

A Comparative Psychohistory of McCain and Obama

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INTRODUCTION

Though there are lots of similarities between McCain and Obama clearly the dissimilarities predominate. Advocates of Obama see him as being the bright young hope of America who has mobilized the youth and those formerly outside the political process to take a "stand for change," "change we can believe in." They believe he is a natural reconciler who can bring black and white and all other groups together to transform America for the better and restore the respect of the world after eight years of Bush's unilateralism.¹

Advocates of McCain see him as an authentic American hero who showed enormous courage as a prisoner of war for over five years. He turned from public service in the military to serving the public in the political arena, but without becoming a typical politician. Instead, he has been a maverick Republican who has fought the Washington establishments for the good of the people, crossing the Senate aisle to join with reform-minded Democrats to actually work to get things done. With unusual political courage in an election year, he has stood his ground against the tide of public opinion in favor of continuing the war in Iraq to victory.

Major sections of this article will be devoted to comparing and discussing the family backgrounds, childhoods, coping mechanisms, expressions of emotion, narratives, and travels of John McCain and Barack Obama. The McCain military tradition, including his imprisonment, and his reputation as a maverick senator will be discussed, as will the issue of race in the context of Obama's search for racial identity and his political career as a black intellectual.

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THE METHODOLOGY OF A PRESIDENTIAL PSYCHOBIOGRAPHER

Political psychobiography is such a powerful tool for understanding presidential candidates and other political leaders precisely because it offers insights into the origins of adaptability and inflexibility, creativity and dogmatism, innovation and rigidity, success and failure, as well as empowering and self-defeating behavior.² It can provide invaluable insights into what policies a leader may put forth and seek to implement.

In examining the family backgrounds, childhoods, coping methods, leadership styles, personalities, and values of political candidates for over three decades, I utilize a method of empathetic inquiry tinged with skepticism. It is based on the psychoanalytic model of listening to the evidence—rather than leading with theory—and being especially attuned to the difference between stated intention and actual behavior. Psychoanalytic principles and insights are used throughout the research and writing process. In 1996 I developed the comparative presidential candidate psychohistorical method as a way of bringing forth considerable materials without prejudging the candidates and it has been used in all subsequent presidential elections.

A key issue is the search for *patterns* of candidate behavior. Since disciplined subjectivity is vital to the approach, the psychobiographer's fantasies, feelings, hopes for, and fears about each candidate are monitored closely. There is a conscious effort to suspend judgment as part of the process of seeking to achieve the greatest possible empathy for each candidate.

The method of research I have utilized since 1976 is to collect as much material as possible by the candidates, those close to them, and the popular media. In this election the numerous books by the presidential hopefuls and access to data from the world-wide-web has helped compensate for the plethora of candidates I have had to follow in 2007 and 2008. The contenders are watched on various televised sources including C-Span, the Public Broadcasting System *News Hour*, 24-hour news programs, and various interview programs. The *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Newsweek*, and a large variety of additional sources are searched for information on the accomplishments, campaign styles, childhoods, family backgrounds, Freudian slips, life crises, personalities, politics, and so forth of the candidates.

The patterns of early life incline to be repeated or intensely struggled against, making first experiences vital to understanding candidates. Thus family expectations, early development, characteristic ways of approaching the world, and childhood experiences and behaviors are all closely ex-

amined. In short, as the poet William Wordsworth wrote, "The child is the father of the man."

Like the psychoanalyst, the political psychobiographer is often frustrated in the search for first experiences. Accordingly, at this point in my research I know nothing as to the pregnancies of the mothers of both candidates, whether each was breast or bottle fed, when they first walked, talked, or were toilet trained. Often one learns about the candidate's childhood in relationship to events in the lives of their own children, though thus far little has been revealed. We do not even know whether or not they were present for the birth of their own children. As the campaign progresses, more information is usually forthcoming, as questions are asked and answered, and handlers attempt to humanize their candidate or defend them against the attacks of others.

The model for this research is the work of Alexander and Juliette George's *Thomas Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House* (1956) that used all the insights of applied psychoanalysis and political science without the technical language—the jargon—of these fields to understand personality and leadership. The focus is on adaptability, ambition, capacity to learn, childhood, coping mechanisms, familial patterns and delegation, humor, identification, integrity, judgment, loss, personality, persistence, personal relatedness, resourcefulness, values, and the ability to overcome trauma. Parents and family traditions are an essential element in this comparative analysis.

MCCAIN AND OBAMA FAMILY BACKGROUND AND TRAVEL

Probing the family backgrounds of Obama and McCain is essential to knowing them as individuals and candidates. John Sidney McCain III comes from the typical lineage of those who have been elected president, or have come close to winning the presidency: his family has been in North America since the seventeenth century and is Scotch-Irish and English. Barack Hussein Obama's family is much more varied. His father, Barack Hussein Obama Sr., was born on the shores of Lake Victoria in Kenya as a member of the Luo tribe, while his mother's family was of Midwestern stock able to trace itself to Scotland, England, and Cherokee Native American.³ Of course, if we go back far enough in American history, we may find connections between these individuals. The popular press had banner headlines regarding Senator Obama's relationship to Vice President Cheney—the candidate sometimes jokes about his Republican relative. He is reported to be a ninth cousin, once removed, to Cheney and an eleventh cousin to President Bush.⁴

One aspect of their families' traditions is movement for economic, educational, and professional advancement. Thus, a branch of the McCains, with a long military tradition, moved from post-Civil War Mississippi to make their careers in the United States military. It became a family tradition to go to Annapolis and to travel to wherever their country's service required. When John McCain III was challenged as a carpetbagger while running for Congress in Phoenix, Arizona, he claimed that his longest period of residence in any location was for five and a half years in Hanoi as a prisoner of war.⁵ A consequence of the considerable movement was that McCain had minimal contact with his father and Obama had almost none after the first two years of his life. Nonetheless, these fathers were incredibly important as role models.

The movement within his Democratic competitor's family has also been quite extensive. According to family tradition, his grandfather Hussein Onyango Obama, known as "the Terror"⁶ within the family, served the English as a cook for English missionaries, was a captain in the British army in World War II, converted to Islam, and returned home with a foreign wife prior to marrying several more times. His son, Barack H. Obama Sr., thrived as a student in a missionary school, prior to winning a scholarship to go to the University of Hawaii where he met his second wife, Stanley Ann Dunham, and lived with her until accepting a scholarship to go to Harvard for his doctoral degree in economics. Except for travel he would spend the remainder of his years in his native Kenya.

Obama's maternal grandparents Stanley Dunham and Madelyn Lee Payne, born and raised Kansas, married in 1940 and traveled extensively in search of better economic opportunities as well as because of his restlessness. Their daughter Stanley Ann was born in 1942 and raised in Kansas, Texas, Washington state, and Hawaii. Her wanderlust would result in her marriage to Kenyan and Indonesian husbands, and service to the poor in Asia and Africa. Her children's fathers were African and Asian and in both cases she worked hard to imbue them with their paternal cultures, as well as her own.

The travels of the McCains were dictated primarily by military service, though the Senator's mother Roberta Wright McCain, with a powerful wanderlust of her own, would drive her children great distances, rather than fly, so that they could explore the country along the way. Subsequently, as a widow with her twin sister, she would wander the world. It should be noted that the largest portion of her life, as well as that of her Senator son, has been spent in Washington, D.C. Whether on her travels or in the capital city, Mrs. McCain made friendships with prominent people of the era as reflected in her saying: "Madame Chiang Kai-

shek: 'Lovely woman; she was so misrepresented.' Jean Paul Getty: 'Loved him!' Clare Booth Luce: 'One of my best friends.'"⁷

Both John McCain and Barry Obama were raised and expected—perhaps delegated is a more accurate word—to achieve the very different dreams of their families.

Dedication to the military was and is a given in the McCain household.⁸ Three generations of John McCains went to Annapolis and served their country's naval service in wartime. John S. McCain I died of heart failure within days of the end of World War II, his son John S. McCain II reluctantly retired from the navy because of ill-health and after nine years he died of heart failure,⁹ and John S. McCain III only left the navy after 23 years when he realized that he could neither fly a fighter aircraft nor achieve the four star admiral rank of his father and grandfather. He then chose to go into politics where he would be able to make the policies governing the military and would not have to work through a bureaucracy to achieve distinction.

Education and public service are primary values in the immediate family of Barack Obama. He earned his law degree from Harvard—where his father took a doctoral degree in economics—and went on to work in government, as had his namesake (in Kenya). He earned a terminal postgraduate degree like his mother, as would his sister. Both of the children of Stanley Ann became educators: she at a girls' school and as an adjunct professor of anthropology in Hawaii and he as a part-time constitutional law professor in Chicago. The entire family went into public service of one sort or another.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN CHILDHOOD AND LIFE

John Sidney McCain was born on August 29, 1936 at the Coco Lolo Naval Base within the Panama Canal Zone while Barack Hussein Obama came into the world at the Kapiolani Medical Center in Honolulu, Hawaii on August 4, 1961. Thus neither was born in the continental U.S.A. Obama's birth weight was eight lbs. two ounces, while the Republican's weight is not yet known. Both men were named after their fathers and raised to idealize them. There is a striking age difference between them: if elected the Arizonan would be the oldest man to step into the Oval Office and the senator from Illinois one of the youngest. Obama is tall (6'1" or 2") and McCain is average height (5' 8"). The Democrat is left-handed while the Republican is right-handed: a wag might connect their dexterity to their politics. Obama's mother's political preference was Democratic and his family was vaguely liberal though his grandparents voted for Nixon as "the

law-and-order candidate."¹⁰ It would appear that the McCains were Republicans, with his parents, especially Roberta, building relationships across party lines to advance her husband's naval career.¹¹

In terms of birth order, John Sidney McCain III is the elder of two sons, and the second child of three. There is little information available regarding his older sister Sandy and younger brother Joe (1942-), even though they have shown up at political rallies in Florida. McCain barely mentions them in his books and refuses to comment on them when their names came up, as Sandy's did regarding breast cancer.¹² McCain describes incidents of being very willful under two years of age, of then having been a well-behaved child for the next ten years, and of considerable sibling rivalry with his sister.¹³ Barack Obama Jr. is the eldest child and the only son of his mother, and the third child and second son of his father, who appears to have had a total of seven or eight children by four different women.¹⁴ His sister Maya Soetoro-Ng became an anthropologist like their mother, also marrying someone from another country and culture. The pictures of him as a baby and small boy always show him smiling. The Democrat grew up in Hawaii, except for four years in Indonesia, and the Republican was raised in many different locations as the son of a military man. Obama was mothered by his grandmother, as well as his mother, and it is not clear if McCain's mother Roberta's identical twin sister Rowena, played any role in his mothering or if he was confused by their sameness.¹⁵

McCain's many nicknames have included "Johnny" within the family, "McNasty," "Nasty," "Punk," and "Worst Rat" in high school and athletics, and "John Wayne McCain" in the naval academy, "Crisp" by his fellow POWs, the "White Tornado" as a young congressman, "Senator Hothead," and a variety of other names by the media.¹⁶ By contrast, Barack grew up being called "Barry" and "Bar" by his family and "Barry O'Bomber" on his high school basketball team. Sports played as boys were boxing, wrestling, football, and tennis for the Republican, and baseball and basketball (still a favorite sport) for the Democrat. On the campaign trail McCain likes to refer to himself as having been a "jock." In school, teachers beat both as boys, in the case of Obama with a bamboo switch in Indonesia.¹⁸ John is reported by Mark Halpern to have had a newspaper route and Obama worked in a Baskin Robbins ice cream store, to the point of losing his taste for ice cream.¹⁸ Both went to prestigious private schools; Obama from age ten to the Ponahou [Day] School in Honolulu, and at the same age McCain went to the newly founded St. Stephens private day school¹⁹ for three years, and then at age fifteen to the Episcopal High [Boarding] School in Alexandria, Virginia. McCain's favorite book is Hemingway's *For Whom*

the *Bell Tolls* and movie is Brando's *Viva Zapata*, he identifies with the "beautiful fatalism" of heroes Robert Jordan and Emiliano Zapata; Obama reported his favorite authors as William Shakespeare and E. L. Doctorow. In high school McCain "mocked the dress code by wearing a ratty old jacket and tie with a pair of infrequently laundered Levi's," while as an activist and student Obama wore "tattered jeans and ratty sweaters."²⁰

Both boys endured lengthy separations from their fathers and to a lesser extent their mothers. In school neither followed all the rules, although the Hawaiian was more compliant than the officer's son who broke lots of rules at Annapolis including having water balloon fights and a banned television set in his room.²¹ Obama says the worst thing he did as a teenager was drugs,²² while McCain says his vice was smoking. McCain's worst vice as smoking does not fit the image he presents of himself in his autobiographical writings as a leader of boys breaking curfew at Episcopal High and climbing over the wall to go to downtown Washington D.C. "bars and burlesque houses," which led to his mother calling him "a hell-raiser."²³ (The *Arizona*, "an absolute chain-smoker"²⁴ smoked two packs of cigarettes a day, until he gave up smoking in 1980, while the senator from Illinois' wife extracted a promise from him not to smoke as a condition of her supporting his run for the presidency.)

