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The World's "Exceptional" Neighbor:
Comparative Perspectives on American Exceptionalism in Presidential Discourse and the Effects
at Home and Abroad

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines the idea of American exceptionalism from both production and effects perspectives. First, it identifies the distinct ways that U.S. presidents have articulated this idea in major domestic and international speeches. To address these questions it examines how U.S. presidents articulated American exceptionalism in speeches since World War II. Second, it examines the effects of these types of messages, relative to what we might call "non-exceptional" emphases, among the American public. The study draws on social psychological work on national attachment to identify the cognitive dimensions of impressions about America and how these relate to U.S. citizens' interpretations and reactions to messages containing exceptionalism themes. Looking specifically at U.S. citizens helps to uncover whether emphasis on American exceptionalism is distinctly impactful, whether it activates certain cognitive structures embedded in the psyches of U.S. adults, and whether it influences how citizens understand foreign countries or compels them to support specific foreign policies over others. Third, because these messages regularly reach beyond U.S. borders it was important to explore

their reception among international audiences. The present dissertation is the first step in this examination as it explores the impacts of this very American idea on a Mexican student population. Specifically, it examines the effects American exceptionalism messages on Mexican perceptions of their own country, the United States, and on their attitudes regarding policies toward the United States. In sum, the types of exceptionalistic messages presented by presidents and their effects on both domestic and foreign audiences are the foci in this dissertation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| List of Figures | ii |
| List of Tables | iii |
| Acknowledgements | iv |
| Chapter One: National Identity, Exceptionalism, and Political Communication..... | 1 |
| Chapter Two: Research Design | 30 |
| Chapter Three: Invoking American Exceptionalism at Home and Abroad | 50 |
| Chapter Four: Exceptionalism, Presidential Discourse, and the American Mind | 86 |
| Chapter Five: Exceptionalism, Presidential Discourse, and the Mexican Mind | 124 |
| Chapter Six: Insights and Implications | 160 |
| References | 179 |
| Appendix A: Content Analysis Codebook | 188 |
| Appendix B: Content Analysis Code Sheet | 198 |
| Appendix C: Experimental Manipulations for U.S. Study | 200 |
| Appendix D: Experimental Manipulations for Mexico Study | 204 |
| Appendix E: Questionnaire for U.S. Study | 212 |
| Appendix F: Questionnaire for Mexico Study | 216 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure Number | Page |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 3.1 American exceptionalism in domestic and foreign speeches, by president..... | 58 |
| 3.2 Primary exceptionalism with overtly comparative language, by president..... | 64 |
| 3.3 Types of American exceptionalism themes in domestic and foreign speeches.... | 73 |
| 3.4 American exceptionalism by individual presidents in domestic speeches..... | 75 |
| 3.5 American exceptionalism by individual presidents in foreign speeches..... | 77 |

LIST OF TABLES

| Table Number | Page |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 2.1 Total number of domestic and international addresses by presidential term..... | 33 |
| 2.2 National exceptionalism bias measures | 42 |
| 2.3 Measures of global roles for the United States | 43 |
| 2.4 Measures of evaluations of United States and American People..... | 45 |
| 3.1 American exceptionalism invocations, domestic and foreign speeches..... | 56 |
| 3.2 Primary and secondary invocations, domestic and foreign speeches..... | 66 |
| 3.3 Mutual exceptionalism invocations, domestic and foreign speeches..... | 70 |
| 3.4 Primary, secondary, mutual invocations, by political party. | 74 |
| 3.5 Primary, secondary, mutual invocations in times of war and peace | 78 |
| 3.6 Primary, secondary, mutual invocations in times of recession..... | 80 |
| 4.1 Mean scores on national exceptionalism bias, by condition type..... | 98 |
| 4.2 Mean scores on national exceptionalism bias, primary vs all other conditions... | 102 |
| 4.3 Regression predicting national exceptionalism bias, interaction terms | 104 |
| 4.4 Mean scores on global roles for United States, primary vs all other conditions... | 106 |
| 4.5 Regression predicting “global model,” isolating primary exceptionalism | 108 |
| 4.6 Regression predicting “global leader,” isolating primary exceptionalism..... | 110 |
| 4.7 Regression predicting “exempt,” isolating primary exceptionalism..... | 112 |
| 4.8 Mean scores on foreign policy stances, isolating primary exceptionalism..... | 114 |
| 4.9 Mean scores on global roles attitudes, by education level..... | 116 |
| 4.10 Mean scores on global role attitudes, by age range..... | 117 |
| 5.1 Mean scores on national exceptionalism bias, isolating primary exceptionalism | 135 |
| 5.2 Mean scores on national exceptionalism bias, secondary exceptionalism..... | 136 |
| 5.3 Mean scores on evaluations of U.S.A., isolating primary exceptionalism..... | 137 |
| 5.4 Mean scores on evaluations of U.S.A., isolating secondary exceptionalism..... | 138 |
| 5.5 Mean scores on evaluations of U.S.A., by message condition | 139 |
| 5.6 Regression predicting evaluations of U.S.A., interaction terms | 142 |
| 5.7 Mean scores on foreign policy stances for U.S.A., isolating primary/secondary. | 144 |
| 5.8 Mean scores on attitudes about bilateral policies, isolating primary/secondary... | 146 |
| 5.9 Attributions of responsibility for drug violence in Mexico..... | 147 |
| 5.10 Regression predicting attitudes on spreading freedom, interaction terms..... | 150 |
| 5.11 Mean scores on national exceptionalism bias, by political party..... | 153 |

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Chapter One

National Identity, American Exceptionalism, and Political Communication

In the contemporary era, there is something inherently simple, yet imminently stirring about what is commonly referred to as *La Nación*, *A Nação*, or The Nation. Few entities evoke more emotion or loyalty than the nation-state: it provides most peoples around the world with a sense of security and purpose tied to being members of a collective, albeit “imagined,” national community (Anderson, 1983). Furthermore, celebration of “The Nation” has long been a form of communication employed by politicians and governmental administrations to create and maintain a sense of unity among their citizenry. Invocations of the nation, for example, are omnipresent in the United States, where the idea of national greatness is older perhaps than the country itself. For centuries the mythical place called “America” has been invoked by politicians, journalists, and community leaders to convey ideas of greatness and hope, adventure and individual opportunity, and an unwavering, even divine, national spirit (Madsen, 1998). Indeed, government and community leaders throughout U.S. history have painted the United States as not only a great nation, but one that is *greater* than any other country on the globe. This act of rhetorically setting apart the country from its international counterparts continues to be a favored emphasis among American politicians.

In recent years, these communications have become a focus of scholars. Specifically, there is a substantial and growing interest in the concept of *American exceptionalism* and how it has been employed by politicians for political gain in U.S. discourse (Domke & Coe 2010; Edwards & Weiss, 2011; Ivie & Giner 2009; Pease, 2009). This work shows that the notion of America as unique, superior, and even God-favored has been pervasive in the construction and

maintenance of American identity throughout the country's history. However, relatively little research has examined either the potentially *differing ways* that U.S. heads of state have invoked American exceptionalism in their domestic and international communications, or the *effects* of such messages on public audiences both in the United States and abroad. These components are of focus in this dissertation.

Such work is important because scholarship has linked American exceptionalism to a number of pivotal domestic and foreign policies over time. For example, claims about America's special status were used to justify Manifest Destiny (Hietala, 2003), the use of nuclear bombs in Japan, and the Bush Doctrine (Pease, 2009), as well as the creation of the League of Nations (Lipset, 1996), the reconstruction of Japan and Europe after World War II, and the creation of the Peace Corps. Furthermore, because American exceptionalism involves trumpeting the country's status over supposedly "un-exceptional" others, it has been cited as one of the main reasons for rising anti-American sentiment in the world (Kohut & Stokes, 2006). It is important, therefore, to examine such discourse and its potential power in shaping how people, both domestically and internationally, understand the role of the United States in international relations.

