' and the government's actions to increase social mobility, for example, with the Affordable Care Act, which has been one of the major conflicts between the democrats and the republicans, and which Obama has been working for and vouching for the major part of his presidency.

Word choices such as "still", "actually" and "how exactly" when referring to the republicans also show the way that Obama thinks about the republicans and their ideas. Furthermore, such word choices give accusatory tone to Obama's speech. Obama again appeals to the American people at the same time as he challenges the republicans and puts them in a bad light by saying "You owe it to the American people". With this phrase Obama gives the impression that the republicans have done something bad to the Americans and that the Americans deserve better.

Obama addresses openly the ideological differences between the republicans and the democrats and even adds humor when addressing the opposing party when mentioning the Obamacare (i.e. the Affordable Care Act) with the remark "If you still don't like Obamacare -- and I know you don't" and gets the audience to laugh. In addition to challenging the republicans to make better suggestions and give their opinions, Obama defends his administration's actions and efforts by quickly arguing as a side note for the facts which the ObamaCare is based on.

Obama remarks at the end of his speech that "The point is these programs are not typically hammocks for people to just lie back and relax", which he probably directs to the republicans who have raised concern over government funded programs and criticized publicly especially the Affordable Care Act, which they have tried to repeal multiple times.

Obama emphasizes the importance of education when it comes to economic mobility. As mentioned in section 3, democrats are generally of the opinion that education enables and affects greatly economic mobility, whereas republicans regard family and parents as the decisive factor for economic mobility (Jackson & Jackson, 2013). Obama makes suggestions for improving economic mobility by focusing on education reform:

(3) Obama's speech: The importance of education

We know that education is the most important predictor of income today, so we launched a Race to the Top in our schools. We're supporting states that have raised standards for teaching and learning. We're pushing for redesigned high schools that graduate more kids with the technical training and apprenticeships, and in-demand, high-tech skills that can lead directly to a good job and a middle-class life. We know it's harder to find a job today without some higher education, so we've helped more students go to college with grants and loans that go farther than before. We've made it more practical to repay those loans. And today, more students are graduating from college than ever before. We're also pursuing an aggressive strategy to promote innovation that reins in tuition costs. We've got lower costs so that young people are not burdened by enormous debt when they make the right decision to get higher education.

It becomes clear from the above extract that in Obama's opinion it is important to expand opportunity to the lower social classes who do not have the same resources to attend higher education as higher social classes do. In his opinion, money should not be the decisive factor for economic mobility, and everyone ought to have the same possibilities in life, no matter in which social class one is born. Higher education is expensive, and not being able to attend higher education already diminishes the possibilities to move upwards in the economic ladder. In Obama's opinion, investing in education and technical skills gives young people better chances of obtaining "a good job and a middle-class life", at which Obama is aiming.

In addition to depicting the democrats' ideological orientation towards education as the decisive factor for economic mobility, Obama is also talking positively about the government's actions and refers to the government with the pronoun "we". Obama's role as the president will be discussed further in the next section. As well as talking about what the government has done in the past to secure economic mobility with education, Obama is also talking about the future promises regarding educational reform. Obama's promises for the future will also be discussed in section 4.5.

Obama mentions also briefly the ideological common ground of the democrats and the republicans. Obama begins the phrase by the expression “by the way” giving the impression that the fact that members of the opposing political parties agree on something is a side note, while at the same time giving his suggestion more validation and credibility:

(4) Obama’s speech: Ideological common ground

And I’ve also embraced an idea that I know all of you at the Center for American Progress have championed -- and, by the way, Republican governors in a couple of states have championed -- and that’s making high-quality preschool available to every child in America.

Most of the times that Obama talks about the republicans in his speech, there is clear polarization between the different ideologies, but this time as seemingly surprising he mentions the agreement of the availability of high-quality preschool between the different ideological parties.

#### 4.4 Obama’s role as the president

In addition to using the pronoun “we” to refer to the American people, Obama also uses the pronoun to refer to the government when defending the actions of the government and administration, for example by saying that “we helped millions of Americans live in dignity”. Obama talks positively about the government’s actions by talking about the positive effects of Social Security, Medicare, and Earned Income Tax Credit, and again talks about how “we’ve strengthened that safety net”, but then again appeals to the patriotic side of the Americans while at the same time defending the government’s actions by saying “they affirmed that we are a great country”.

Obama uses the pronoun “we” to refer to different groups and takes a different role even during the same sentence:

(5) Obama’s speech: Different roles

Together, we forged a New Deal, declared a War on Poverty in a great society. We built a ladder of opportunity to climb, and stretched out a safety net beneath so that if we fell, it wouldn’t be too far, and we could bounce back.

Obama speaks first as part of the government and administration, then changing the reference and speaking as an American. The mixing of the groups that the pronoun “we” refers to shows the

different roles that Obama has while giving the speech, and it implies that the roles of being the president and part of the government at the same time as being a democrat and American all have great influence on Obama's identity.