As is the case with all but one of the presidents of the United States, both men are Protestants. John McCain had mandatory daily chapel at the elite Episcopal High School and the Annapolis Naval Academy he attended, but he has never been baptized, is not "born again" and does not talk much about his religious beliefs. Though he has spoken of the U.S. as a "Christian Nation" he does not appear to be devout, though he prayed and organized church services during desperate times as a prisoner of war in Hanoi. He is usually described as an Episcopalian though since the later nineties he has been going to a Baptist mega-church in Phoenix.²⁵ Barack Obama, who had no strong religious feeling during much of his life, became a member of the Trinity United Church of Christ about 20 years ago. He was sufficiently inspired by one of his minister's sermons to name his campaign autobiography, *The Audacity of Hope*, after a sermon his pastor had given. Both married Protestants and raise their children in the Protestant religion of the overwhelming majority of Americans.

According to his sister,²⁶ Barack Obama's mother dreamed that her son would become president while John McCain's mother responded to a reporter asking if she were proud to have her son become a prominent person with the reply, "Fools' names and fools' faces are often seen in public places."²⁷ Roberta McCain came to accept and support her son's

involvement in the public arena and pursuit of the presidency. How the McCains felt—before it became politically correct to favor the possibility—about a black stepping into the public arena and becoming president, is not something that I have found information about.

Racial awareness does not stand out in the autobiographical writings and speeches of Senator McCain. Though it is tempting to generalize about their racial ideas based upon his family's Mississippi and South Carolina origins, and the Navy's history as the most elitist and racist of the military services, there is not a lot of evidence about his racial attitudes outside of his disdain for the "gooks" who kept him imprisoned in Hanoi. In fact, he used this term a dozen times when two months after his release from imprisonment he wrote an extensive account of his experiences.²⁸ In the 2000 campaign, he had to retract his statement that his family had not been Southern slave owners when evidence to the contrary was brought forth. What feelings his parents had for the native Panamanians where he was born is unclear, though generally the military personnel in the 1930s looked down upon the non-whites who serviced them.

However, his Mexican-American roommate for three years at Annapolis described him as "the most color-blind person I have ever met in my life"²⁹ and as a sophomore he stood up to an upperclassman abusing a Filipino steward.³⁰ Of course, his adoption of a black daughter from Mother Theresa's orphanage in Bangladesh is a powerful indication of his not being a racist. When writing books on character development and heroic types he chooses examples that include people different than him in terms of gender, class, national background, and race.

TRAVEL IN THE LIVES OF THE CANDIDATES

The contending senators have traveled far and wide as both children and adults. After a childhood of moving because of his father's profession, John McCain thought nothing of flying to Brazil to continue his "storybook romance" with a fashion model in Rio de Janeiro whom he met while on maneuvers off the coast of Brazil; flying to Europe to party with friends and then spending time in Paris with his "new girlfriend, the daughter of a tobacco magnate from Winston Salem, North Carolina;" and courting his future wife in Philadelphia while stationed at McCain Air Base in Mississippi—using naval training missions for transport on long weekends in the City of Brotherly Love.³¹ On the basis of what he writes and my own observation while stationed abroad in the Army, I wonder to what extent he was actually involved with the local cultures where he was posted or otherwise traveled. This issue will become more apparent when ex-

amining his attitudes towards the Vietnamese whom he experienced as stereotypes rather than as human beings.

An important issue is whether travel has opened the candidate to the world or simply confirmed earlier viewpoints and stereotypes. When the Arizona Senator traveled to Vietnam in the early nineteen nineties with Democratic Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts in pursuit of those still missing in action (MIA) from the Vietnam War, traveling together did help to forge a friendship which may have resulted in McCain's considering serving as Kerry's running-mate in the 2004 presidential election.³² Reading literature and history is a way of coming to know the world, without even traveling. John, who later would come to love history, reports becoming interested in literature, a subject beloved by his father, grandfather, and grandmother, from the age of ten while staying with his grandmother.³³

Senator Obama's travel has not been as extensive as that of his rival but it clearly has had a more profound impact on him. From the ages of six to ten he lived in Jakarta, Indonesia, where he had to adjust to an extremely different society that his mother and stepfather were immersed in. He returned to Hawaii alone, followed several months later by his mother and younger sister as her second marriage deteriorated and she decided to go to graduate school. When Stanley Ann was ready to return to Indonesia, Barry found that he liked it better in America, choosing to stay to live with his grandparents in the Fiftieth State. There he was exposed to a variety of peoples, especially because his grandfather Stanley ("Gramps") had an abiding interest in different types of people, resulting in his grandson associating with blacks, Filipinos, Japanese, Portuguese, and others among the Hawaiian smorgasbord of peoples. Barry Obama chose to go to Occidental College in southern California where he associated with African American students as he heightened his sense of blackness and went from being known as Barry to being Barack. After two years he took advantage of a transfer program to Columbia University in New York City where he lived on the shifting border of East Harlem with an illegal Pakistani immigrant.

Why Obama chose to go to Chicago to become a community organizer and then return there after graduating from law school is not totally clear, beyond Chicago's importance as a center of black life in America. Since he had no family there it would seem that it was mostly about his being offered a position as community organizer in the Windy City. However, I wonder if it also had something to do with his mother having lived there briefly as an *au pair* at age 16 and of her wanting to go to the University of Chicago on a special early entry program, which her father

disallowed because he felt she was too young. *Dreams from My Father* (1995) might very well have been entitled, *Travels in Search of My Father* since much of the book is a travel log. In reading it, a psychoanalytic biography group felt that the author was very much a journeyer rather than someone ready to assume major administrative responsibility.³⁴

THE CANDIDATE NARRATIVES PROVIDING INFORMATION ON THEIR LIVES

The campaign managers, consultants, and media experts who are looking to practice their craft in the presidential electoral system know the incredible value of straightforward candidate narratives. They may come to work for someone with an established narrative, such as John McCain, or create a narrative in words and pictures, as David Axlerod did for Barack H. Obama,³⁵ but in either case this will be the primary instrument in their endeavors. Her-story and his-story (that is, history) must work in sound bites in the endeavor to establish positive emotional connections with the voters.

Senators John McCain and Barack Obama are very well served by their campaign narratives: in contrast Hillary Clinton had far more problems establishing one that worked for her campaign. Voters who have not already made up their minds because of other factors will look for individuals with whom they can identify, and a narrative that can fit into a sound bite is of enormous advantage. John Sidney McCain's story is quite straightforward: he is a son of a military family who served his country in Vietnam and during five and a half years of brutal imprisonment for its sake prior to entering politics as a continuation of his public service. His narrative continues with him as a hawkish-senator who has consistently been a Republican maverick fighting the special interests for campaign reform and the good of the people.

Barack Obama's carefully crafted narrative is that of a biracial son raised by a single mother who took him to Indonesia where he began to learn about the diversity of the world first hand.³⁶ He excelled in school and made his way to Harvard Law School, where he was elected as the first African American president of the *Law Review*. He became a community organizer in Chicago for the sake of ordinary people rather than seek to enrich himself, and then a state and U.S. senator to further his service to the American people as an agent of a changing politics of the people. "Hope" and "change" are absolutely key words in his narrative and campaign. His search for identity, mirroring that of so many younger Americans, is also a key ingredient.

Character, courage, difficult decisions, and the good fight, are terms that McCain and his trusted aide and co-author, Mark Salter, want associated with his name in the minds of Americans. Consequently, since the Arizona Senator's presidential run began in 1999 they have published a variety of books for adults and even juveniles. Their titles are *Character Is Destiny* (2005); *Worth the Fighting For: A Memoir* (2002); *Why Courage Matters: The Way to a Braver Life* (2004); *Faith of My Fathers: A Family Memoir* (1999); *Hard Call: Great Decisions and the Extraordinary People Who Made Them* (2007). Two are primarily autobiography and family history while the others are about the courage of others, from military men of all ranks, to a much wider cast of people associated with heroism. Included are people as diverse as Aum Sang Suu Kyi in Burma, Hannah Senesh in Nazi-occupied Poland, John Lewis during the Alabama freedom marches, and so forth.

In *Character is Destiny: Inspiring Stories Every Young Person Should Know and Every Adult Should Remember*, over 25 qualities are discussed with an individual as an exemplar of each. Charles Darwin, as the paradigm of curiosity, is presented in ten pages containing several definite factual mistakes and a clear statement of belief in intelligent design. Throughout these books and McCain's many brief introductions to other people's volumes, the same personal stories are told again and again. The world he presents is of idealized heroes, rather than complex individuals and complex causation. If these books reflect his deeply felt beliefs, rather than just the politician creating a useful image, as a psychohistorian I must wonder what is missing in him that he needs a world of heroes rather than one of ordinary mortals. The world he presents is very different from the one found in the books of Barack Obama.

MCCAIN'S FAMILY ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

Spouses are an essential part of the contemporary political system. The country has not had a bachelor president since James Buchanan before the Civil War when retail politics was much different than it is today. In our era, a never-married man would be seen as possibly gay, and even in an election that featured an African-American and woman contending for the presidential nomination in a meaningful way for the first time, America does not seem ready for a homosexual leader. There is a sense in the minds of many voters that a married leader will be more responsible and capable of caring for others. Barack and Michelle Obama mostly campaign separately as did Bill and Hillary Clinton—although the latter was named "Billary" by those opponents desirous of lessening the candidate's independence from the scandals of her husband. By contrast, Cindy McCain,

at this stage of the campaign, appears with her husband more often than she appears separately. She is, according to Senator Lindsay Graham, a family friend, "a private person with her own stresses and commitments," who may drive around with a "Ms BUD" license plate in honor of her Budweiser distributorship,³⁷ but moves toward, and then backs off from the public arena, as indicated by her signing a contract to write a memoir quickly followed by her rescinding the arrangement.

In the tradition of his father, who only rarely saw him during the entire Second World War and in many other periods of his life even before he was sent to a boarding school, Senator John McCain has not spent much time with his children. Even if one puts aside his long period of isolation as a POW and later separation and divorce from his first wife who had custody of his first three children, he has been a distant father. When he became congressman and then senator, he lived in Washington and his family lived in Arizona, minimizing his contact with his children and wife.

Children and parents are sometimes used as stage props in the electoral process, as is the case with Roberta McCain, whose very presence at age 96 demonstrates that her son, who would be the oldest man ever to assume the presidency at age 72, is likely to live well beyond a four or eight year term. His namesake and father died at age 70, so he does not appear to be suitable to cite as proof of longevity. However, when compared to Obama's parents who died at age 48 in an automobile accident and 52 of ovarian cancer, McCain's father's shorter lifespan is less of a liability. How voters will factor in that one of the Republican's children is older than his Democratic rival is not clear.³⁸

LEADERS AS FOLLOWERS, THE PANDERING INDEX, AND POLITICS AS SPORT

A paradox of leadership is that leaders are lionized for their willingness to stand alone in the fight for the good cause, but if they really are alone, then they are simply lonely, ostracized voices in the wilderness, rather than leaders. Leaders must be in tune with public sentiment; that is, follow the mood of the public in order to really lead the public. They must get past all sorts of special interest groups within their parties to achieve the nomination and then the active support that can lead to election in November. When presidential candidates switch their positions while wooing particular groups, it is called pandering. In watching the day-to-day activities of presidential aspirants, I am not alone in keeping a rough index of their pandering.

By the standards of their competitors, neither the Democrat nor the Republican is a good panderer. In focusing on generalities like change and

hope without a long track record, Obama has had less need to pander than most politicians, though one can find instances of his doing it in on issues such as gun control and Jerusalem's status in peace negotiations. McCain, on the other hand, in seeking to overcome Republican conservative fears of his reputation as a maverick who does not toe the conservative party line, has pandered, though he often does it in a way—with a smirk, hesitation, or a wince—that shows his heart is not in it. Because of his close relationship with the press his flip-flops on issues often are ignored or downplayed.