This dissertation examines American exceptionalism from three perspectives. First, I identify the distinct ways that U.S. presidents have articulated this idea in major domestic and international speeches. For example, has national exceptionalism been presented differently for domestic or foreign audiences and, if so, are these shifts related to international relations and national challenges? To address these questions I examine how U.S. presidents articulated American exceptionalism in speeches since World War II. Second, I examine the effects of these types of messages, relative to what we might call "non-exceptional" emphases, among the

American public. I draw on social psychological work on national attachment to identify the cognitive dimensions of impressions about America and how these relate to U.S. citizens' interpretations and reactions to messages containing exceptionalism themes. Looking specifically at U.S. citizens helps to uncover whether emphasis on American exceptionalism is distinctly impactful, whether it activates certain cognitive structures embedded in the psyches of U.S. adults, and whether it influences how citizens understand foreign countries or compels them to support specific foreign policies over others. Third, because these messages regularly reach beyond U.S. borders it is important to explore their reception among international audiences. Notably, a claim of American exceptionalism compares all other countries to the United States, potentially spurring a range of international reactions. I wish to examine, therefore, the effects of such an emphasis on America's international image and on attitudes regarding policies toward the United States. In sum, the types of exceptionalistic messages presented by presidents and their effects on both domestic and foreign audiences are the foci in this dissertation. My hope is that this work provides fresh perspectives on an issue that has been underexplored at the domestic level, cross-nationally, and in terms of individual cognition.

Interdisciplinary Perspectives on American Exceptionalism

The idea of "American exceptionalism" has been a vibrant part of the national mythology since before its independence. From the beginning, the idea that the United States is a special place in the world has helped to build national cohesion and social order, as well as international legitimacy. Madsen (1998) suggests that those who left Great Britain did so with hopes to build a "redeemer nation" on the American continent, one that would "save the rest of the world from itself" (p. 2). Puritans further believed that because they established a society that shed perceived

structural flaws of the European styles of government and society, the new country would stand as an example for the world to admire and emulate. This idea was captured in the widely cited words of John Winthrop, then governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, who told his followers, “For we must consider that we shall be as a City upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us” (quoted in McCriskin, 2003, p. 9). This idea that America was special, exemplary, and even God-favored had great appeal to America’s founding politicians as they sought ways to build the country. For example, in his first inaugural address President Thomas Jefferson (1801) put it simply: the United States was “the world’s best hope.”

The concept that the United States might be distinct from all other countries on earth has sprung from more than just Americans, however. For instance, a half a century after the country’s founding French historian Alexis de Toqueville (1840) publicly lauded the qualities that the United States had integrated into its formation. Tocqueville was not an unabashed admirer of the new nation, but he argued that the United States and its citizens were unique in a number of ways—in particular in the egalitarianism and the ways in which U.S. leaders seemed to govern more efficiently than counterparts in Europe. He is credited with coining the term “American exceptionalism” (Lipset, 1996; Madsen, 1998), and his praise of the United States made Toqueville an icon in U.S. mythology. Politicians and academics have regularly used Toqueville’s words as a way of confirming the commonly held view among Americans that it was all but an inevitability that others would eventually take notice of America’s “exceptional” status. This view has reverberated across the U.S. political landscape forever.

The resonance of this idea among the U.S. public is deep and transcends ideological perspectives. In December 2010, the Gallup polling firm found that 80 percent of U.S. adults agreed with the statement that the United States “has a unique character that makes it the greatest

country in the world” (Gallup, 2010). Furthermore, believing in America’s unique grandeur was tied to international attitudes. Specifically, 66 percent said that because of its exceptional status, the United States holds “a special responsibility to be the leading nation in world affairs.” Similarly, Public Religion Research Institute (2010) found strong support for a religion-based form of exceptionalism: almost 60 percent of Americans agreed with the statement “God has granted America a special role in human history.” More recently, a poll by Generation Opportunity (2010) assessed the traction of this concept among America’s young adults. They found that among Americans 18 to 29, a full 56 percent agreed with the idea of “American Exceptionalism.” In short, the idea of America’s special status is widely held among large portions of the U.S. public.

For over two decades, scholars and pundits have attempted to distill this idea so as to test it empirically. That is, American exceptionalism has become the subject of an active debate centered on verifying whether the United States has any number of empirically observable characteristics that make it different from the rest of the globe. Scholarship has compared America with other countries on a wide range of national qualities—including political power (Lipset, 1996; McEvoy-Levy, 2001), economic influence (Hodgson, 2009; Saito, 2010), international cultural impact (Kohut & Stokes, 2006) and athletic performance (Markovits & Hellerman, 2001). This line of inquiry has produced three conclusions. First, some argue that *any* country, not just the United States, can be determined to be exceptional if it gets to select the criteria by which it is compared (Lipset, 1996; Pease, 2009; Shafer 1991). Second, some have suggested that the United States is exceptional in both positive (e.g. foreign aid) and negative (e.g. drug consumption) ways (Lipset, 1996). Finally, others argue that the time of American exceptionalism has passed and that a “changing of the guard” is underway due to increases in

globalization and the rise of other powers such as the European Union and China (Mason, 2009; Zakaria, 2011). However, while some continue to seek ways to prove or disprove American exceptionalism, I suggest that the greatest power of the concept lays elsewhere. What is absent in these studies is that whether the country is proven—or not—to be exceptional, the idea is perpetuated in American political and cultural discourse regardless. In other words, the United States is exceptional in people's minds not because they can prove it, but because after years of having the idea reinforced in their minds (McCrisken, 2003; Pease, 2009), they *believe* it to be so. The process by which this culturally resonant idea is asserted and reinforced in American political discourse—and in particular by U.S. presidents—is of central interest in this study.

Presidential Discourse, Nation Maintenance, and American Exceptionalism

American exceptionalism has always been at the heart of the way that U.S. presidents have sought to bolster the image of their country. This powerful, patriotic idea has been used by U.S. presidents as one of the quintessential tools of nation building and maintenance (Neumann & Coe, 2012). According to Bloom (1990), ideas of national grandeur—or in this case, exceptionalism—are effective tools of nation building and maintenance because the people of a given society actively want to imagine themselves as part of something great. Furthermore, Anderson (1983) argues people actively look to their national leaders to reassure them that they are members of a great and unified country. Scholarship on social identity theory (Tajfel 1981, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) explains that there are two important reasons why nation-states play such a centrally important and symbolic role in people's minds. First, because people understand themselves in relation to the groups to which they belong, they tie their own sense of self-esteem and positive self-image to the national group (Huddy & Khatib, 2007). For example,

it is common for Americans to feel proud as individuals when U.S. teams win in international competitions. If America's image is bolstered, so too is theirs. Second, because their self-image is tied to that of the national group, people seek to evaluate that group in positive ways. For instance, Rivenburgh (2000) found that people go out of their way to disregard or downplay negative characteristics associated with their respective nation. This process of comparison helps people to bolster their already positive image of the national group.

American exceptionalism, therefore, is a particularly powerful type of social comparison because it both paints the country in a positive light *and* positions it above all other countries by comparison. This need to position one's own group hierarchically above other groups stems from what Tajfel and Turner (1986) describe as power-based maneuvering in intergroup comparisons. In the case of international relations, the authors argue that there is a hierarchical structure within the community of countries or national groups. Each nation's status is determined by how it compares to the other national groups. Furthermore, certain groups emerge as being superior to others in the comparative process and this superiority tends to be agreed upon, albeit implicitly, by the groups involved (Tajfel, 1981). For example, from the end of World War II and throughout the latter half of the 20th Century, the United States became widely regarded as *the* global economic and political superpower. Furthermore, according to Bacevich (2008), by 1991 when the Soviet Union had fallen, that global status was all but solidified.