Even though Obama is trying to in-group the Americans and include himself as being part of the American people and society, the quickly changing references of the pronoun "we" is not done completely coherently. Especially as Obama says that the government "stretched out a safety net beneath so that if **we** fell...", he includes himself in the American society, although the role of president clearly prevents him from ever having to worry about falling out of the ladder of opportunity.

The metaphor "ladder of opportunity" is commonly used when talking about the American Dream and the American society in general. Referring to this particular metaphor, the phrases "to move up or down the (economic) ladder" are commonly used when talking about economic mobility. The metaphor concretizes and popularizes the otherwise abstract phenomenon, and it is easier to depict the meaning of economic mobility (for the use of metaphors in political discourse, see Van Dijk, 2005, p. 738). With relation to the idea of a ladder, Obama uses the metaphor "stretch out a safety net beneath", to which he then refers with the phrases "if we fell ... we could bounce back". With the rich use of figures of speech, Obama concretizes and clarifies the otherwise abstract and complicated meanings and at the same shortens the distance between the people and himself. With the metaphor "safety net" he connotes a safe and caring idea of the government, which implies that the government takes care of everyone who encounter economic troubles.

In addition to talking positively about the government's actions to help and support people when they face financial difficulties, Obama also talks highly of the Affordable Care Act which has reformed the health insurance and lowered health care costs. To give his words more validation and credit, Obama gives several number facts and statistics in his speech to support his argument. He does not only give statistical information of the benefits of the Affordable Care Act, but he also exemplifies and concretizes the facts by linking the numbers to ordinary Americans, to again appeal to the emotional side of the audience. For the use of numbers and statistics in arguing for something and creating more credibility, see Van Dijk, 2005, p. 738.

The Affordable Care Act has had a lot of negative feedback and Obama also acknowledges the government's mistakes while passing the law, although in very few words before getting back to



the positive sides. De-emphasizing “our” bad things and emphasizing “our” good things is typical for political discourse, as discussed in section 2.1.

(6) Obama’s speech: De-emphasizing “our” bad things

It's the measurable outcomes in reduced bankruptcies and reduced hours that have been lost because somebody couldn't make it to work, and healthier kids with better performance in schools, and young entrepreneurs who have the freedom to go out there and try a new idea -- those are the things that will ultimately reduce a major source of inequality and help ensure more Americans get the start that they need to succeed in the future. **I have acknowledged more than once that we didn't roll out parts of this law as well as we should have.** But the law is already working in major ways that benefit millions of Americans right now, even as we've begun to slow the rise in health care costs, which is good for family budgets, good for federal and state budgets, and good for the budgets of businesses small and large. So this law is going to work. And for the sake of our economic security, it needs to work.

As is clear from the above example, Obama goes into great lengths to emphasize the good things of his and the government’s own actions, while only very briefly accounting for the poor execution of the government, to which Obama refers in extract 4 in the bold text. After admitting the government’s shortcomings, he goes back to defending the Affordable Care Act and again appeals to the people by associating the law and its positive effects with economic security and mobility, the themes which he is giving the speech about. In addition to possibly feeling the need to defend the disputed law, Obama also argues for the positive effects for economic security and mobility. The Affordable Care Act gives better possibilities for people in the lower economic classes to move to a higher social class by enabling more people to get health insurance and therefore securing them financially if they get sick, in addition to decreasing unnecessary sick leaves. The Affordable Care Act is part of the “safety net” that Obama referred to in extract 5.

Obama appeals multiple times to people’s emotions while giving the speech. He talks about his own background and how America has helped his family. He also explains why he takes the issue so personally and thereby tries to persuade the audience:

(7) Obama’s speech: Appealing to emotions

So what drives me as a grandson, a son, a father -- as an American -- is to make sure that every striving, hardworking, optimistic kid in America has the same incredible chance that this country gave me.

As the president of the United States, Obama successfully motivates his personal interest in the matter while also appealing to the American ideology, which was discussed in section 4.2.

#### 4.5 Obama's plans for the future

Obama promises to focus all his and the administration's efforts on the issue of economic mobility for the rest of his presidency. He promises, for example, strong application of antidiscrimination laws so that women and men get paid equally, immigration reform, growing the economy and helping businesses hire, simplifying the corporate tax code, setting a responsible budget, making investments in education, enabling more students to attend college and higher education, high-quality preschool and raising the minimum wage in all states.

Obama argues for the antidiscrimination laws because the minorities are more likely to suffer from low economic mobility and worse economic security, and according to him, women still get paid less than men. According to Obama, America needs an immigration reform that "grows the economy and takes people out of the shadows". However, he does not say how the immigration reform would actually help the economy. Even though making suggestions to improve the conditions and opportunity of the minorities, Obama does explicitly state that the problem of economic immobility is not limited to minorities.

Growing the economy and helping businesses hire new workers is the basic suggestion for improving economic mobility, and Obama exemplifies and makes suggestions on how the economy has to be grown in the future. Obama states that the corporate tax code has to be simplified in order to encourage companies hire and create new jobs to replace those that have been lost overseas, in addition to growing exports. Even though Obama makes these plans, he does not say how the corporate tax code will be simplified in practice, or how the exports will be grown.