Along with baseball, basketball, football, golf, horseracing, and tennis, politics is one of the great American sports. Presidential politics, like the Olympics, is all the more special for being played only once every four years. The psychology of sports dictates that you do what you must to win for your team; it is all about the contest, with consistency and the nuances of truth inclining to fall by the wayside. In this situation the candidates, focused on victory rather than consistency, press their cases in an exhausting process of campaigning. In May, as I watched McCain give speech after speech reassuring Republican conservatives that he is their champion, I was reminded of this inclination. Well-organized political supporters, like sports fans, cheer their champions on, idealizing their heroes and denigrating the opposition team and its leader. In the heat of this game, intelligent voters are commonly governed by their passions far more than their logic in analyzing what is happening and said. The sport of politics is governed by the words attributed to the great football coach Vince Lombardi, "Winning isn't everything; it's the only thing." Truth and consistency are certainly the casualties in political warfare. Winners are forgiven for their excesses and held up as heroes, while losers are inclined to be blamed for their failure and put out of mind.

JOHN MCCAIN'S COPING MECHANISMS

John McCain embraces criticisms directed at him, which has been an enormous political asset to him. For example, while calling the chapter on his idealized grandfather, "Mr. Sea Power," he labels the chapter on himself, "Worst Rat," in reference to one of his nicknames. Having been criticized as having a terrible temper, he begins the chapter describing himself as not quite two years old when his parents felt compelled to take him to the doctor because "at the smallest provocation, I would go off in a mad frenzy, and then, suddenly, crash to the floor unconscious." He describes this scenario as the result of his having "quite unexpectedly developed an outsized temper" that was "self-induced" because "when I got angry I held my

breath until I blacked out." He described the doctor's treatment as "whenever I commenced a tantrum," to fill a bathtub full of cold water for Johnny to be immersed in when he blacked out hoping to get his way with his parents. The Senator reports having no recollections of this behavior or treatment stating, "eventually, I achieved a satisfactory (if only temporary) control over my emotions." He reports the "dreaded immersion therapy" to have worked well and that whenever his older sister lost her temper, however momentary, he would shout, "Get the water! Get the water!"³⁹ As this example shows, John McCain is humorously embracing his outsized temper and inviting the reader to join him in laughing at himself.

Humor is an enormous advantage to the senior Senator from Arizona; it is a key to his easy relationship with the press and the public. It enables him to express much of his frustration in a socially acceptable way. In 2000, for example, he dealt with some of the pain of his loss to George W. Bush with the following humor about how he felt: "Last night I slept like a baby. I slept for two hours and woke up crying. I slept for another two hours and woke up crying."⁴⁰ When his relations with Bush remained strained, he quipped that the President and Mrs. Bush invited his wife and him to dinner. It was an intimate dinner with only six people present: Laura, Cindy, George, me, and two food-tasters.

Humor is a useful dodge, as when McCain's role model Ronald Reagan successfully deflected the question of his age during the second 1984 presidential debate by declaring "I am not going to exploit for political purposes my opponent's youth and inexperience." Countering concerns about his age and physical condition, McCain uses a variety of humorous lines including, "I am older than dirt and have more scars than Frankenstein." When criticized in April for getting an audience laugh by singing "Bomb Iran"... "bomb, bomb, bomb" to the music of the Beach Boys' "Barbara Ann" song, his response was simply, "Get a life!"

Barack Obama's humor is less overt than that of his rival. He often seems to have a smiling "Oh isn't that nice" or "I've got a secret" look on his face as he listens to others on the campaign trail. At moments, some viewers experience his reserved humor as a smirk. With children there is a greater openness to his smile. Ken Fuchsman has suggested that Obama's less-than-overt humor may help make him appear to be the conveniently iconic elitist his opponents want to campaign against.

THE MCCAIN TRADITION OF CLOAKING EMOTIONS

The McCain family tradition is to hide and deny many emotions, or to cloak them in humor. When his father's friends expressed concern for Johnny's

welfare after the deadly Forrestal aircraft carrier fire, he responded with the assuring, though inaccurate note, "Happily for all of us, he came through without a scratch, and is now back at sea."⁴¹ When his father and mother received word that their son was shot down over Hanoi and almost certainly dead, they finished dressing and went to an embassy dinner in London without saying a word about this terrible news to anyone.⁴² Because in his life the needs of war and duty to his service come before his family or fatherhood, he gave the order to bomb Hanoi which could have had the effect of killing his eldest son.⁴³ Admiral McCain hid the strain from the world, but according to his widow, for an hour in the morning and evening he would kneel down, reading "his Bible...in agony."⁴⁴ His suppressed emotions are connected to his being an alcoholic for much of his life. His son and namesake disliked seeing him drunk because "it changed my image of him."⁴⁵ Jack McCain eventually achieved control of his drinking after he went to Alcoholics Anonymous. Just like his father John McCain hides *many* of his own emotions, though not anger. As indication of this suppression and repression is his declaration "I don't talk about prison because it bores the shit out of me."⁴⁶ The overwhelming emotions he felt when his life hung in the balance during the hell of his imprisonment were anything but boring, but the work of repressing them did leave him feeling "bored." (This was boredom he sought to escape by charming new people, rather than going beneath it to how he really felt while a prisoner.)

Making the best of their limited opportunities in the South after the Civil War, disappointments and setbacks and then moving to find opportunities was the McCain way. The family tradition is that the McCains of Mississippi "never lamented the South's fall"—which seems dubious. John S. McCain I, with limited opportunities on the family plantation in Mississippi, married rich and turned to naval service and then to naval aviation: McCain Field in Meridian, Mississippi is named in his honor.⁴⁷ In World War II he became the "right arm" of Admiral Halsey. His son Jack married rich and, when turned down by naval aviation, made his career as a submariner.

Paternal and national idealization abounds in the life of John McCain precisely because of his lack of contact with his father, ancestors, and a given location in his country. The lack of day-to-day contact led to the creation of an imagined paternity and country. The evidence for this formulation is plentiful. To quote from his first book, "But our fathers, perhaps because of and not in spite of their long absences, can be a huge presence in our lives. You are taught to consider their absence not as a deprivation, but as an honor." Reflecting on his boyhood and family tradition, the man

who barely knew a father away at sea and fighting in the South Pacific, goes on to write, "By your father's calling, you are born into an exclusive, noble tradition. Its standards require your father to dutifully serve a cause greater than his self interest," and most importantly for the boy left at home, "and everyone around you, your mother, other relatives, and the whole Navy world, drafts you to the cause as well." Clearly it was hard to complain about his father's absence, since McCain claims, that his "father's world is marked by brave and uncomplaining sacrifice" and the child is "asked only to bear the inconveniences caused by his absences, with a little of the same stoic acceptance."⁴⁸

A small boy with an absent, idealized father has limited choices. First, it is hard to rebel against an absent father idealized by his family and his society, but not so hard to rebel against parental substitutes who are his teachers—of this there is ample evidence to be spelled out below in the case of Johnny McCain. Since he lived in a naval world where the absence of the father was normal, he joined in the idealization and accepted the father's life as his own. Identifying with his father, born to the same lack of choice, John McCain in his sixties wrote, "when your father is away, the tradition remains, and embellishes a paternal image that is powerfully attractive to a small boy, even long after the boy becomes a man."⁴⁹ Not surprisingly, he declared his father and grandfather to be "my first heroes and earning their respect has been the most lasting ambition of my life." In prefacing *Faith of My Fathers*, he portrayed his life as a struggle of different attitudes and behaviors, some resulting in his using the terms "conceit," "contrition," and "deeply regret." He went on to write "when I chose well I did so to keep a balance in my life—a balance between pride and regret, between liberty and honor."⁵⁰ This "balance" was slow in coming since those who know him have described him as cocky, a holder of grudges, a poor loser, and surly, earning him nicknames like "Punk," "McNasty," and "Senator Hothead." His path toward maturity has been a slow one.

Idealization puts the hero worshiped beyond humanity, causing psychoanalysts to be uncomfortable with it.⁵¹ It is a defense against actually knowing the anger, frustrations, and other disclaimed feelings held for the person. In the case of John Sidney McCain III, his father's career meant that he was constantly moving around and having to make new friends while often going to totally inadequate schools, sometimes only in converted aircraft hangars. (On one occasion his father made the grand gesture of offering to convert to Catholicism to get his children into a better school.) Reflecting back on his life McCain says that his goals in these schools were to demonstrate to his new schoolmates "that I was not a per-

son to suffer slights lightly" and to prove himself as an athlete, despite his small size. Consequently, on a regular basis he was disciplined for fighting.⁵² Fighting was also a good way of displacing his anger at his father for causing the family to move, onto strangers, and perhaps gaining attention from his parents, or at least his mother. Though he was ambivalent about it, John Sidney McCain III decided that he "belonged at but dreaded" Annapolis Naval Academy.⁵³

Roberta Wright McCain "despaired" at the "irregular schooling" of her children, complaining that they were being "raised to be completely ignorant." To compensate for this inadequacy, she assumed most of the responsibility for what the schools lacked, proving herself "to be an imaginative and amusing educator." Wherever they traveled, she took her two sons and daughter to interesting historical, natural, and scientific sites. With Johnny quarreling for hours on end in the back seat with his older sister Sandy, this was obviously difficult for their mother while she drove. Roberta on one occasion dented a thermos against his head in an apparently desperate move to quiet him down after a smart-aleck comment following the banana she threw hitting his sister rather than him. Johnny's attempt the next day to shame his mother before two University of Texas students who were joining them to share the ride to California, resulted in considerable laughter continuing all the way to the West Coast.⁵⁴

The informality of his education, at which his parents despaired, was what he "enjoyed most." John McCain liked his "mother's mobile classroom," reporting her to be "an excellent teacher," and disliked the regimentation he found in boarding school and then Annapolis.⁵⁵ He enjoyed the adventure and special attention of the trips with his mother as she recreated for her children the education that had been bestowed on her by her father. Archibald Wright was an oil wildcatter who made a fortune young, and then retired to devote himself to his family, taking three of his five children around the country to the most exciting places.⁵⁶

While idealizing his father, McCain readily acknowledged, "I became my mother's son. What I lacked in her charm and grace I made up for by emulating and exaggerating other of her characteristics. She was loquacious, and I was boisterous. Her exuberance became rowdiness in me." Most important was her "irrepressible spirit that yields to no adversity" and that "she taught me to find such joy in life that misfortune could not rob me of the joy of living." Joe McCain, John's "keen eyed brother," thought that that his father and older brother were mirror opposites. The father was "taciturn" and "shy" and the son "noisy," "loving to work a crowd," and the cause of or at the center of family squabbles.⁵⁷

John S. McCain is anything but a military man who marches to the beat of someone else's drum. At Annapolis and throughout his career, he would insist upon standing out from the crowd. By choosing to pilot a single-man aircraft he expressed his desire to march to his own drumbeat. The ramifications of this can be seen throughout his life. Unlike his father and grandfather, he stood almost no chance of becoming a four-star admiral, because there was no war and he never worked within the military bureaucratic system. His fellow Republicans have always distrusted him as a maverick who refused to follow the party line. His 96-year-old mother, whom he totes around the campaign trail to demonstrate that it is safe to elect a man in his 70's to the presidency, as late as March was saying that she did not think her son "has any support among the Republican base" despite his supporting Bush on everything but Rumsfeld's conduct of the war.

The John Sidney McCains are a fairly idiosyncratic lot. Stories abound about the first to bear this name, not only wearing his hat like "Popeye the Sailor Man," but also mumbling his words as he sought to speak with his wooden teeth amidst drinking, gambling, and sporting endeavors. He was "an original," as his grandson would be. While the second John Sidney was less outspoken and idiosyncratic, his pugnacious devotion to making it through Annapolis and building American sea power, won him many admirers. It was essential for the returning prisoner of war, John McCain III, to achieve distinction and the four stars as an admiral in the footsteps of his father and grandfather. When he could not achieve this, he turned to public service, hinting about going into politics in the 13-page article he wrote about his captivity for *Newsweek* magazine two months after his release.

Regarding John Sidney McCain's idealization of his country, it is worth noting that he was not even born within its borders. The America he knows, aside from Washington, D.C. where he has lived for about 40 years, is that of naval bases such as Coco Lolo in the Panama zone. He may have wrapped himself in the flag as a political leader, but he has never shown any interest in spending time in small-town and rural America. He learned, from observing his mother and hearing family stories, that the important decisions were made in the capital by influential people and this has always been much of his focus.