Notably, though, Tajfel (1981) suggests "superior" national groups tend to have a much more tenuous or insecure sense of national identity because they are tasked with perpetually having to protect or perpetuate their standing. Tajfel notes:

A completely secure social identity for a group consensually considered as "superior" is nearly an empirical impossibility. The kind of psychological distinctiveness that would insure their unchallenged superiority must not only be gained; it must also be preserved. And it can only be preserved if social conditions of distinctiveness are carefully

perpetuated, together with the signs and symbols of distinctive status without which the attitudes of complete consensus about “superior” distinctiveness are in danger of disintegrating (p. 278).

With its political, economic, and cultural influence in the world, the United States is therefore both blessed with and challenged by having a “superior” national identity. Because the American people want to believe that their country is exceptional, they are therefore tasked with maintaining that image in the face of constant international competition and challenges. U.S. presidents are at the forefront of this process as they must assert and reassert their country’s exceptional international status to both domestic audiences and ever-watchful citizens in countries around the world.

As the country’s primary diplomat, a U.S. president is also tasked to understand that such a powerful and potentially divisive concept as American exceptionalism might not have as positive effects on citizens abroad as it does on Americans. They are likely, therefore, to take this into account when preparing their speeches for domestic, as opposed to foreign audiences. When addressing a primarily U.S. audience, presidents are likely to view American exceptionalism as being more centrally beneficial to emphasize—and to do so frequently—because it appeals to people’s need to maintain a positive view of their country. The audience itself and their country are directly and positively exalted when the idea is put forward. On the other hand, although it is important for presidents to assert the United States’ relative exceptional status when addressing foreign audiences, Entman (2008) argues that they need to craft the messages in a way that either appeals directly to the foreign audience or that does so in a way that minimalizes the messages conflict with their national culture. Presidents, therefore, would be likely to highlight American exceptionalism less in foreign contexts than when addressing a domestic audience. In other words, because the idea does not have the same resonance with foreign populations as it does in

the United States, U.S. presidents are more likely to be selective about how frequently they assert this idea abroad. I would therefore expect U.S. presidents to highlight American exceptionalism more in general when addressing a domestic audience than when addressing foreign ones (H1).

At the same time, U.S. presidents who emphasize American exceptionalism must also decide *how* to feature the concept and in what circumstances to do so. That is, political leaders must decide what “exceptional” characteristics or perspectives are strategically beneficial to highlight. Specifically, I suggest there are three distinct ways that U.S. presidents might invoke the idea of American exceptionalism. First, presidents can make explicit claims of America’s exceptional status in the world. I call these *primary* themes of American exceptionalism: they highlight America’s exceptional status by referring to it as being the one country that is different, better, or even uniquely favored by God. Second, presidents can articulate American exceptionalism in more implicit ways. I call these *secondary* themes of American exceptionalism: they refer to America’s special place in the world without overt declarations. A final way that presidents infuse this idea in discourse is to claim the United States is exceptional *along with* another “exceptional” country or two. I call this latter incarnation, *mutual* themes of American exceptionalism. Each of these merits significant discussion.

Primary Themes of American Exceptionalism

Research has only begun to examine just how U.S. presidents invoke the idea of American exceptionalism in their public addresses. For instance, Pease (2009) examines how three recent U.S. presidents have employed the idea of American exceptionalism as a way of forging compacts between their administrations and the American public. Specifically, he argues that U.S. presidents have highlighted the idea as a way of forging a “national fantasy” that helps attract public support for their individual policies. Similarly, McCrisken (2003) argues that the

five presidents following the end of the Vietnam war—Gerald Ford to Bill Clinton—emphasized American exceptionalism as a way of attempting to restore America’s image, both in the minds of Americans and abroad. More recently, Neumann and Coe (2012) examined a broad conception of the idea of American exceptionalism in State of the Union addresses. Specifically, the authors defined American exceptionalism as the invocation of the United States, or the idea of America, in political speeches. Furthermore, they examined how U.S. presidents positioned the United States in relation to other countries in regards to their position in the world order or their relationship to the United States as representative of what they call “exceptionalist tendencies” (pp. 20). What is absent in this research, however, has been an examination of the differing ways that U.S. presidents characterize the United States as actually being exceptional, or in other words, the “exception” in the international community.

Scholarship has discussed the idea of American exceptionalism in a number of distinct ways; however, there are three common thematic categories in which the explicit idea of America as exceptional is present in literature. These *primary* themes of American exceptionalism explicitly invoke the idea that the United States is the one, exceptional country of the international community of countries. These themes are neither subtle nor left to interpretation. They all overtly paint the United States as a comparatively exceptional country. The first primary theme of American exceptionalism represents the core of the idea of American exceptionalism and is characterized by the idea that the United States is a *singular* country that is simply distinct from every other country on the globe. According to Heitala (2003), this idea of American uniqueness or singularity comes, in part, from the fact that the United States considered itself to be the first “new nation” because it was the first colony to gain independence. This meant that as a nation newly separate from European colonial powers, with a

new style of government, the United States was simply qualitatively different—and therefore unique—from the rest of the countries of the world (Heitala, 2003; Lipset, 1996). This idea was further reified by the country's more rapid development than other former colonies and its relatively rapid ascension in international relations (Madsen, 1998). This idea that the United States was unique, different, or singular has since permeated American political discourse.

From the perspective of American *singularity*, therefore, the country is placed on a set-apart pedestal where it is glorified for reasons and qualities that it alone possesses. The singular theme of American exceptionalism can focus on aspects of the country, such as the character of the people, forms of government, founding principles, geographic area, economic power, and political influence in the world (Shafer, 1991). Such a perspective encourages people to see their country as distinct or set apart when comparing it to all other countries in the world (Tajfel, 1981). For example, a president might suggest that the American people or their government are “different” in some important ways from those around the world. Another manifestation can be found when presidents paint the United States as the only place in the world where certain phenomena occur. For example, Barack Obama in his 2008 presidential campaign regularly declared that “In no other country on earth is my story even possible” suggesting that *only* in America could someone with his history become president (Obama, 2008). Furthermore, this perspective—which suggests that the nation is distinct, unique, and singular in the world—is the foundation of all types of American exceptionalism rhetoric, including the following two themes.

The primary themes of American exceptionalism do commonly go farther, though, with a form of social comparison that explicitly defines the United States as *superior* to all other countries. This perspective characterizes everything associated with the United States—such as the people, government and political principles—as being fundamentally better, or grander, or

“more” by comparison with the rest of the world. According to Shafer (1991), when the United States emerged from World War II as a globally hegemonic power, many Americans began to think about their country as being ahead or above the rest of the world. This was further exacerbated by the fact that U.S. political leaders publicly lauded the United States as being superior to Russia, the only other global hegemon throughout the Cold War. Lipset (1991) adds that while the idea of American superiority represents, in many cases, an over-exaggeration of the core idea of American singularity or uniqueness, it is a comparative judgment that is popularly employed in the American discourse nonetheless. For example, people in all ranks in American society often refer to the United States as “the greatest country in the world.” U.S. presidents, often employ this idea in creative ways. For instance, President Ronald Reagan (1981) declared that the American people “have fought harder, paid a higher price for freedom, and done more to advance the dignity of mankind than any people who ever lived.” This perspective suggests, explicitly, that all other countries are inferior to the United States.

The final primary theme of American exceptionalism moves the United States into religious terrain. This component suggests the country has been chosen or favored by God or some other divine power. In this view, the United States is unique and is perhaps better than all other countries because it has been assigned a special “favored” status on earth by a divine being. According to Madsen (1998), the categorization of the United States as a divinely “elect nation” that was going to be the salvation of the rest of the world has been fused with American national identity since the country’s historic beginnings. Furthermore, the author argues the idea of America’s divine selection have grown and flourished in U.S. political and cultural discourses throughout American history. For example, when President William McKinley (1898) addressed Congress about the Spanish American War, he said, “[W]e are constantly reminded of our

obligations to the Divine Master for His watchful care over us and His safe guidance, for which the nation makes reverent acknowledgment and offers humble prayer for the continuance of His favor.” This element of exceptionalism provides Americans with the opportunity to assign their country a supreme status based solely on transcendent belief, rather than on tangible, terrestrial indicators. Furthermore, in assigning their country a positive and otherworldly status, citizens associate such transcendent sensibilities with their self-images. People gain a sense of being individually blessed from their belief that their country has been chosen by a higher power.