Setting a responsible budget is also a justifiable plan from Obama, but one that hardly becomes reality as has been seen from recent budgets of the country. Investments and improvements in education do not come as a surprise taking into account the ideologies of democrats and their views that education is the decisive factor for increasing mobility. Suggestions relating to education was discussed more in section 4.3.

Obama argues for raising the minimum wage in all states as it according to him “raises incomes for low-wage workers and boosts short-term economic growth”. As Obama also remarks, according to some people raising the minimum wage discourages businesses to hire new workers and there might actually be fewer jobs available. Many economists also argue against raising the minimum wage. However, Obama disagrees strongly about the negative effects of raising the minimum wage.

Obama’s plans for the future are not vague, but instead very precise and explicit. People expect real suggestions and actions from him and the government, which is why he has to make detailed suggestions and plans. However, people have expressed their frustration with the government and administration, a fact which Obama also remarks in the beginning of his speech: “So it’s not surprising that the American people’s frustrations with Washington are at an all-time high”.

As is typical for political discourse by politicians, Obama talks a lot about the positive outcomes that his and the government’s actions will have. He uses a lot of goal description to describe the goals and results of his actions, even though they might not come true (see Van Dijk, 1995, p. 147). As the people’s frustrations and distrust in the government indicate, Obama has not been successful in implementing all his promised reforms and improvements.

## 6 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to look at how ideology is visible in the speech by the president of the United States, Barack Obama, and what kinds of suggestions he makes to improve the decreased economic mobility and increased income inequality in the country. The speech was held on December the 4th, 2013, at THEARC, Washington D.C. In addition to being the president, Obama has other roles, too, which affect the way that he speaks and the suggestions that he makes. Being a democrat means that the democratic ideology is also visible in the discourse. American ideology is also strongly present in the speech.

American ideology can be seen all around the speech. Self-identity and national glorification are emphasized in the way that Obama speaks about the greatness of the American people and their country. Obama uses the pronoun “we” to in-group the American people and appeal to the patriotism of the audience. He also persuades them emotionally and shortens the distance

between himself and the audience by concretizing and exemplifying the struggles of ordinary Americans, as exemplified in extract 1.

Although Obama addresses every American and emphasizes the greatness of the American people, he also opposes his own democratic ideology with the republicans. He addresses directly the republicans and challenges them during the speech. Opposing the republican views, Obama uses negative other-presentation and out-groups the republicans with his word choices and the use of metaphors with negative meaning. In addition to addressing the republicans, Obama also appeals to the people at the same time to oppose republican views and talks in an accusatory tone about the republicans (extract 2).

In addition to openly addressing and challenging the republicans, Obama's democratic ideology is visible also in the suggestions that he makes to increase economic mobility. According to Jackson & Jackson (2013), the democrats believe that education is the decisive factor for increasing mobility, which Obama also emphasizes in the speech. He talks in detail of how education has to be reformed so that money would not be the reason that people from lower social classes could not get higher education. In Obama's opinion, higher education leads to a good middle-class life, which is in line with the democratic ideology (extract 3).

As Obama is giving the speech, people will perceive him mostly as the leader of their country. He goes into great lengths to defend the government's actions in order to increase mobility in the United States. To give his words more validation and credit, Obama both appeals to people's emotions as well as gives factual and statistical information. In addition, with the rich use of figures of speech, Obama concretizes and clarifies the abstract meanings of economic mobility, and with so doing shortens the distance between himself and the audience. As is typical for political discourse, Obama emphasizes and talks in great detail about the positive actions of the government and only briefly mentions and admits their mistakes (extracts 5 and 6).

Obama promises to focus on increasing economic mobility for the rest of his presidency. His plans include, for example, growing the economy and setting a reasonable budget as well as raising the minimum wage in all states. Obama also wants to invest in both high-quality preschools as well as higher education to expand opportunity for the lower social classes.

As Obama remarks in his speech, people have expressed their frustration with the government and they do not trust the government. Even though Obama has not been able to keep all his promises and plans for the future, education reform and creating jobs as well as expanding opportunity for all are some of the priorities in the budget for the fiscal year 2017, as they have been in past few years, too. However, when it comes to setting reasonable budgets as Obama promises in his speech, the new budget for Obama's last year as president is an all-time high \$4.1 trillion (Mason & Lawder, 2016).

This study provides new information on how ideology can be visible and analyzed in a presidential speech, and in other political discourses as well. Political ideology is usually studied in a situation where different ideologies are explicitly polarized, for example in political debates. However, as this study suggests, ideology is visible in presidential speeches also, even though in this case Obama is acting as the leader of the United States and represents all American people. When it comes to political discourse analysis, the contents of the speech is also of importance, and therefore political discourse analysis can be utilized in political sciences, sociology and even economics in addition to discourse studies.

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