Glamour and wealth have always had great appeal for our subject. On traveling to Brazil on a training exercise, he fell head over heels for a glamorous model. When at Annapolis, he dated a girl from the Mainline of Philadelphia, and later married Carol Shepp from there. As a prisoner of war he would refer to her as fun-loving "Long Tall Sally."⁵⁸ As a flight instructor at McCain Field in Mississippi he arranged for the four-day train-

ing flights to Philadelphia so he could party with his girlfriend and then wife. After his release from captivity his marriage did not fall apart because of that experience but because he, unlike his wife, had not changed enough after it. Carol had suffered a terrible accident on Christmas Eve of 1969 which resulted in her having multiple operations, becoming four inches shorter—gaining weight after her trauma and losing most of her glamour. While she has always been extremely supportive of her ex-husband, who takes responsibility for their marital breakup, she said that the main reason the marriage ceased to work was that John was “turning forty and wanting to be twenty-five again.”⁵⁹

THE ROLE OF A MAVERICK WARRIOR IN THE FAMILY BUSINESS OF WAR

John Sidney McCain III proudly declares “for two centuries, the men in my family were raised to go to war as officers in America’s armed services.”⁶⁰ Here, I will start my discussion with the family business of war and John McCain’s role in it and attitude towards it.

As Southern patriots, the McCains were on the losing side in the Civil War. His grandfather, known as “Slew” by his contemporaries, “Popeye” by his sailors, and “Sid” by his family, married a rich woman and was devoted to “riotous living,” including drinking, gambling, and sports. Slew made the switch from the army to the navy, graduating from Annapolis in 1906 and achieving the rank of four-star admiral. He went to flight school in 1935 at the age of 51,⁶¹ achieving distinction in association with the new field of naval aviation. The end of World War II in the Pacific came as a great “shock” to him, causing an awful “letdown” since he did not know if he “knew how to relax or not.” He “invented three new cocktails,” and died just days later at 61-years of age.⁶² Slew’s son Jack achieved his four-star status as a submariner and was in charge of the American war in Vietnam, when his son Johnny was a prisoner of war in Hanoi.

In Johnny’s teenage years, with thoughts of attending the gentleman’s institution of Princeton (the most Southern of the Northern universities), he considered not going to Annapolis, but apparently did not dare to voice this rebelliousness, except to a highly regarded teacher. The necessity of following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather was simply a fact within his family. His younger brother Joe, unburdened by sharing the exact same name as two four-star admirals, was able to establish another life after he did not make the grade (“bilged out”⁶³) at Annapolis.

The John Sidney McCains (I-III) are cocky men of average or short stature. Their respective heights are five-foot-seven-inches, five-foot-six-

inches, and five-foot-eight or -nine inches.⁶⁴ The sailors called Johnny’s grandfather “Popeye” in reference to the way he wore his hat as well as his cocky quality. Because of his small size and combative disposition, Jack McCain had a tough time at Annapolis, ultimately squeaking by as 270th in a class of 292. His rebellious son appears to have worked consistently to make the very bottom of his class, graduating fifth from the bottom (894th) of his class of 899. Looking back, the senator described himself as an immature “punk.” At Annapolis, as in his previous education and much of his subsequent life, Johnny would bend and sometimes break the rules though never in a way that would lead to expulsion. From his adolescent school days until he was captured in Vietnam he craved the attention and excitement of being on the edge. Amidst his idealization of them he presents a picture of his father and grandfather as somewhat similar. The life of the dashing naval aviator who crashes his plane and then goes partying was what he enjoyed. This raises the question: Is he a war lover? Or was he just in a dangerous profession in a war zone to prove he could also make the four admiral stars that had become a family tradition?⁶⁵ It will be left to the reader to answer this on the basis of the evidence presented in this essay.

It takes more than a family tradition of military service and pride in combat to make a war lover. It requires a willingness to give oneself totally to battle to the point of dying, sending others to die, and killing. (McCain was sufficiently distant from where his bombs fell to not write of killing anyone.) His death-defying daredevil attitude is reflected in his crashing three planes in his career as a naval aviator as well as causing an international incident by cutting electrical wires causing a blackout when he flew very low in Spain. His first biographer presents him as a below-par pilot who loved the life and image of being a naval aviator. As he taught others to fly as a naval aviator, his performance improved.⁶⁶ To get into the active war he went out of his way to play tennis with the visiting Undersecretary of the Navy to use political influence to get a combat tour in Southeast Asia.⁶⁷

After completing five bombing raids in his A-4 Skyhawk dive-bomber on July 29, 1967, while McCain waited his turn to be launched into the air, a Zuni missile broke loose on the flight deck, ripping open its gas tank and igniting the deck of the *USS Forrestal* in Tonkin Bay. McCain jumped ten feet from his aircraft and to escape “rolled through a wall of flames as...[his] suit caught fire” which he put out and ran to the other side of the ship which was being consumed by flames. Killed or missing and presumed dead were 134 men, 20 planes were lost, the ship was barely saved from sinking, and it would take two years in dry dock for it to be made seaworthy again.⁶⁸

The 31-year-old pilot's burns and shrapnel wounds were not major and he was saved from "my despondency" over not being able to continue to carry out the mission for which he had trained and the fulfillment of his "ambitions were among the casualties in the calamity that had claimed the *Forrestal*."⁶⁹ When a passing aircraft carrier indicated that it needed pilots, he jumped at the opportunity to serve on it off the coast of Vietnam. On his 22nd bombing mission over Hanoi, John McCain knew that his plane was locked onto by enemy radar and would be hit unless he immediately disengaged. Displaying his lifelong stubbornness, he did not, causing the wing of his aircraft to be blown off by a missile the size of a telephone pole.

IMPRISONMENT, ATTACHMENT STYLE, AND THE LEGACY OF VIETNAM

John McCain's status as a genuine American hero is based upon his suffering as a prisoner of war and defiance of his North Vietnamese captors. In the process of ejecting from his plane on October 26, 1967 he broke his right arm, his left arm in three places, and right knee, and was briefly knocked unconscious before awakening as he hit the water, sinking under the weight of his equipment before his vest inflated, followed by his being dragged ashore by an angry crowd who broke his shoulder with a rifle butt and bayoneted his groin and ankle. At first his captives gave him no medical care because of his initial refusal to provide information and the fact that they assumed he would die from his wounds. However, when they discovered he was the son of an important admiral they endeavored to keep him alive by giving him transfusions and injections. He spent much of his five and a half years of imprisonment in solitary confinement, never receiving proper medical care. To his great shame John McCain once confessed to war crimes and then in despair made a weak attempt at suicide. He refused early release on the grounds that prisoners should be released according to seniority, rather than for Vietnamese propaganda purposes after his father was put in charge of the entire war effort.

It is hard to know just how McCain survived the horror of his captivity. On one level, the descriptions he wrote of his experience two months and also 26 years afterwards present a picture of his surviving because of his hatred of the enemy, the care of and his connection to his fellow prisoners, his coming to love America, prayer, and the Vietnamese wanting to keep him alive for their own purposes.⁷⁰ On another level, he papered over the experience as an updated version of *Stalag 17* in which the ingenious American POW's outsmart the sadistic, inept jailors—"Bug," "the

Cat," "Frankenstein," "the Prick," "Slopehead," "Soft-Soap Fairy," "the Rabbit," "Shovel," and "Zorba."⁷¹ The Hoa Lo Prison and its different sections were called by names such as the "Hanoi Hilton," "Plantation," "Las Vegas," "Gun Shed," and "Calcutta." (This approach would appear to be a fantasy of control by McCain and his fellow inmates.) Understanding what really went on is complicated by his not wanting to speak about his experiences, especially in a way that would bring his underlying feelings to the surface. Thus when Governor Reagan, of whom he and his wife became favorites, asked if he ever wanted to kill himself, he could respond "Sure" but that it would be too easy as a way out.⁷² He neither wanted people to feel sorry for him nor to probe too deeply.

Clearly there is a link between the McCain who grew up as the maverick smart-aleck teenager who went to every new school fighting for respect and the defiant prisoner of war. But it might have taken more than that. Irene Javors, a New York psychotherapist, suggested that his ability to withstand such a long period in solitary confinement might be related to McCain's ways of relating, suggesting that in terms of the research of Mary Ainsworth and John Bowlby, "he may have adopted an 'avoidant attachment style wherein he maintains a cold and detached attitude to others.'" Consequently, unlike most captives "he didn't need to bond with his captors—as a matter of fact, he might have felt that he didn't need anyone." This emotional position makes it possible to be a lifelong maverick who faces the world with a defiant attitude when it does not readily accept your needs. In the case of McCain, he usually vacillates between charming the world and defying it. To prove or disprove this hypothesis, more evidence is needed on his early parenting to determine if it was, or was not, "cold, distant and miss-attuned to a child's relational needs." Because the family moved so much, and thus far we are virtually totally dependent on McCain's own style of accounting of his early life, much work needs to be done to test this theory.⁷³

Vietnam veteran senators, and former senators, share a common bond. This is true for the Democrats Max Cleland, John Kerry, Bob Kerrey, and Chuck Robb, and Republicans Chuck Hagel and John McCain. But McCain differs from the others in an important respect that may relate to experience on the ground in Vietnam as well as their foreign policy inclinations and personalities. Flying above the conflict from where he saw physical targets of bridges, buildings, and power plants, McCain did not share the gradual disillusionment of his colleagues who fought in the fields, rice paddies, and waterways where they saw civilians and comrades die and smelled rotting flesh. Consequently, unlike his colleagues, he remains

hawkish on Iraq as reflected in his not wanting to grant generous GI Bill benefits for Iraq veterans because he wants to keep soldiers in the military, rather than have them go to college.⁷⁴ His record of support for military involvement abroad remains mixed, opposed in Lebanon, Somalia, and Bosnia and for it in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Grenada. Once involved in a war, his inclination is to fight it to victory or the bitter end.

MCCAIN'S CHARACTER AND SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PRESS

John McCain presents himself to the world as a flawed man whose character, "even at this late date, [is] a work in progress."⁷⁵ He sees himself as a very human individual who has made mistakes and will likely make more. These errors fall into several categories, those which he feels ashamed of, those he presents as the foolish acts of indiscretion, political ambition, or of his youth, and those he laughs about with pride, rather than regret.

The mistake that violated his personal code of honor and of which he is therefore deeply ashamed of is of signing a propaganda confession when he was desperate for medical help as a prisoner of war. He is somewhat ashamed of having pandered during the 2000 South Carolina primary by equivocating on the issue of flying the Confederate flag over the capital. He can laugh at losing at a game, but not usually when it happens. According to his second wife Cindy Lou Hensley McCain, he is "a remote control freak. Once he gets hold of the remote control, forget it. If you want to watch something else you are out of luck."⁷⁶ He accepts full responsibility for the breakup of his first marriage.⁷⁷ He thinks it is funny that he lied about his age to appear younger when he met his second wife (she lied to seem older!) and that he never corrected her when thanked for some flowers sent by another man named John while she was in the hospital recuperating from knee surgery. He laughs at himself and cracks jokes about his vulnerabilities. All this makes him appear very human to most reporters and millions of people—an enormous asset to him as a politician among colleagues who are usually extremely reluctant to acknowledge flaws and very defensive with the media. Matt Welch calls McCain "one of the most preemptively confessional politicians in America," writing that his "ritual self-criticism produced [and produces] spectacular results" as the press call him "Washington's Last Honest Man" and want to protect him from himself and others.⁷⁸

Throughout his entire life John S. McCain III has been drawn to fame, glamour, power, and money, using these to advance his military and then

political career. His second marriage was to a much younger, wealthy woman who lived in a growing state where there was great political opportunity he soon availed himself of.⁷⁹ While Naval Liaison to the Senate he befriended two young senators, Gary Hart and William Cohen, and both served as groomsmen at his wedding. Senator John Tower, with whom he went carousing, treated him like a son⁸⁰ and became his main mentor in the Senate. He is the type of politician who never mixes with ordinary people, except as a photo opportunity. Throughout his career he has had an unusually good relationship with the press in Washington, though not in Arizona.⁸¹ Books with titles such as *Free Ride: John McCain and the Media* (2008), *John McCain: An Essay on Military and Political History* (2000), *McCain: The Myth of a Maverick* (2007), *The Real McCain: Why Conservatives Don't Trust Him—and Why Independents Shouldn't* (2008) question his authenticity, the degree to which he is really a maverick, and generally argue that he has manipulated an overly friendly media.⁸²

Brock and Waldman argue that the Arizonian's "free ride" with the press in the nation's capital is based upon his Vietnam experience, advocacy of campaign finance reform, and his "Straight Talk Express" style of dealing with reporters.⁸³ He is disinclined to speak about Vietnam, yet he built his 2000 campaign on his book, *Faith of My Fathers*, mostly on his imprisonment. As a former POW who survived so much suffering and had turned down the chance to be released earlier, interest in him increased as did tolerance for his explosive temper that sometimes erupted. They argue that he has gotten most of the credit undeservedly (others played a key role) for what has proven to be an ineffective campaign finance bill that favors his political party. The press loves him because he is very friendly to reporters, makes himself accessible to them by providing good quotes while speaking in a manner that seems uncalculated, breaks with his party on less important issues to maintain his image as a maverick, and has a good sense of humor. Quite importantly, they have very low expectations of him, so he has not suffered great criticism. At a psychological level, reporters and newsmen, who are in awe in the face of the suffering of people like McCain in the war in Vietnam, out of guilt may be giving him a free ride. TV talk show host and political pundit Chris Matthews has said, "the press loves McCain, we're his base."⁸⁴ Perhaps the McCain myth is based upon the identification of Americans with his long suffering in a Hanoi cell as our surrogate as we suffered through the long, losing war in Vietnam.⁸⁵ In short, these authors argue that this seemingly uncalculating, humorous, often self-deprecating man has carefully crafted his own myth.⁸⁶ Whatever the merit of their argument, now that John S. McCain

is the Republican standard bearer it remains to be seen if the media will apply its normal standards of judgment and evidence in covering him.