These primary themes of American exceptionalism are likely to resonate favorably with the U.S. public because they all directly bolster the image of the national group. This does not mean, however, that American presidents will view all three of the themes to be equally valuable in political speeches: certain themes are likely to be more culturally resonant and politically strategic than others. Although all three themes are likely to be prominent in presidential speeches, I expect presidents when addressing domestic audiences to favor the *superior* theme above the *singular* and *God-favored* themes. The *superior* theme in particular works to paint the United States and the American people in an unequivocally positive light—as better than all other countries in the world. The other two themes—singular and God-favored—are less likely to be seen as having the same appeal to the audience’s national identities. On the one hand, the *singular* theme does not necessarily place the United States in a hierarchically positive position internationally as does the *superior* theme. Although this still reinforces the country’s positive image, it leaves open the possibility that other countries can be evaluated as comparably unique and therefore does not reify the people’s ideal image of the United States as the world’s *only* exceptional country (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). On the other hand, the *God-favored* theme in particular has the potential of being more domestically divisive than the other two. Scholars

(Domke, 2004; Domke & Coe, 2010) suggest that Americans of lesser religiosity or from non-Christian orientations are more likely to have negative reactions to *God-favored* themes than to other strands.

When addressing foreign audiences, in contrast, U.S. presidents are likely to carefully assert their country's exceptional status. When speaking abroad they are faced with the distinct challenge of both asserting American exceptionalism while at the same time maintaining a tone that does not directly threaten the audiences they are addressing. Highlighting American exceptionalism serves to both reaffirm America's superior status to the world and to appease an ever-watchful audience at home, but doing so in an overtly explicit manner is likely to evoke harsher international reactions. U.S. presidents, therefore, seem less likely in general to employ overt expressions of American exceptionalism when addressing foreign, as opposed to domestic, audiences. When deciding to employ one of the primary themes of American exceptionalism, U.S. presidents are likely to highlight those themes that are less overtly aggressive. The theme of American *singularity* or uniqueness is more likely to be seen as less divisive because, again, it leaves room in the social comparison for other countries to also be considered unique or singular. In other words, although the *singular* theme is an active social comparison, it is not necessarily one that negatively impacts other national groups. The other two themes—the *superior* and *God-favored* themes—do, in contrast, necessarily place all other countries in an inferior international position. The *superior* and *God-favored* themes, therefore, are likely to be strategically left out of speeches for foreign audiences, specifically because such themes can be seen as menacing or potentially divisive when communicated to foreign audiences. According to Hogg & Abrams (1988) foreign audiences are likely to see this type of aggressive social comparison as an overt

threat to the image of their own country and therefore are more likely to have adverse reactions to such rhetoric. In light of these perspectives I offer the following hypothesis:

H2: U.S. presidents will be more likely to favor the *superior* theme of American exceptionalism over all other themes when addressing a domestic audience and the *singular* theme when addressing foreign audiences.

Another tactic that U.S. presidents can employ when addressing foreign audiences is to refrain from using *overtly* comparative language when invoking a primary theme of American exceptionalism. Again, all three primary themes of American exceptionalism are inherently comparative, to be clear. Categorizing the United States as singular, superior, or God-favored directly places the country in a special or hierarchically superior position in relation to all other countries on earth. Such language—albeit perhaps largely innocuous at home—is likely to be perceived by people in other countries as unnecessarily boastful and undiplomatic. There are ways, however, in which U.S. presidents can make this comparison less emphatic when invoking this culturally powerful idea. Specifically, a U.S. president might choose to invoke the idea of America’s exceptional status without making mention of any other country, or group of countries, in the process. For instance, a president may say, “The United States is the greatest country,” but do so without adding “of all the countries on earth.” By omitting the overt comparison, U.S. presidents may be perceived as being more diplomatic. In light of these perspectives, I offer the following hypothesis:

H3: U.S. presidents will be more likely to employ directly comparative language when highlighting American exceptionalism in addresses to domestic audiences than ones to foreign ones.

Secondary Themes of American Exceptionalism

The secondary themes of American exceptionalism that U.S. presidents employ are more implicit in their approach. These themes point to the country's exceptional status, but do so without explicitly painting the United States as singular, superior, or God-favored. Specifically, Neumann and Coe (2012) defined these themes as ones that point to the United States' exceptional relationship to the rest of the world by referring to it as the global leader, as a model that the rest of the world should follow, or as a country that is exempt from the same rules that the rest of the world follows. In other words, these themes represent the global roles that individuals might expect the world's exceptional country to take.¹ These secondary themes of American exceptionalism, therefore, are likely to be very common in a president's repertoire when addressing a domestic audience. Specifically, in these cases I expect U.S. presidents to employ these secondary themes of American exceptionalism in a similar amount and fashion as they do the primary themes. In contrast, I expect the opposite to occur when speaking to foreign audiences. Specifically, U.S. presidents should be more likely to highlight the secondary themes than the primary themes when addressing foreign audiences. This is because the secondary themes are likely to be perceived as less aggressive toward foreign audiences. By highlighting these themes, U.S. presidents can claim the country's exceptional standing in the world without making an explicit social comparison with any other country in general, and in particular the one being addressed. By opting for these less explicitly comparative themes, presidents can assert their country's exceptional status without sounding overly pompous or self-aggrandizing to their foreign audiences. In light of these perspectives, I offer the following hypothesis:

¹ It merits noting that these are "conclusions" that presidents and American audiences are likely to make if they believe in the exceptional status of their country. These conclusions, therefore, might manifest both in presidential speeches and the attitudes held by the American people. Furthermore, these conclusions are also centrally important when examining the effects that these communications might have on both domestic and foreign audiences.

H4: U.S. presidents will be more likely to employ secondary themes of American exceptionalism than primary ones when addressing foreign audiences.

Mutual Exceptionalism

In my focus on presidential speeches over time, I also have identified a third way in which U.S. presidents affirm their country's exceptional status. This exceptionalism tactic is what I call *mutual exceptionalism*, and involves characterizing another country as being exceptional in its own right as a way of paving the way to asserting America's exceptional status at the same time. In other words, mutual exceptionalism elevates another country to the level of the United States so that both can be spoken about at a singular or superior level. One example of this tactic would be if a U.S. president were speaking to an audience in India, he might choose to refer to the United States and India jointly as "the world's two most powerful democracies." For example, President Bill Clinton in a 1996 speech to the Japanese Diet said these countries were "the world's two largest economies and two of its strongest democracies." Such a rhetorical move placed Japan in an elevated status, while safeguarding the United States' exceptional status. Such a tactic has a place in domestic speeches—for example, when referring to close rivals such as the Soviet Union during the Cold War—but U.S. presidents seem more likely to employ this tactic in foreign speeches. Specifically, in a domestic context, mutual exceptionalism is likely to be less favored because it does not exclusively exceptionalize the United States like the other types of exceptionalism. This emphasis, therefore, is more suited for appealing specifically to foreign audiences because it works to bolster their own sense of national identity, while safeguarding the United States' own exceptional self-image. In light of these perspectives, I offer the following hypotheses:

H4: U.S. presidents will be more likely to employ *mutual exceptionalism* when addressing foreign audiences than when addressing U.S. ones.

Impacts At Home and Abroad

Considering the seeming cultural potency of American exceptionalism in political speeches, it is important to explore how this idea may shape public understanding of the United States in relation to the world. Specifically, I am interested in the effects of four distinct political communications involving variations on American exceptionalism.

The first is a combination of the three primary American exceptionalism themes—that the United States is *singular*, *superior*, and *God-favored*. For example, this approach includes invocations of the United States as being “the greatest country on earth” or “the world’s only hope for peace.” Such messages directly compare the United States to the rest of the world. The second type includes invocations of secondary themes of American exceptionalism—that the United States is the global leader, a model, or exempt from the rules that the rest of the international community follows. For example, this approach includes references to the United States as being a “global leader,” “leading the world,” or being an example that the rest of the world should follow. The third type includes invocations of *mutual exceptionalism*—which seek to affirm the exceptional status of the United States through claims of mutual exceptionalism for other countries. For example, this approach might equate the United States with Mexico and refer to “the two greatest countries on earth.” I contrasted the impact of these three emphases with what I call *non-exceptional messages* that discuss the United States but do so without favorably comparing it, directly or indirectly, with any other country. For example, a president might say that the United States is a “great” country without having to compare it with others by

calling it “the greatest” or “greater.” These types of messages are widely employed by presidents in national and international speeches and have the potential of eliciting responses that are distinct from exceptionalistic claims. In the following section I address the potential effects of these four types of messages on both American audiences and foreign audiences.

National Exceptionalism Bias and Inter-group Evaluations

I am interested in the potential influences that the distinct message types might exert on a cognitive concept that I call “national exceptionalism bias.” A national exceptionalism bias couples the belief that one’s own country is exceptional (e.g., *unique, superior, or God-favored*) with the idea that all other countries are *not* exceptional by comparison. People who exhibit this cognitive outlook both view one’s own country as superior or exceptional and view other countries as outright inferior or unexceptional. Kinder and Kam (2009) argue that such biases can manifest in varying degrees. On the one hand, a strong national exceptionalism bias is one in which people exhibit strong positive evaluations of their own national group coupled with a strong denigration of other groups. In contrast, a weaker national exceptionalism bias is one in which people do not feel the need to outright *negatively* evaluate other national groups in order to maintain a positive image of their own. In these cases, as long as their own group is painted in a more positive light than all others, there is no need to directly criticize or de-exceptionalize other national groups. Because their national group’s image is not threatened by the comparative equation, there is no need to view other groups as inferior or less exceptional by comparison. Finally, the weakest level of national exceptionalism bias is one in which individuals reject both the idea of national superiority as well as that of the relative inferiority of other national groups. These relative levels of national exceptionalism bias are of interest to me.

In particular, I think that a national exceptionalism bias may be spurred by political communications that make those very ideas more salient in people's minds. For example, a stronger national exceptionalism bias seems more likely to be spurred when other national groups are brought into the comparative evaluation (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). People might be more willing to negatively evaluate other national groups when those groups are directly linked to one's evaluation of their own country. I would, therefore, expect messages containing some form of comparison to spur a stronger national exceptionalism bias overall in Americans than messages that do not cue any sort of comparison in people's minds. Messages that contain *primary*, *secondary*, or *mutual* exceptionalism themes—which are inherently comparative—are more likely to cue people to think in comparative terms, eliciting a stronger national exceptionalism bias. Because these themes explicitly place the United States in positions of relative preeminence over other countries, they seem likely to spur imbalanced evaluations in the minds of the American public. In contrast, messages that are *non-exceptional*—that is, they do not overtly paint other national groups in an inferior light—should not spur as strong of a national exceptionalism bias. Because the message does not invoke an aggressive comparison, U.S. audiences are likely to arrive at a favorable evaluation of their own national group in a positive, but not strongly hierarchical, manner.

At the same time, I expect one of these comparison messages to more substantially impact American audiences. I expect that messages containing *mutual* exceptionalism themes to spur a much stronger national exceptionalism bias in U.S. audiences than messages containing straightforward American exceptionalism themes. It may seem counterintuitive to expect messages which place the United States above all other countries to spur a weaker exceptionalism bias than messages which place it on the same level as others. But I suggest that

messages with *mutual exceptionalism* themes are more likely to be perceived by American audience members as threatening to their own desire, or even need, to view their country as singularly exceptional. Specifically, Bloom (1990) argues that the level of a country's perceived prestige is closely linked to citizens' own sense of national pride and that when this level of prestige is challenged in any way, members of the national group can react in more negative ways. Because this perspective places the United States on an even ground with another country or countries in the social comparison, it does not work to protect and reaffirm America's status as the world's one superior country. As a result, American audience members are more likely to feel the need to place cognitive distance between their country and others. In contrast, people are likely to feel that the exceptional image of their country is less threatened by messages that highlight explicit American exceptionalism themes. This is likely because such messages do much of the groundwork of national stratification for American audiences. In light of these perspectives, I offer the following expectations:

H5: Messages highlighting *primary*, *secondary* or *mutual exceptionalism* themes will spur a stronger national exceptionalism bias in U.S. respondents than will *non-exceptionalism messages*.

H6: Messages highlighting *mutual exceptionalism* themes will spur a stronger national exceptionalism bias in U.S. respondents than will *primary* or *secondary* American exceptionalism messages.

For members of foreign national groups, in contrast, responses to these political communications are likely to be quite different. Messages that alone champion American exceptionalism are likely to be perceived by foreign group members as much more aggressive, and potentially threatening toward the positive image they hold of their own country, and

therefore, to their country's perceived level of prestige (Bloom, 1990) or hierarchical status (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) in the international community. Because such emphases are likely to be understood as characterizing their own country as inferior by comparison, they will likely put foreign group members on the defensive. Primary and secondary American exceptionalism emphases, therefore, are more likely to provoke higher levels of national exceptionalism bias in foreign group members than the other two types of messages.

Specifically, people will tend to seek ways to defend the threatened image of their country by praising it as being "exceptional" over all other countries. Additionally, to further defend their country's image, they might also feel it necessary to direct their negative feelings back at the United States and the American people. In other words, it might be cognitively useful for them to denigrate America's positive international image in particular because they are the source of the message.

In contrast, *mutual exceptionalism* messages are more likely to elicit more positive reactions overall. Because these messages jointly elevate the United States and the other country to similarly "exceptional" levels, foreign group members are less likely to feel the threat to their country's image. It is therefore likely that they will seek ways to elevate the exceptional status of their country, but not in a way that "de-exceptionalizes" either other countries in general *or* the United States in particular. Finally, messages that do not carry any American exceptionalism component are likely to provoke more neutral reactions overall. These messages will neither spur as strong of a need for foreign group members to overtly exceptionalize their own country, nor a need to de-exceptionalize others by comparison. With all this in mind, I offer the following two hypotheses:

H7: Messages with *primary* or *secondary* American exceptionalism themes will spur a stronger national exceptionalism bias among foreign respondents than will *mutual exceptionalism* or *non-exceptionalism* messages.

H8: Messages with *mutual exceptionalism* and *non-exceptionalism* themes will spur more positive attitudes toward the United States than those with *primary* and *secondary* American exceptionalism themes.

American Exceptionalism and Global Attitudes

In believing or least claiming that one's country is unique from all others, superior to them, or specially favored by a higher power—or any combination of the three—Americans might also ultimately conclude that the United States has a special, unique *set of roles* in the world. Similar to the secondary themes of American exceptionalism, this set of global roles is derived from Neumann and Coe's (2012) "exceptionalism tendencies" or the conclusions likely to be spurred by a belief in American exceptionalism. Specifically, we can consider three basic templates that Americans with a strong sense of national exceptionalism might use for imagining the United States' role in the world: as a model, a leader, and an exception. The first contends that the country should stand as a *model* to the rest of the world to emulate. The second charges that the United States should actively *lead* the rest of the world. Finally, the third posits that the United States should be *exempt* from the international rules that other countries have to follow. Each of these merits discussion.