McCain, and everyone else, agree he is quick to anger on some subjects.⁸⁷ One is that his life has been made easier as a result of his family connections.⁸⁸ Yet he himself lists multiple occasions in which his life is made better as a result of his family. Here are a few examples from his autobiographical writings. When he was about to drop out of Annapolis just shy of graduation because of his excessive demerits which had become "something of a perverse trophy,"⁸⁹ the commandant came at his mother's request and told him to stay. He got special treatment as a prisoner of war because as the son of the Admiral in charge of the war he was the "Crown Prince" to the Vietnamese. His national profile was established upon his return from Hanoi when as the son of an admiral, the *U.S. News and World Report* gave him, rather than one of the other 591 prisoners released by the Vietnamese that year, space for a 13-page article on his experiences—beginning his profitable literary career. When he did not have the rank to gain entry to the National War College he used political connections to get what he wanted.

In going from the dangerous business of naval aviation to the incredibly competitive business of presidential politics, he may discover that the latter is as dangerous as the former, though in different ways. Now we turn to his much younger rival who offers a very different life story, personality, set of values, and political agenda.

DUNHAM FAMILY HISTORY AND PSYCHODYNAMICS

Though Barack Hussein Obama bears his father's name, he is the child of the three Kansas-born Dunhams who raised him in multicultural Hawaii with loving care and expectations for the great success they engendered. As he struggled with issues of abandonment as a fatherless child whose mother's two marriages failed and who lived abroad during much of his adolescence, he saw in the Dunhams some examples of the values of curiosity, education, empathy for others, openness to change, personal discipline, political activism, social welfare, toleration, and working for a better world. They, and their values, helped him find his racial identity even as he was *avoiding* the pitfalls of substance abuse and finding a comfortable niche outside of mainstream society among the black nationalists, foreign students, Marxists, and punk rock performance poets he was attracted to at Occidental College.⁹⁰ They are Stanley Armour Dunham (1918-92), Madelyn Lee Payne (1922-), and their daughter Stanley Ann Dunham (later Obama and Soetero, a.k.a. Ann Sotoro [1942-95]).

Gramps was born and raised by "God-fearing Baptists" in Eldorado, Kansas and Toots or Toot (a version of the Hawaiian word "Tutu," meaning grandmother or older female relative) was born as the eldest of three children to stern white-collar Methodists opposed to card-playing, dancing, and drinking. She mostly grew up only twenty miles away in Augusta. Both spent their adolescence in the difficult economic times of the Great Depression. At eight, the boy Stanley discovered his mother's body after she committed suicide, which neighbors associated with his father's philandering. "Punching the principal in the nose" got the rebellious, troubled teenager expelled from high school at age 15, followed by three years on the road dabbling in cards, moonshine, and women.⁹¹ Both families had moved to Wichita where the couple ultimately met. Madelyn Payne, who came from a much more stable, white-collar family than her future husband, graduated from high school as a topnotch home economics major and wanted to escape from their respectability. When she was 18 and he 22, the young couple eloped. A pattern of rebellious rejection of conventionality was apparent.

Stanley enlisted in the army right after the attack on Pearl Harbor and his young wife helped the war effort by assembling B-29 bombers at a Boeing factory in Wichita. Their daughter, Stanley Ann, was born at Ft. Leavenworth, where her father was stationed on November 27, 1942. Though Stanley became part of Patton's army in France, he never saw combat. After the war he used the GI Bill to try college at Berkeley, but was too restless to tolerate the classroom for long. Stanley sold furniture and the family moved from Kansas to Texas to Seattle, where on Mercer Island their daughter was able to finish high school prior to the move to Hawaii when a job offer was presented to the restless salesman.

The roots of Stanley Ann Dunham's empathy for black, brown, and disadvantaged people generally would appear to lie in her childhood identification with those who were mocked, as she was mocked as "Stanley Steamer" and "Stan the Man" because her father gave her his name since he had hoped to have a son. She was a lonely eleven- or twelve year-old girl with "eccentricities" who was just then outgrowing a bad case of asthma and suffering from constant relocation. When the family moved to Texas, stones were thrown at her and an African American playmate amidst taunts of "Nigger Lover" and "Dirty Yankee." When her indignant father took a day off from work to complain to the school principal he was told in no uncertain terms that, "White girls do not play with coloreds in this town."⁹²

In this period her mother insisted on calling the janitor, a dignified World War II veteran "Mr." despite being told by a coworker in no uncer-

tain terms never to "call no Nigger 'mister.'" When the family relocated to Seattle the girl's father insisted it was because of Texas racism while her mother told her grandson that they "moved only because Gramps wasn't doing particularly well on his job and because a friend in Seattle had promised him something better." Barry believed his grandmother because of his grandfather's "tendency to rewrite his history to conform with the image he wished for himself."⁹³

The teenager's close friends and schoolmates on Seattle's beautiful Mercer Island for four-years describe "Stannie" as "a very intelligent, quiet girl, interested in her friendships and current events."⁹⁴ "She was not a standard-issue girl of her times....wasn't part of the matched-sweater-set crowds," according to a friend and a retired philosophy teacher, who remembers speaking to her by the hour in Seattle coffee shops. The precocious, boyish-looking girl was curious and questioning, sometimes a contrarian. She could be quite outspoken and witheringly sarcastic, cracked her knuckles constantly, complained of her nose, her weight, and her parents—especially her father.⁹⁵ Stanley Ann was accepted for early admission by the University of Chicago, but her father said she was too young to attend.

In her later teenage years the relationship between Stanley Ann and her father became strained. "He was hard on her, in that he picked on her, he had a sarcastic sense of humor," and her mother tried to protect their daughter, according to another high school friend.⁹⁶ Although the origins of their strained relationship are not completely clear, a girl who waited at the same bus stop with her recalls the words following the giving of names at their first meeting, "I know, it's a boy's name...and no I don't like it. I mean, would you like to be called Stanley. But my Dad wanted a boy and he got me. And the name 'Stanley' made him feel better, I guess." Her son wrote, "she would never quite forgive his instability and often violent temper and would grow ashamed of his crude, ham-fisted manners."⁹⁷ His uprooting of the family on so many occasions also created a strain and at least one of her Seattle friends thought she held a grudge against him for the last move to Hawaii.

It is also my impression that the strain between father and daughter was based in part on the ways they were alike, the ways in which she wanted to please (sometimes unconsciously), and/or rebel against him. For example, her father wanted a boy and she came across to classmates as boyish. She endured the first name she shared with her father, not introducing herself as Ann and signing as "S. Ann Dunham" until she got to college. She had her namesake's restless need to move on from one place to the next, he on a national scale and she on a continental scale. He was

outspoken in his denunciation of prejudice and prided himself on his friendship with different types of people—blacks, Chinese, Japanese, Jews, Filipinos, and so forth—and she too was drawn to foreign students and their countries. Later, by marrying two foreigners, she took his values to a point well beyond where he wanted her to go. After an adventuresome life that took him far away from home, he married a teenage woman and she as a teenager married an older man from a far-away place. His future in-laws took one look at him and saw him as the "other"—a wop (Italian, which he was not), while his daughter brought home a black man and then an Asian she would marry. Stanley, who had spoken loudly against organized religion but joined the Unitarian Church in Seattle with his wife because it did not stress dogma, found Stanley Ann proclaiming atheism in high school. The father, who could be quite convincing as a furniture salesman, found his often shy daughter to be outspoken in her opposition to his desires for her, and her advocacy of different ideas and causes. In short, Stanley Ann Dunham identified with her father and his values just as she rebelled against him and them, mostly by taking them well beyond his comfort zone.

In 1959, while still a 16-year-old working for the summer as an *au pair* in Chicago, Stanley Ann saw her first foreign film—*Black Orpheus*. She was deeply moved by this award-winning story of the doomed, interracial love of a black man and white woman.⁹⁸ Shortly after her graduation from high school, the family moved to multi-racial Hawaii where she as a shy freshman in a Russian language course found her own black Orpheus in the form of the Kenyan economics student Barack Obama. Like the Orpheus of the award-winning movie, he was older (by five years) and romantically involved with another woman (actually married to a Kenyan and the father of two children though what the naïve American teenager knew about this and when she knew it is unclear). Her parents invited the charming, confident foreign student to dinner, becoming concerned when they saw the couple holding hands. Despite their own reservations and upsetting, objecting letters from Obama's father in Kenya, they gave their consent to the marriage since their daughter was already three months pregnant and probably would have married in any case.

THE CHILDHOOD, ADOLESCENCE, AND EARLY MANHOOD OF BARRY OBAMA

Barack Obama grew up as a fatherless boy. Before the baby was two years old his father, having graduated as a Phi Beta Kappa member in three years at the top of his class, had the choice of taking a tuition scholarship at

Harvard or a scholarship at the New School for Social Research in New York City which would pay everything, allowing him to bring his new wife and child. "How can I refuse the best education?" was his response, as he went alone to Harvard.⁹⁹ At one point Ann took her baby, stopping in Seattle to visit friends, to Boston to see her husband.¹⁰⁰ Whatever plans the couple had of going to Kenya upon his graduation were shattered by the strong objections of the candidate's grandfather Hussein Onyango Obama, Madelyn Dunham's fear that her daughter would be killed in the Mao Mao uprising, and, I presume, the doctoral student's newest romantic attachment since he was followed to Kenya by the white-American teacher Ruth Niedersand, who would become his third wife and mother of his fourth and fifth children.¹⁰¹

The abandoned teenage mother who had dropped out of college before the birth of her son returned to the University of Hawaii, filed for divorce in 1964 on the standard and uncontested grounds of "grievous mental suffering," and moved on with her life. Ann earned her degree in anthropology after becoming romantically involved with an older Indonesian student named Lolo Soetoro, whom she married in 1966 and with whom she had a daughter, Maya, born in 1970.¹⁰² Much of the childcare fell to the grandparents of the little boy, who was called Barry, just as his father had introduced himself as Barry in America.

At the age of six little Barry flew to Jakarta with his mother to spend most of the next four years in a radically different culture. In *Dreams From My Father* he focuses on the strangeness of the culture and how he learned to deal with the realities of power, not from his mother who experienced the word like a "curse," but from his kindly stepfather who taught him to accept the realities of power, take care of his own needs rather than those of others, and to box. According to interviews with playmates and teachers from his Indonesian period, the chubby smiling boy, the only foreign child in the neighborhood, was very much an outsider who was made fun of. He was called "Negro," which was *said* not to be negative, and was undaunted in his desire to be accepted, though without great success.¹⁰³ He went to a Catholic school for two years, and then a leading Muslim school (not a *madrasa*) for the children of the local elite after his mother, who was suffering from loneliness, awakened him at four in the morning to force-feed him breakfast and three hours of English lessons.¹⁰⁴ She insisted that "if you want to grow into a human being you're going to need some values" as she preached the virtues—"honesty," "fairness," "straight talk," "and independent judgment... of her midwestern past."¹⁰⁵ She did not appear to have great success at the time, but she never let up.

At the age of ten Barry returned to Hawaii to live with Toots and Gramps and go to the private Ponahou School of the Hawaiian elite where he was one of a very few black students in this racially mixed institution. Though his introduction was difficult, he appears to have made a good adjustment after the first month. Within a year his mother came to Honolulu to work on her doctoral degree (only conferred in 1992), but three years later when she returned to Indonesia to do field work, she accepted her son's desire to remain with her parents in Hawaii.