The first potential role is that because of its exceptional status, the United States is a model for the rest of the world. Because America is thought to be unique from, and perhaps superior to, all other countries, it is an almost inevitable conclusion that such an anomalously positive force in the world should be admired and aspired to by all other countries. In this view,

the United States is heading on the “right”—or even *righteous*—track not only for its own good, but for the rest of the world to learn from (Madsen, 1998). For example, it is common in the American mindset to make a causal connection between the belief that the United States has the world’s best form of democracy and the belief that the rest of the world should adopt such a system. This idea has been threaded throughout American history. For instance, President Abraham Lincoln (1862), over half a century after countries such as Mexico and Spain abolished slavery, emphasized American exceptionalism to frame U.S. abolition as globally exemplary: “We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last best hope of earth... The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just—a way which if followed the world will forever applaud and God must forever bless.” The United States was not the first country to abolish slavery, but for Lincoln it nonetheless was the global ideal. In short, any quality that can be found to be exceptional in the United States—from its people and its government to its philosophical principles, economic system, and its pop culture media products—stands, in turn, as a model for the rest of the world.

The second role concludes that the United States should not only stand as a global model, but it should guide or lead the world on issues of international importance. According to Edwards and Weiss (2012), the idea that United States should lead the world is intrinsic in a number of major U.S. foreign policy decisions such as the country’s engagement in the wars in Vietnam and Iraq. From this viewpoint, because the United States already stands as the world’s exemplary power, unique in the world and superior to all others, it should play a role much more impactful than that of a simple nation-state. According to McCriskin (2003), in this view the United States is not only a country, but a global power imbued with the special responsibility as the steward for the international community. Examples can include policing other nation-states’ internal affairs, maintaining peace between warring countries, setting international policies, and

influencing countries to sign treaties. Furthermore, such a view is often incongruous with highly cooperative, or multilateral, policies such as ceding power to the United Nations or following other countries such as France when they take the lead on pushing innovative international policies. This implication gained significant meaning in the 1950s when the United States emerged from World War II as a global economic and political power. President Dwight Eisenhower affirmed America's special role in the world in 1953 when he declared that the end of the war era—culminated by the Korean War—meant that “destiny [had] laid upon our country the responsibility of the free world's leadership.” Three decades later following the Soviet Union's fall, President Bill Clinton (1997) said America was no longer only the greatest country on earth, it had become the world's “indispensable nation.” From this viewpoint, the United States' leadership is integral to the future welfare of the world.

A third role is that because of its special place in the world, the United States should also enjoy special privileges or exemptions. The United States in this perspective cannot be considered to be the same type of political entity as the rest of the countries on earth: it is the exception to the (international) rule. In practice, according to Pease (2009), this means that because the United States is perceived to have a special mission on earth that it shares with no other country, many conclude that it should not be hindered by the rules and laws that govern other countries in the world. Recent examples of this perspective can be found in the nation's refusal to participate in widely supported international treaties such as the Kyoto Protocol, its unwillingness to extradite any former leader to be tried in the International Criminal Court, and George W. Bush's decision to skirt the United Nations Security Council in declaring war on Iraq in 2003 (Bacevich, 2008). In this view, American exceptionalism is a basis to conclude that the United States is free from the rule or supervision of important international institutions.

U.S. audiences are likely to be generally supportive of these perspectives on America's role in the world. It is also likely, however, that distinct types of political messages may spur different levels of support. I expect messages with primary or secondary American exceptionalism themes to be more likely to elicit higher levels of support for all three of these global roles. These two types of messages should spur stronger support among Americans for the ideas that the United States should stand as a *model* for the rest of the world to emulate, that it should be the world's *leader* in international affairs, or that it should be *exempt* from the rules that other countries have to follow and that it should follow its own rules on the international stage. Mutual exceptionalism and non-exceptionalism messages, in contrast, do not overtly position the United States as necessarily different or unique "stock" from the rest of the world. The connection between such a perspective and the position that the United States should have special or unique privileges, therefore, is not as strong as it is in claims of American exceptionalism. In light of these perspectives, I offer the following expectation:

H9: Messages with *primary* and *secondary* American exceptionalism themes will spur stronger support among Americans than messages of *mutual exceptionalism* and *non-exceptionalism* for the ideas that the United States should stand as a *model*, a global *leader*, or *exempt* from international rules and institutions.

Such patterns, however, are not likely to be the same for foreign audiences. First of all, I expect lower overall foreign support for these three global roles than from American audiences. Even so, these three political messages are likely to spur differences in foreign audience support for the roles for America in the world. Among these individuals, I expect messages with primary or secondary American exceptionalism themes to spur lower levels of support for all three of the global roles than will mutual exceptionalism and non-exceptionalism messages. Because both

primary and secondary American exceptionalism messages characterize all other countries as being comparatively below or apart from the United States, they are more likely to spur the most negative reactions from foreign audience members. For this reason, I would expect for these groups to engage in tactics to protect their own sense of national pride by pushing back at the United States (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). I expect that when exposed to these messages, foreign audiences will attempt to cognitively level the playing field between their country and the United States by arguing against any idea that the United States should be treated differently than any other country. Messages that paint the United States as superior in contrast to the rest of the world might also provoke foreigners to de-exceptionalise the United States so that their own country may again be equal by comparison. I offer, then, the following expectations:

H10: Messages with *mutual exceptionalism* and *non-exceptionalism* themes will spur stronger support among foreigners than messages with *primary* or *secondary* American exceptionalism themes for the ideas that the United States should stand as a model, a global leader, or exempt from international rules and institutions.

Chapter Outline

This dissertation examines these predictions by focusing on (a) the way presidents have emphasized the idea of American exceptionalism, (b) the impact that this idea has on a U.S. public who, for the most part, is deeply invested in protecting this “exceptional” mythology, and (c) how others outside the United States understand and interact with America. This research therefore provides an *inter-national* perspective on a concept that has traditionally been examined from domestic and comparative standpoints. This first chapter provided the conceptual framework for this research. I discussed the ways in which American presidents have perhaps

emphasized exceptionalism throughout U.S. history in speeches given both in the United States and abroad, and sought to explain the national importance of this concept through the concept of social comparison. These theoretical perspectives, in turn, provided the foundation for my research hypotheses.

In Chapter Two I detail the two distinct methodological approaches that I employed in this research. I first provide the specific details of a content analysis of presidential speeches — including the selection criteria for speeches chosen, how each concept was coded, and intercoder reliability scores. I then discuss the details of the message experiments conducted in the United States and abroad, including the criteria used for selecting sample populations, the concepts operationalized and measured in the questionnaire, and the design of the distinct message conditions. I then turn to the data chapters.

Chapter Three presents results from the content analysis of U.S. presidential speeches in the United States and abroad. This analysis tracks how U.S. presidents have invoked the idea of American exceptionalism 1933 to 2012. The purpose of this analysis is to illustrate which types of these invocations have been highlighted more frequently in speeches for American audiences, in what contexts they have been emphasized, and if these trends have changed over time. Then, the analysis explores whether the trends are different when U.S. presidents deliver speeches to foreign audiences. The findings of this chapter contribute to scholarship on patriotic discourse and strategic public diplomacy.

Chapter Four presents results from a message experiment conducted with a U.S. audience. This analysis examines how different messages of American exceptionalism impact U.S. adults. Specifically, it explores the influence of these messages on people's relative understanding of their country in comparison to the rest of the world and their explicit attitudes

toward other countries. Furthermore, it examines the impact that these messages have on the roles that American audiences believe the United States should play in global affairs. The findings in this chapter provide an in-depth look into how Americans cognitively process both the idea of—and messages containing distinct themes of—American exceptionalism.

Chapter Five presents results of a similar message experiment conducted in Mexico. This chapter presents an analysis of the impact of different political messages on how people in Mexico construct an “exceptional” understanding of their own country in relation to the rest of the world. This chapter takes the further step of also examining how these messages impact the attitudes held by people in this North American country toward the United States. Ultimately, the findings illustrate the impacts of U.S. political messages with transnational reach on the country’s international image.

Finally, in Chapter Six I provide a detailed interpretation of the results. I discuss the findings in relation to relevant scholarship and the larger social conversation about American exceptionalism in contemporary U.S. and international politics. Finally, I address the limitations of this research and suggest future scholarship that may address these limitations and, more importantly, propel the research program forward.

Chapter Two

Research Design

There are three data components in the dissertation, designed to examine (a) the emphasis on American exceptionalism themes in presidential addresses and (b) the impact of such emphases on how people, at home and abroad, understand the United States and its relationship with the rest of the world. Put another way, I examined both how these messages have been highlighted and how they matter to audiences who are exposed to them. In the first stage of the dissertation, I conducted a content analysis of major presidential speeches to examine whether and how U.S. presidents articulated American exceptionalism themes in the modern era. I examined major speeches delivered by U.S. presidents to domestic and foreign audiences to identify their approaches to this concept. In the second stage I focused on the effects of American exceptionalism themes on the ways that U.S. adults imagine their country in relation to the rest of the world. Specifically, I conducted an experiment in which respondents were exposed to different news messages containing variations on American exceptionalism as well as non-exceptionalism emphasis. In the final part I employed a similar experimental design as with the U.S. respondents, but implemented it in Mexico. By employing the same experimental design for the two populations I examined the effects of these messages in a cross-national comparative manner. I address each stage in detail in the following sections.

American Exceptionalism Themes: Content Analysis

The first part of the dissertation is a content analysis focused on examining how American exceptionalism themes have been invoked in major presidential speeches delivered to

(a) domestic audiences and (b) foreign audiences. The method of content analysis has been a part of communication research for decades. It was created to gain an overarching understanding of the trends in large swaths of communications that were available in the post-World War II era (Berelson 1952). Holsti (1969) adds that because communication is at the heart of every society as well as in interactions around the world, the recorded manifestation of these communications (e.g. speeches, news stories) are fundamental to our understanding of human nature and interaction. Further, when examining the political communications of interest in this dissertation, content analysis provides insight into the specific strategies, dispositions, norms or values of the distinct U.S. presidents (Riffe et al. 2005). I used this method, then, to examine how U.S. presidents have invoked the idea of American exceptionalism in their speeches over a long period of time.

The time frame of speeches started with Franklin Delano Roosevelt's first inaugural address in March 1933 and ended with President Barack Obama's State of the Union speech in January 2012. This time frame provided a longitudinal understanding of how presidents have featured—or not—themes of American exceptionalism through times of economic prosperity and strife, war and peace, and before, during, and after pivotal international events. My analysis began with Roosevelt's inauguration for three reasons. First, Roosevelt was the first president to regularly employ mass communication technologies such as radio through which a speech could be broadcast live to a national audience. This meant a speech reached many more eyes and ears beginning with FDR. Second, Roosevelt was the first U.S. president to travel abroad in any significant degree, and subsequently international travel became a mainstay of the diplomatic communications of American presidents. Third, the period of the Roosevelt administration was a key stage at which the United States began to set itself apart from the pack of internationally

influential countries. In sum, then, I examined how presidents in the modern era—when mass media had arrived and the United States’ global footprint was large—employed American exceptionalism as a rhetorical emphasis.

The data consisted of two distinct universes of speeches collected from the American Presidency Project, which is a comprehensive archive of U.S. presidential public communications. The first was comprised of speeches delivered to the U.S. public. These *domestic* speeches offered insight into how U.S. presidents have articulated American exceptionalism in attempting to build and maintain a sense of national unity and collective identity. I adopted Domke and Coe’s (2010) definition of a major presidential address: (1) the speech had to be delivered to the entire nation, (2) the speech had to be broadcast live, and (3) the speech had to address serious national or international topics. This collection of texts, then, included major speeches geared toward informing the American public about issues and events that were deemed important enough by the president to share with a national audience. I ultimately included speeches about national issues or crises, as well as inaugurals, annual State of the Union addresses, farewell addresses, and nomination acceptance speeches among sitting presidents. In total, I collected 363 major domestic speeches by U.S. presidents. Table 2.1 presents a summary of number of domestic speeches per president.

The second universe of texts was major addresses delivered by U.S. presidents to *international* audiences. With such analysis I identified ways in which U.S. presidents have highlighted American exceptionalism to foreign audiences. This included three types of addresses. First, I included speeches delivered by U.S. presidents on foreign soil, almost always to a governmental entity or legislative body. In speeches of this sort U.S. presidents address elite decision-makers of a given foreign country and engage in some of the most direct forms of

public diplomacy. Second, I identified speeches delivered by U.S. presidents at the United Nations general assembly. These speeches are not directed solely at a specific country, but to *all* foreign governments and their publics. Third, I identified opening remarks by U.S. presidents at joint press conferences with foreign leaders, whether they took place abroad or in the United States. These moments are heavily reported by international news organizations—and specifically by journalists whose leader is involved—and thus are another major way in which U.S. presidents communicate with international publics. In total the collection of texts contained 476 international addresses: 69 to foreign legislatures, 43 to the United Nations, and 364 opening remarks of joint press conferences. I summarize the number per president in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: *Total number of domestic and international addresses by presidential term*

| | | Domestic Speeches | Foreign Legislatures | United Nations | Joint Press Conferences |
|------------|-----------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Roosevelt | 1933-1937 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Roosevelt | 1937-1941 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Roosevelt | 1941-1945 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Roosevelt | 1945 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Truman | 1945-1949 | 19 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Truman | 1949-1953 | 21 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Eisenhower | 1953-1957 | 21 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Eisenhower | 1957-1961 | 29 | 8 | 2 | 0 |
| Kennedy | 1961-1963 | 15 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Johnson | 1963-1965 | 7 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Johnson | 1965-1969 | 22 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Nixon | 1969-1973 | 23 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Nixon | 1973-1974 | 15 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Ford | 1974-1977 | 10 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Carter | 1977-1981 | 21 | 6 | 2 | 0 |
| Reagan | 1981-1985 | 23 | 6 | 3 | 0 |
| Reagan | 1985-1989 | 24 | 3 | 4 | 0 |
| HW Bush | 1989-1993 | 23 | 10 | 4 | 46 |
| Clinton | 1993-1997 | 16 | 10 | 4 | 88 |
| Clinton | 1997-2001 | 12 | 8 | 3 | 38 |
| W Bush | 2001-2005 | 22 | 3 | 4 | 63 |
| W Bush | 2005-2009 | 15 | 1 | 4 | 86 |
| Obama | 2009-2012 | 15 | 5 | 3 | 37 |
| Totals | | 363 | 69 | 43 | 364 |

For all of the addresses I employed the same coding scheme. The codebook is contained in Appendix A and the codesheet in Appendix B. The unit of analysis was both the speech and the “invocation” of American exceptionalism. I defined an invocation as any emphasis upon an American exceptionalism theme at any given time in a speech. To be specific, invocations were often full sentences, but also sometimes were sentence fragments or phrases that contained a single references to American exceptionalism. For example, in “I am very proud to be a citizen of the greatest nation on earth,” I coded the phrase “greatest nation on earth” as an invocation. Further, invocations of American exceptionalism were often in close proximity. For example, when Richard Nixon called the United States “the richest and strongest nation on earth,” I coded two invocations of American exceptionalism. I analyzed all texts twice. The first analysis of the texts was used for orientational purposes. Specifically, I sought to first determine just how the theorized themes of American exceptionalism were invoked. This pass through the data allowed me to firm up the theoretically derived themes, while allowing me to identify other manifestations of American exceptionalism. Specifically, I identified *mutual* exceptionalism through this informal coding process. In my final analysis, I coded for the three types of American exceptionalism themes: primary, secondary, and mutual.