Barack gives the impression of spending lots of time with "Gramps"—who finally had the son he had always wanted, although in the form of a grandson. His grandmother was a powerful, less dramatic force within the household. Unlike his mother who was always dreaming of a better world, "Toots," according to her grandson, "was the opposite of a dreamer, at least by the time I knew her...she was just a very tough, sensible, non-nonsense person" who "injected" into the teenaged Obama "a lot of that very midwestern, sort of traditional sense of prudence and hard work," even though "some of those values didn't sort of manifest themselves until I got older."¹⁰⁶

The impact of Barack's grandparents on him was enormous since they were the ones who were always there for him, providing a safe environment in beautiful Hawaii. Their love never appears to have been conditional. They appear also to have sought to give their beloved grandson space to find his own way as an adolescent and as a person who would be identified by his society as African American. They do not appear to have spoken to him about this decision, they just did it. Since adolescents need both a lot of space to develop their sense of self and a lot of connection to know they are loved, this was invaluable.

There is a disconnection between the Barry his high school classmates and friends at Ponahou remember and the Barry presented by Barack Obama in *Dreams*. They remember him as a good kid with an afro haircut who fit in with his classmates, and he depicts a young man with lots of internal turmoil.¹⁰⁷ As he would in his first two years of college, he smoked marijuana, drank beer, and occasionally used cocaine,¹⁰⁸ but always kept these "troubles" outside of his home—in an unspoken agreement with his grandparents.

Basketball was the great outlet for the boy nicknamed "Barry O'Bomber" by the members of his high school basketball team because of his very good jump shot: he was so obsessed with the sport that his mother "despaired of him ever having a social conscience." His high school was able to win the state championship in his senior year, with Obama as a second string

player, mostly a bench warmer because his creative, more aggressive, "black style" of play did not fit in with that of the team.¹⁰⁹ Beneath these typical teenage activities the roots of other possibilities were developing.

The Barry who left Hawaii for the mainland in 1979, to return yearly for the Christmas holidays, carried the hopes and wishes for great success of his family as well as a sense of being special engendered by the Dunhams. In racially mixed Honolulu when tourists watched his grandson playing in the sand, Gramps would walk up behind them and comment that the boy was the great-grandson of the first Hawaiian king while at age ten Barry told other children that he was the son of an African prince and the grandson of an African king.¹¹⁰ His sister Maya Soetoro reports "there was always a joke between my mom and Barack that he would be the first black president."¹¹¹

Barry's missing father played a key role in his development though not by being present or sending childhood support—never forthcoming or probably even sought. The father's presence was limited to the first two years of the child's life and one additional month eight years later, but the mother who invoked him as the heroic role model kept him alive in the mind of the boy. She said or wrote that he was, or must be, like his father who had grown up poor in a poor country in a poor continent, won scholarships to graduate at the top of his class in three years in Hawaii before going to earn his doctoral degree at Harvard and returning "to Africa to return his promise to the continent." She declared "your brains, your character you got from him." Meanwhile, Gramps invoked his former son-in-law as a model of "confidence."¹¹²

When Barack Obama senior came to America for medical treatment during Barry's tenth year, the mother's message was directly reinforced. Aside from the boy being given a basketball and taught to dance by his namesake, the month of his visit would become very long and tense for Barry and the Dunhams. As he sat down to watch the much-anticipated TV cartoon special, *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*, his father told him to go to his room to do his homework. When the boy and his family protested that it was done he was told to do the next day's homework. Reporting that vacation was just a few days away was to no avail, as his father declared, "Barry, you do not work as hard as you should. Go now, before I get angry at you." The boy slammed the door behind him as his grandparents protested the bullying they were experiencing. His father had become the Grinch stealing the spirit of Christmas. This was the mixed legacy of the father who "remained a myth" to him until he traveled to Africa later in his life.¹¹³

The greatest builder of Obama's character was not the absent, mythic, and idealized father, but his mother, even when she had to do it in absentia. She did it by all means possible, including guilt and example. She knew how to make her son feel guilty, saying that she slipped it into his "baby food." With a big smile she declared, "A healthy dose of guilt never hurt anybody. It's what civilization is built on, guilt. A highly underrated emotion." Her own example was of devotion to improving the lives of ordinary people. She got close to the villagers and worked to improve their lives, especially the lives of the women. "She wasn't ideological," says her son, "I inherited that, I think, from her." Ann worked as a program officer for the Ford Foundation, providing microfinance to better the lives of people. Barack was following in his mother's footsteps when, after graduating from college, he became a community organizer, bringing together disparate groups.¹¹⁴

It was at Occidental College (1979-81) where Barry Obama chose to be known as Barack Obama and first had a sense of his oratorical powers when he spoke against apartheid in South Africa at a rally. After two years in Los Angeles, he took advantage of a transfer program to Columbia University where he became a much more serious student of political science with a concentration in international relations. After graduation in 1983, his next steps were to work for an international business corporation and a public interest group before moving to Chicago in 1985 to become a community organizer for three years. He appears not to have had much impact but to have learned a great deal about Chicago politics, organizing, and poverty. This was followed by his attending Harvard Law School where he achieved prominence when elected in 1990 as the first African American president of the *Harvard Law Review* as a compromise candidate between the conservatives and the radicals.¹¹⁵ After graduating *magna cum laude* in 1991, he returned to Chicago where he became involved in the law, philanthropic activities, and politics.

RACE IN THE MIND AND LIFE OF BARACK OBAMA

Race was intimately connected in Obama's mind with his missing African father. In discussing an article on his father's graduation from the University of Hawaii, which made no mention of his mother or him, he reports, "I was too young to realize that I was supposed to have a live-in father, just as I was too young to know that I needed a race." Racial consciousness became an issue early on to Barry Obama who was called "Negro" by the Indonesian kids and who at age nine reports reading a *Life Magazine* article on a man who severely damaged his skin by trying to

lighten it with chemicals in the hope of passing for white.¹¹⁶ As a ten-year-old at Ponahou School he felt guilty, at least in retrospect, when he protested loudly and shoved the one black girl in his class whom the other students were trying to get him to kiss as his "girlfriend." At the age of 12 or 13 he ceased to advertise the race of his mother to those who did not know his background.¹¹⁷

When elected as president of the *Harvard Law Review*, 28-year-old Barack Obama was sought out by publishers offering advances to write a book on the current state of race relations—he received \$40,000.¹¹⁸ *Dreams From My Father* instead became Obama's life story focusing on his search for racial identity and knowledge of his father. A number of the thinly disguised characters presented in the book take sharp exception to its depiction of them, of what Barry Obama discussed with them, and his concerns at the time. The prime example is "Ray"—the black high school friend with whom he reports "living out a caricature of black male adolescence" with "no idea who my own self was" as "I learned to slip back and forth between my black and white worlds," each "with its own language, customs, and structure of meaning."¹¹⁹

Keith Kakugawa, the real Ray, half Japanese and half black, told reporters he always saw himself as mixed race and was never "an angry young black man." The "longing and loneliness" of his friend's "inner turmoil" were not about race, but "missing his parents. His biggest struggles were his feelings of abandonment."¹²⁰ If Kakugawa's remembrance is correct, then Obama's racial issues were kept very much to himself and secondary to other issues. Since when interviewed, classmates and others mentioned in *Dreams* almost all minimize the question of race, I am far from alone in concluding that Obama kept his concerns, many of which were inchoate, mostly to himself. In retrospect he has also found it much easier and more advantageous to focus on racial politics rather than the other pains of adolescence, especially those associated with his sense of abandonment by his parents. He does acknowledge in the foreword that his book "is a record of a personal, interior journey." It is obvious that he takes great poetic license in recreating conversations and situations with a specificity that would otherwise require an almost perfect memory.

There were issues of racial prejudice among his relatives. Racial hatred led the African grandfather he would never meet, Hussein Onyango Obama (1895-1979), to disapprove of the marriage to Ann Dunham, threatening to disown his son for sullyng the pure Obama blood with that of an impure white woman. When his beloved grandmother wanted a ride to work and expressed fear of an aggressive black panhandler at the bus

stop, her husband accused her of prejudice. Confused, the teenaged Barry sought out a black poet friend of his grandfather who told him his grandmother had a right to be scared because "she understands that black people have a reason to hate" and that she might be as right as her husband. At that moment Barry felt "utterly alone."¹²¹

At Occidental College, Barry became Barack Obama as he associated primarily with black students. There and elsewhere he associated with the black and brown people of the world, but he could speak up to all people.

As a young adult, Obama was beginning to think of establishing a relationship with his father when he received a call telling him that his father had died in an auto accident—the senior Obama was a terrible driver who sometimes drove on the wrong side of the road, following British rules in America, and was quite slow to acknowledge his mistake. The medical care he had gone to Hawaii for when Barack was ten was for the impact of a previous auto accident. His son eventually traveled to Kenya on several occasions to get past the myth of his father, to discover the "Old Man" from relatives, as well as to connect with his previously unknown family. In Africa the picture of his namesake went from the mythic image of brilliance created by his mother to one of an abusive, irresponsible father and husband and a bitter drunk: an arrogant, lonely, narcissistic, prideful, self-destructive, stubborn failed bureaucrat who felt entitled to special treatment. Yet the Old Man had a profound impact not simply on his children, who mostly accomplished relatively little, but also his former wives.¹²² One author argues that his American son was inspired to be the man he imagined his father to be.¹²³

When Barack returned to Chicago as a lawyer, he chose a strong, outspoken African American wife from a stable family, one of equal education who would keep him grounded and in line in certain ways, letting him know if he didn't put away the butter. The candidate respects her judgment and looks to her for support in many aspects of life, including politics.¹²⁴ In 2000 Illinois State Senator Obama lost a Democratic primary election partly because he was "viewed to be a white man in black face" in the African American community.¹²⁵ The "not black enough" complaint against him ceased to be a major hindrance to black support once he became a national candidate, since African Americans overwhelmingly support almost any black on the national stage.

For most Americans Obama's biracialism, especially his whiteness, is a valuable asset. He embodies much of the Kansas-born Dunhams who raised him. Part of Barack Obama's appeal is that of being a healer of racial and other societal divisions. But some ask how he can heal America's racial

splits if he befriends and is mentored by a racist minister (Jeremiah A. Wright) who performed his marriage, baptized his children, and inspired the title for his second book, *The Audacity of Hope*, with a sermon by that name. The Obamas have sought to lessen these concerns by leaving the Trinity United Church of Christ of Reverend Wright.

IS OBAMA TOO INTELLECTUAL TO BE ELECTED PRESIDENT?

Unlike John McCain, Barack Obama is an intellectual and sounds like one. He uses his intellect to ask questions about a wide variety of issues, entertaining different ideas, reflecting, speculating, and consulting. When not in the process of wooing the voters, he has the intellectual's "on-the-one-hand-on-the-other-hand style." He is a journal keeper who writes introspectively at times, as in *Dreams*. Because he is empathetic and a reconciler, rather than an ideologue and a leader always pushing for dominance, he comes across as weak to some observers. When some of his newness and star status wears off, I suspect these characteristics will be clearer to the country.

Is Barack Obama too much of an intellectual to be elected president? This question has crossed my mind on numerous occasions. In most elections in my lifetime the more clearly intellectual candidate has lost to the less intellectual one. Consequently, Stevenson lost to Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956 while Dukakis lost to George H. W. Bush in 1988. More recently, the younger Bush triumphed in 2004 over Kerry (I am leaving out his 2000 victory over Gore since the Democrat had a half million more votes). In running against a clearly non-intellectual in 2008, this issue will certainly be relevant. Intellectuals are characterized not simply by education at fine and often elite universities, or we would have to include Gerald Ford (University of Michigan and Yale Law School), George W. Bush (Yale and Harvard), and Bill Clinton (Georgetown and Yale Law School) in their ranks. Rather, it is a constellation of elements, especially their willingness to go beyond the usual glib political talking points to a more nuanced approach to a subject. For this they often pay a heavy price in the political process since they are viewed as elitists who are out of touch with the common people.

An example of paying a price comes from the Pennsylvania primary. On April 11th Obama made comments about small-town voters in Pennsylvania and the Midwest, where jobs had been drying up for a quarter century: "it's not surprising then they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant

sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations." The result was a media flare-up as he was criticized by the Clinton campaign for an elitist view of faith, guns, and immigration, rather than an appreciation of the ways in which small town America has these as embedded values. The intensity of the critical media focus led the former law professor to say he expressed himself poorly but not to back down from what is a highly defensible intellectual position.¹²⁶ However, the point in contemporary politics is not to gain intellectual insight, but to stay focused on getting favorable media coverage in order to gain election first and then support for particular legislation.

Intellectuals incline to distrust the use of emotional symbols like the flag; however, politicians normally wrap themselves in the flag on any and all occasions. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, flags abounded on cars, houses, buildings, and chest pins. According to his own words, Barack Obama as a state legislator wore a flag pin shortly after 9/11, though he later "decided I won't wear that pin on my chest" when it became "a substitute for...true patriotism" as the country prepared for the Iraq war. In October of 2007 he reiterated, "I decided I won't wear that pin on my chest. Instead, I'm gonna try to tell the American people what I believe will make this country great and hopefully that will be a testimony to my patriotism." In Philadelphia he got in trouble when he declared that "I have never said that I don't wear flag pins or refuse to wear flag pins. This is the kind of manufactured issue that our politics has become obsessed with." Now, it is possible that he was misquoted (I find that no reporter has ever gotten everything I have said correct), that it was taken out of context, that he simply forgot what he said, or that he lied. Whatever the truth, Obama argued during the exchange that this issue "distracts us from what should be my job when I'm commander in chief, which is going to be figuring out how we get our troops out of Iraq and how we actually make our economy better for the American people." But his emphasis on policy was treated as secondary in the political game of "gotcha." It is worth noting that while calling flag pins "a phony issue," he started wearing one, though not all the time.¹²⁷ This issue hurt him with working class white voters in Appalachia, where many distrust leaders they experience as intellectuals.

This dislike, and often disdain, is based on the sense that intellectuals are elitist dreamers out of touch with their emotions, needs, and values. Workers bond over "identity issues" like abortion, flags, guns, and religion when the politician advocating them seems real. Barack Obama, with his foreign-sounding name and vague slogans of change and hope, has not had much success with them. They hear his rhetoric but they do not feel

his anger, one of their hallmarks for genuineness. Obama's failure to express anger strongly on the campaign trail is a serious liability.

There is a case for seeing Obama as a dreamer. "Dreams" is the first word in the title of his first book and "Dream" is the last word in the subtitle of his second book. He writes that his wife worries that he, like Gramps and his father, is "something of a dreamer" and there is evidence to support this interpretation in his writings. Much to my delight as a psychohistorian, he also presents two of his actual dreams in *Dreams From My Father*, one with day residue and evidence that it represented an important emotional connection to his father.¹²⁸

It remains to be seen how Obama being an intellectual will impact his ability to be elected and then govern, and whether his blackness will negate what is usually a liability in the minds of so many voters.

ESTABLISHMENT FAVORITES

For years John McCain was a favorite of many Washington reporters and insiders because of his Vietnam service, humor, willingness to meet with them, authenticity (or seeming authenticity), willingness to go against the wishes of the Republican establishment, and support of finance reform. This preferential attitude and reporting may become a casualty of his becoming the Republican candidate.

Barack Obama has been a favorite of the media, in which he has "fans,"¹²⁹ and the Democratic establishment for a variety of reasons. After watching the conservative Republicans bring enormous youthful energy to the political process, mostly from the South since Reagan came to the presidency, they are thrilled by youthful support for the Illinois senator. They like the story of a biracial child raised by a single teenage mother becoming their candidate and president, energizing African Americans as never before in the process, perhaps making the South competitive once again for their party. When they failed to get Hillary Clinton to drop out of the race in April, they reluctantly accepted her right to contest the remainder of the primary schedule provided she did not "say anything mean about the Chosen One"—Barack Obama.¹³⁰ The Democrats have paradoxically seen themselves as both the party of the ordinary people and the intellectuals—in Obama they get both.

WHAT KIND OF A PRESIDENT WOULD MCCAIN OR OBAMA MAKE?

Clearly this is a complex question and none of us know for sure what challenges the future will bring, nor do we have crystal balls. However, I do

know a great deal about these two men based upon my study of their personalities and policies. My standards for what I look for in a president, beginning with the general and then going to the particular, are the ability and desire to:

- Keep America safe
- Demonstrate the ability, like an analyst, to *not act* and to teach Americans restraint in a crisis when there is great fear and pressure to act
- Find symbolic ways of helping Americans through crises
- Withstand the twin threats of idealization and denigration
- Find solutions for long term problems rather than dealing only with short term issues
- Select and effectively work with a talented, at least partly bipartisan administrative team
- Have appropriate administrative and foreign policy experience to be Commander-in-Chief
- Assist Americans in dealing realistically, rather than narcissistically, with the problems of the world, especially nuclear proliferation and global warming
- Educate Americans that the U.S. is not a lone superpower, but rather the world's leading country with the need to work to integrate China, India, Brazil, and other rising powers into the world systems for the good of humankind
- Reverse the export of American industrial production abroad
- Provide health care to all Americans with an emphasis on preventative care
- Get out of Iraq and avoid U.S. involvement in future wars
- Improve our relations with the world, treating terrorism as a police issue requiring the cooperation of the world
- Maintain civil liberties, restoring those that have been eroded in recent years

Keeping America and its constitution safe is the most important function of the occupant of the Oval Office. An American leader like McCain who is feared as militaristic may be given more leeway by the world than Obama who is seen as a conciliator; however, McCain is less likely to work out cooperative military and other relations with an increasingly important European Union, expanding China, re-assertive Russia, explosive Middle East, burgeoning India, and so forth. Regarding the war in Iraq, the foreign policy issue foremost in the minds of Americans, the Arizona Senator has always been a strong supporter of the mission but not its execution. He moderated his statement of maybe staying 100 years if need

be, to removing most of our forces within five years. Obama, on the other hand, has never supported the war and wants to remove combat troops from Iraq within a year while supporting the emergence of democracy in Iraq, but not through military force.

Both candidates express wariness of involvement in future wars, though given his *Realpolitik* approach and idealization of Teddy Roosevelt and other militaristic Americans, McCain would seem more likely to get entangled militarily than would Obama, who favors a diplomacy focused on mutual interest and talking with potential enemies. The greatest danger with the Arizonan is that once committed to a military action or a diplomatic action that could lead to war, he will be bound and determined to continue, no matter what the cost, just as he did when he had the choice over Hanoi to continue to bomb his target or take elusive action when his radar revealed that a surface-to air-missile was locked onto his plane. If he demonstrates the same stubbornness in the name of national or personal honor there is a danger that he will slip into solitary self-righteousness in making military and other decisions. A key element to a successful presidency is the ability, rather like that of a psychoanalyst, to avoid or delay action in the face of great fear and pressure to act during a crisis. To teach Americans to make more rational decisions, in much the same way the analyst helps the patient to understand the pressures from within and without, before taking action. A related capability is to find symbolic ways of helping Americans through crises.

John S. McCain has a talent for being able to stand alone, apart from his political party, taking unpopular stands. He also has a willingness to cross the aisle of political parties and forge alliances with Democrats. At this point it is less clear if Barack Obama can stand alone, though his coming out in opposition to the Iraq War in 2002, before it started, is one indication that he can do this.

Neither candidate has the administrative experience I hope a president would have. McCain's mismanagement throughout most of his presidential campaign in 2007, his largest administrative task to date, is not a good omen, though his comeback in the primaries does bode better for his ability to lead. Obama has even less executive experience in this respect, as in so many others, since he is a blank slate. Though you would not know it from their campaign policy statements, neither seems to know much about economics,¹³¹ although Obama being a "quick study" is a plus. Nor has either addressed in a meaningful way the export of American jobs abroad, though based upon his life experience it would seem that Obama would be more attuned to the problem, despite his inability to compete

well with Senator Clinton for the votes of white factory and union workers. Unlike McCain, Obama in his books has expressed some signs of empathy for those displaced by economic change.

Barack Obama is a better listener, but McCain has proven himself able to withstand criticism as during the Keating Five Scandal (1989-1990) and the 2000 Republican primaries. Withstanding adversity is a key element in leadership and clearly McCain has an edge in this respect.

Having health and life to lead are vital elements. In good health at 47 years of age it is likely that Obama will be able to fulfill this vital requirement better than McCain whose body suffered grievously in Vietnam and has survived four bouts with melanoma. However, it should be remembered that our youngest president, Kennedy, was in terrible health for most of his life and Reagan remained in reasonably good health throughout his presidency.

It is not easy to determine which of these candidates is more likely to face long-term problems. Certainly McCain will be focused more on rebuilding the military, which has been strained close to the breaking point by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He also is concerned about climate change, but it remains to be seen if there will be money to do anything significant about this if he gets the tax cuts he wants. Obama, on the other hand, brings the approach of an intellectual who is more inclined to foresee long-term problems. His campaign has energized an enormous number of young people, some of whom he has the potential to mobilize to bring about governmental change. But it remains to be seen if he has the Washington know-how to deal with day-to-day problems that usually overwhelm a president. Whoever is president will find major fiscal constraints after the enormous deficit of the previous administration.

It cannot be sufficiently stressed that administratively, both candidates are of unknown qualities. However, knowing the man means knowing what kind of president he might or might not become. Administrations are reflective of the personalities and experiences the newly elected presidents bring to Washington when they become Commander-in-Chief. This article should help readers by providing additional raw materials for judgment when they step into the voting booth on the first Tuesday in November.

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ENDNOTES

1. I would like to thank the following people for their contributions to this article: Professor Ken Fuchsman for reading it over and making suggestions; Professors Herbert Barry and Rudolph Binion for proofreading; Matt Reed and Caitlin Adams for proofing and editorial assistance; and Alex Ruiz for some online research. Throughout this essay the presumptive nominees are discussed without using this term so as to avoid its endless repetition. Obvious, Obama and McCain will not become the formal nominees, barring unforeseen events, until after their party conventions on August 25-28 in Denver and September 1-4 in St. Paul, while my June 1st deadline meant that I had to make certain assumptions, in consultation with the editor.
2. Some prior comparative presidential publications are "Presidents Carter and Sadat: The Repudiation of the Peacemakers" (with Mohammed Shalaan), in Joan Zuckerberg, editor, *Politics and Psychology: Contemporary Psychodynamic Approaches* (NY: Plenum Press, 1991), pp. 143-173 and "A Comparative Psychohistorical Approach to Candidates Bush and Kerry in the 2004 Election," *The Journal of Psychohistory* 32, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 109-142.
3. The ethnicity is for Obama's grandmother Madelyn Payne. Though I have found some genealogies tracing his grandfather Stanley Dunham's family origins to the early nineteenth and late eighteenth centuries, thus far I have seen no reliable information on the family's countries of origin.
4. Nicholas Wade, "Cheney and Obama, It's Not Genetic." *New York Times Week in Review* (October 21, 2007).
5. Matt Welch, *McCain: The Myth of a Maverick* (NY: Palgrave, 2007), p. 53 reports that McCain lived far longer in Arlington, Virginia, if you combine different periods of residency.
6. Barack Obama, *Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance* (NY: Three Rivers Press, 2004), p. 369.
7. Maureen Orth, "The Road Trip of 2 Lifetimes, and Still Going," *New York Times* (December 14, 2007).
8. Son John S. McCain IV went to Annapolis and his youngest son Jimmy recently served in Iraq as a Marine.
9. John McCain, *Worth the Fighting For: A Memoir* (NY: Random House, 2002), p. 3.
10. Obama, *Dreams*, p. 57.
11. John McCain, *Faith of My Fathers: A Family Memoir* (NY: Random House, 1999), p. 259.
12. Sandy McCain Morgan, whose birth name is Jean, was treated for breast cancer in 1998 at Johns Hopkins University Hospital. The Senator, citing Al Gore's public discussion of his sister Nancy's cancer, refused to comment on his sister when she came up in reference to a vote on breast cancer research. Joe, who is sometimes described as a dinner-theatre actor and former reporter, idealizes his older brother and sometimes stumps for him. In 2000, a person who was with Joe when it looked like his brother would be nominated for president, said that Joe became hyper and said that this is "Better than sex." In Alexander, *Man*, p. 246.
13. McCain, *Faith*, pp. 99-100.
14. Obama, *Dreams*, pp. 212-13, 316-17.
15. McCain, *Faith*. It would appear that Rowena was off raising her own family during much of the Senator's childhood, though we really have little information. When his father was asked how he could tell the difference between his most attractive sister-in-law and wife he would say "that is their problem."
16. Mark Halpern, *The Undecided Voter's Guide to the Next President* (NY: Harper Perennial, 2007), pp. 86-7.
17. Obama, *Dreams*, p. 36.
18. Halpern, *Voter's Guide*, pp. 86, 319.
19. Paul Alexander, *Man of the People: The Life of John McCain* (New York: Wiley and Sons, 2003), pp. 30-31.
20. McCain, *Faith*, p. 111 and Halpern, *Voter's Guide*, p. 320.
21. M. Michael Gelfand, *Sea Change at Annapolis: The United States Naval Academy, 1949-2000* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), pp. 198-99.
22. Obama, *Dreams*, p. 93. He smoked considerable marijuana, drank alcohol, and sometimes did cocaine when he "could afford it."
23. McCain, *Faith*, pp. 113, 102.
24. Robert Timberg, *John McCain: An American Odyssey*, (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1999), p. 105.
25. Linda Fedmann, "John McCain: Keeping Faith, On His Own Terms," *The Christian Science Monitor* (October 28, 2007).
26. John K. Wilson, *Barack Obama: The Improbable Quest* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers 2008), p. iv.
27. John McCain and Mark Salter, *Character is Destiny: Inspiring Stories Every Young Person Should Know and Every Adult Should Remember* (NY: Random House, 2005), p. xvi.). Roberta McCain, who knew the Washington political/military establishment, preferred to work behind the scenes in Washington to advance her husband's career.
28. John S. McCain III, "Prisoner of War: A First-Person Account," *U.S. News and World Report* (May 14, 1973). Quote marks were placed around "gooks," presumably by the editors.
29. Quoted in Halpern, *Voter's Guide*, p. 85.
30. Timberg, *McCain*, pp. 48-49.
31. McCain, *Faith*, pp. 139-40, 149, 171.
32. David M. Halbfinger, "McCain Is Said To Tell Kerry He Won't Join," *New York Times* (June 12, 2004). More recently Senator Kerry has told a reporter that it was McCain who initiated these vice presidential running mate discussions in 2004.
33. McCain, *Faith*, p. 105.
34. Elovitz, "Reading the First Credible, African American Presidential Candidate," *Clio's Psyche* 14, 3 (December, 2007), pp. 87-88. The psychoanalytic reading group read Obama's first book in the spring and summer of 2007 when there were a variety of credible candidates.
35. Ben Wallace-Wells, "Obama's Narrator," *New York Times Magazine* (April 1, 2007).
36. Janny Scott, "The Story of Obama, Written by Obama," *New York Times* (May 18, 2008): pp. 1, 24.
37. Monica Langley, "Preference Aside, Cindy McCain Handles Limelight: Candidate's Wife Fills Several Roles in Public, Private." *Wall Street Journal* (April 17, 2008): A8.
38. Douglas, born in 1959 or 1960, is the eldest of the two sons of his first wife whom he adopted when they married.

39. McCain, *Faith*, pp. 99-100.
40. Halpern, *Voter's Guide*, p.55.
41. McCain, *Faith*, p. 181.
42. Timberg, *Nightingale's*, p. 117.
43. McCain, *Character*, p. xii, presents this as a sign of his father's character.
44. Timberg, *Nightingale's*, pp. 195-96.
45. Timberg, *McCain*, p. 30.
46. Timberg, *McCain*, p. 118.
47. One of Slew's brothers went into the army, rising to the rank of general.
48. McCain, *Faith*, p. 51.
49. McCain, *Faith*, p. 51.
50. McCain, *Faith*, p. vii.
51. Heinz Kohut (1913-81) and his followers differ from most psychoanalysts in finding benefit in idealization.
52. McCain, *Faith*, p. 100.
53. McCain, *Faith*, p. 117.
54. McCain, *Faith*, pp. 102-3.
55. McCain, *Faith*, p. 101; McCain, *Character*, p. xvi.
56. Orth, "Road Trip."
57. McCain, *Faith*, pp. 103-4.
58. Timberg, *McCain*, p. 105.
59. Timberg, *McCain*, p. 125.
60. McCain, *Faith*, p. viii.
61. Alexander, *Man*, p. 12.
62. McCain, *Faith*, pp. 5-6.
63. Timberg, *Nightingale's*, p. 41.
64. Though McCain refers to being 5'9" at Annapolis, at age 72 he does not appear to be that tall. In May 2008 he allowed a select group of reporters, excluding those from the *New York Times* who have a doctor/reporter, to look at some of his medical records for a very brief period.
65. McCain, *Faith*, p. 180, when preparing to run for president in 1999, asserts that "I did not take a perverse pleasure in the terror and destruction of war. I did not delight in the brief, intense thrill of flying combat missions. I was gratified when my bombs hit their target, but I did not particularly enjoy the excitement of the experience."
66. Timberg, *McCain*, pp. 66-69.
67. McCain, *Faith*, p. 178.
68. McCain, *Faith*, pp. 178-79.
69. McCain, *Faith*, p. 180. For some unknown reason McCain italicizes Forrestal.
70. McCain, *Faith*, pp. 189-257.
71. Timberg, *McCain*, p. 121.
72. Timberg, *McCain*, pp. 120-21.
73. Irene Javors raised this possibility at the Psychohistory Forum April 26, 2008 meeting and reiterated it in a May 18, 2008 e-mail.

74. Matthew Bai, "The McCain Doctrines," *The New York Times Magazine* (May 18, 2008), p. 42.
75. McCain, *Character*, p. xii.
76. Halpern, *Voter's Guide*, p.74.
77. McCain, *Fighting*, pp. 13-14.
78. Welch, *Myth*, pp. 74-75.
79. Timberg, *McCain*, pp. 131-32 points out that while some of McCain's critics and friends think his decision to marry Cindy was based upon her money and location in Arizona which represented political opportunity, others think he is not that calculating. Timberg comes down on the side of the later, quoting Albert "Pete" Lakeland, a Foreign Relations Committee staff member, to the effect that Cindy represented "the focus of his regeneration"—rather than political calculation.
80. Timberg, *McCain*, p. 128.
81. McCain, *Faith*, p. 180. After the Forrestal fire he formed "a lifelong friendship with Johnny" Apple, the *New York Times* reporter and well-known epicure, with whom he went to Saigon for "R&R"—rest and refreshment.
82. David Brock and Paul Waldman, *Free Ride: John McCain and the Media* (NY: Anchor Book, 2008); John Karaagac, *John McCain: An Essay on Military and Political History* (Landham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000); Welch, *Myth*; and Cliff Schecter, *The Real McCain: Why Conservatives Don't Trust Him—and Why Independents Shouldn't* (2008). A more favorable view of McCain may be found in a book by a veteran political writer as she depicts his work for campaign finance reform. Elizabeth Drew, *Citizen McCain* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 2002), which is scheduled to be reissued this election year. For the greatest insight into McCain I would recommend Karaagac and Welch.
83. John B. Judis, "The Making of an Überhawk: Neo McCain," in Franklin Foer and the editors of the *New Republic*. Eds., *A Voter's Guide to Election 2008* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 97-117, is an example of a journalist of opposing opinions who goes out of his way to say how accessible McCain is and how he likes him.
84. *Chris Matthews Show* (September 10, 2006) Transcript.
85. Michael Tomasky, "Who is John McCain?" *New York Review of Books* (June 12, 2008).
86. Brock, *Free Ride*, pp. 6-43.
87. Many authors provide examples of his anger directed at Arizona *Republic Reporters* and others. Some of the most damaging are in Schecter, *The Real McCain*, pp. 45, 49-50. On the floor of the Senate he has told Senator Kennedy to "shut up" and called his fellow Republican senators "shithead," "fuckin jerk," and "asshole." When his wife playfully ran her hand through his hair, saying it was thinning, he mocked her makeup and called her a "cunt." At a 2006 strategy session with two new Republican congressmen he addressed them as "boy," resulting in a promise to kick "his old ass" if he said "boy" again." McCain lunged at the younger men and punches were thrown, before they were pulled apart. He called to demand an apology, which was not forthcoming. He then became friends with the congressman. McCain, *Fighting*, p. 63, responded to "some nasty little opposition research from my failed marriage" with the in-your-face promise to "personally beat the shit out of you" if he ever did anything to harm anyone in his family again.
88. Welch, *Myth*, p. 46.
89. Karaagac, *McCain*, p. 52.
90. Obama, *Dreams*, pp. 100-101.
91. Obama, *Dreams*, p. 14.

92. Obama, *Dreams*, p. 18.
93. Obama, *Dreams*, pp. 18, 19, 21.
94. Amanda Ripley, "The Story of Barack Obama's Mother," *Time Magazine* (April 9, 2008). The family also lived in an apartment in Seattle proper for a year, prior to the four years in a house on Mercer Island.
95. Nicole Brodeur, "Memories of Obama's Mother," *Seattle Times* (February 5, 2008).
96. Brodeur, "Obama's Mother."
97. Obama, *Dreams*, p. 21.
98. Obama, *Dreams*, pp. 123-25. She took her reluctant children to see the movie while visiting Barack in New York City. They found it to be "kind of corny. Just Mom's style."
99. Obama, *Dreams*, pp. 9-10, 125-26.
100. Brodeur, "Obama's Mother."
101. Jerome R. Corsi, "Revealed: Obama's Dad Polygamist, Alcoholic Parent Not Hero Portrayed in *Dreams from My Father*" *WorldNetDaily* (March 25, 2008).
102. Ripley, "Story."
103. Kirsten Scharnberg and Kim Barker, "Shaped by Different Worlds, an Outsider Found Ways to Fit in: The Not-so-simple Story of Barack Obama's Youth" *Chicago Tribune* (March 25, 2007).
104. Obama, *Dreams*, pp. 42, 47-48.
105. Obama, *Dreams*, p. 49.
106. Todd Purdham, "Raising Obama," *Vanity Fair* (March 2008). When Obama finally had enough delegates on June 3 to assure the Democratic nomination, he said he owed it all to his grandmother who put everything she had into him.
107. Carlyn Tani, "A Kid Called Barry Barack Obama '79," *Ponahou News* (Spring 2007).
108. Serge F. Kovaleski, "Old Friends Say Drugs Played Bit Part in Obama's Young Life." *New York Times* (February 8, 2008); Scharnberg, "Different Worlds."
109. Ripley, "Story."
110. Obama, *Dreams*, pp. 25, 63.
111. Wilson, *Obama*, p. iv.
112. Obama, *Dreams*, pp. 50, 10, 8.
113. Obama, *Dreams*, pp. 68, 5.
114. Ripley, "Story."
115. Jodi Kantor, "In Law School, Obama Found Political Voice," *New York Times* (January 28, 2007).
116. Obama, *Dreams*, pp. 27, 29-30. The story of the man is challenged by others who established there was no such article in *Life* magazine. Scharnberg, "Different Worlds." When this was pointed out to him, Obama suggested another magazine. and when the article could not be found there he thought it might be in *Ebony*. Where he read it is quite secondary to its content.
117. Obama, *Dreams*, pp. 60-61, xv. For a discussion of white racism see Joel Kovel, *White Racism: A Psychohistory* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 67.
118. Janny Scott, "The Story of Obama Written by Obama," *New York Times* (May 18, 2008).
119. Obama, *Dreams*, pp. 79, 82.

120. Scharnberg, "Different Worlds." Keith Kakugawa, who served seven years in California jails for cocaine possession and burglary, is far from the only friend questioning Obama's depiction of his concerns of the period.
121. Obama, *Dreams*, pp. xvi, 126, 87-91.
122. Obama, *Dreams*, pp. 207-222, 299-430, especially 222, 342-43. His third wife thought him "crazy."
123. Wilson, *Obama*, p. 167.
124. Richard Wolffe, "Barack's Rock," *Newsweek* (February 16, 2008). Michelle LaVaughn Robinson Obama is a major influence on her husband who has an intense sense of the discrimination faced by blacks. Her undergraduate thesis at Princeton was "Princeton-Educated Blacks and the Black Community."
125. Ryan Lizza, "Barack Obama's Unlikely Political Education," *The Agitator*, *The New Republic* (March 19, 2007). For a discussion focusing on Obama's political career see Martin Dupuis and Keith Boeckelman, *Barack Obama: The New Face of American Politics* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008).
126. Katharine Q. Seelye and Jeff Zeleny, "Obama, Now on Defensive, Calls 'Bitter' Words Ill-Chosen," *New York Times* (April 13, 2008): 1, 22.
127. Jim Rutenberg and Jeff Zeleny, "The Politics of the Lapel, When It Comes to Obama," *New York Times* (May 15, 2008): A27.
128. Obama, *Dreams*, pp. 128-29, 439, 373.
129. David Mendell, *Obama: From Promise to Power* (NY: Amistad, 2007), p. 9.
130. Gail Collins, "A Victory Plan for Hillary," *New York Times Week in Review* (May 15, 2008).
131. After becoming the presumptive nominee, McCain acknowledged his lack of economic knowledge and then responded with a series of economic speeches mostly repeating Republican policy platitudes. This may be related to his family tradition in which the men, though successful, do not bother much with money.