Primary themes were explicit invocations of the United States as being *singular*, *superior*, or *God-favored*. For the *singular* exceptionalism invocations, I identified any instance in which a president said America or its people, government, ideas, or founding principles were qualitatively different from the rest of the world. Specifically, I coded invocations as singular when presidents, in reference to the United States, employed terms and phrases such as different, unique, distinct, singular, only, and special. For example, Barack Obama (2011) said that America has a “singular role in human history.” I coded invocations as *superior* when presidents

said the United States or its components were more or better than any other country, or as the best on earth. Specifically, I coded superior invocations as present when presidents, in reference to the United States, employed terms and phrases such as better, best, more, grander, greater, greatest, stronger, and more hard working. For example, I coded the phrase “The United States is the greatest country on earth” as superior exceptionalism. As other examples, Franklin Roosevelt (1943) called the United States the “hope of the world” and Harry Truman (1950) said, “We stand a free and prosperous nation with greater possibilities for the future than any people ever had before in the history of the world.” I coded invocations as *God-favored* when presidents declared the United States or its components as uniquely chosen or favored by a divine power. Notably, to be included in this category, invocations had to explicitly say the United States was divinely connected in a way unlike any other country; invocations that referred to the United States simply as blessed were not sufficient. Thus I did not code the phrase “God bless America” as a form of God-favored exceptionalism. As an example of this category, Harry Truman (1949) said, “Almighty God has set before this Nation the greatest task in the history of mankind, and that He will give us the wisdom and the strength to carry it out.”

Secondary themes of American exceptionalism were expressions that referred to the United States as a *global model*, as a *global leader*, or as *exempt* from international rules. I coded invocations as *global model* when presidents referred to the United States as a model, example, ideal, exemplar, or standard for other countries. For example, on January 25, 2011, Barack Obama said, “America's moral example must always shine for all who yearn for freedom and justice and dignity.” I coded invocations as *global leader* when presidents said the United States was the one country that leads the world in international affairs. Instances of this category included when presidents referred to the United States as a global leader, as leading the world, as

being in charge of world leadership, and as guiding the way for the rest of the world. For example, on January 29, 1991, George H.W. Bush said, “This is the burden of leadership and the strength that has made America the beacon of freedom in a searching world.” Finally, I coded invocations as *exempt* when presidents said the United States was exempt from international rules or organizations like the United Nations. This included references to the United States as following a different code, as being above international law, and as being able to act outside of United Nations restrictions. For example, Bill Clinton (1993) said, “[W]e will often work in partnership with others and through multilateral institutions such as the United Nations. It is in our national interest to do so. But we must not hesitate to act unilaterally when there is a threat to our core interests or to those of our allies.”

Mutual exceptionalism themes were expressions of the United States as being exceptional in conjunction with another country. This occurred in two ways. First, a president sometimes talked about the United States and another country as being exceptional at the same time. For instance, when visiting Japan on April 18, 1996, Bill Clinton referred to the two countries as “the world’s two largest economies and two of its strongest democracies.” Second, I coded invocations as mutual exceptionalism when the United States was described as exceptional before or after the president also placed the other country on an exceptional pedestal. For example, in a speech to the Greek Parliament in 1991, George H. W. Bush said, “[E]very nation must do its duty to preserve freedom and enterprise. America and Greece have *special responsibilities* in this quest—the United States as the world’s *strongest democracy*, Greece as the world’s *first*.”

Next I identified whether each primary invocation was employed in unison with another primary invocation. For instance, in his inaugural address on January 20, 1981 Ronald Reagan

said that Americans had “prospered as no other people on Earth ... because here in this land we unleashed the energy and individual genius of man to a greater extent than has ever been done before.” In this instance I coded all three of the American exceptionalism themes. Then I coded each invocation as employed in connection with another invocation. Specifically, for this category I coded two or more invocations as employed in unison if they were highlighted within two sentences of one another. I chose this distance in the discourse because it constrained the relationship to concepts that are immediately and clearly related. This approach, thus, was a conservative count of connected primary invocations.

Next, I determined whether a primary invocation explicitly compared the United States to others in the world. Specifically, I coded an invocation as being comparative if it explicitly mentioned another party in the comparison. For example, I coded primary themes as explicitly comparative if they specifically mentioned “all other countries on earth” or “the rest of the world,” or included phrases such as “in human history,” “throughout time,” “in the world,” or “of all time.”

Finally, I examined each primary invocation to determine if it was employed in relation to a secondary invocation. Specifically, I coded a primary-secondary connection if a primary invocation seemed to be tied to a secondary theme within two sentences of the invocation. For example, on January 7, 1990, Dwight Eisenhower asserted that “the unparalleled prosperity of our own nation” was part of what was “responsible for position of world leadership to which we have succeeded.” I coded this as a combination of *superior* and *global leadership* invocations.

In addition, I included a number of other important variables in my codesheet. These included each president’s party affiliation, the type of speech (e.g. State of the Union, joint press conference, at the United Nations), as well as the date that each speech was delivered. Overall, I

employed a content analysis to examine both *how* presidents have emphasized these themes in major national and international addresses over the past 80 years and what potential distinctions may exist among presidents.

To assure inter-coder reliability, a fellow graduate student and myself analyzed 10 percent of the universe of articles ($n = 84$). Specifically, I randomly sampled 10 percent of each category of speech (domestic and foreign) for our parallel analysis. Before coding, my colleague and I met on several occasions so that I could train her on the coding procedures. During this training process, we coded a number of speeches together to firm up shared conceptual definitions. After the training process we independently coded the 10 percent sample of speeches. There was a high level of agreement between the coders: types of American exceptionalism invocations (Scott's $\pi = .91$), comparative language ($\pi = .89$), combined use of primary themes ($\pi = .90$), combinations of primary and secondary themes ($\pi = .96$) all were above an acceptable target level. After coding, I produced a full dataset in SPSS format. My final analysis of these data, therefore, was conducted in both SPSS for statistical analysis and Microsoft Excel for percentage calculations and to produce figures and graphs.

Experiments: United States and Mexico

Politicians, civic leaders and citizens from countries around the world are continually exposed to, and grapple with, the notion of American exceptionalism in their relationships with the United States and its people. Because such a concept is not contained within the U.S. borders, research with an international perspective is integral to understanding its importance and impact (Esser & Pfetsch, 2004; Smith & Bond, 1999). With this recognition I made the decision to explore the effects of American exceptionalism messages both in the United States and in an

international context as well. To examine these cross-national perspectives on American exceptionalism, I conducted a split-sample (five ways) message experiment in two countries: United States and Mexico. Specifically, I tested whether emphases on differing American exceptionalism themes exert unique psychological effects among populations in the United States and Mexico. Participants were randomly assigned to one of five conditions. Four of the five conditions contained a news article covering a speech delivered by president Barack Obama, with some of the content of the news article manipulated across conditions.

In the first of these conditions, a news article highlighted the president's emphasis on *primary* American exceptionalism themes in his speech. The article contained a number of invocations of the United States as singular, superior, or God-favored. In the second condition, the article highlighted the president's emphasis on instances of *secondary exceptionalism*. The article contained a number of invocations of the United States as being the global model, global leader, or as exempt from international rules. In the third condition, the article highlighted the president's emphasis on instances of *mutual exceptionalism*. To be specific, the only exceptionalism emphases in the article occurred when another country was elevated at the same time as America. As with the first two conditions, the article included a number of these mutual instances from the president's address. In the fourth condition, the article highlighted the president speaking about the United States in relation to the rest of the world, but without the inclusion of any exceptionalism themes. As a result, in this condition presidential language equated the United States as being on an equal level with the rest of the world. The fifth condition served as a control, in which respondents were not exposed to a message. Full versions of each of the articles employed in the United States study are in Appendix C and those employed for the Mexico study are in Appendix D, with versions in both English and Spanish.

The news articles were identical across conditions except for the types of themes that were highlighted. I employed this controlled message experiment design to isolate each type of political message so as to facilitate comparison of potential effects between each condition (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). Because each condition contained the same message with the exception of manipulating the specific type of themes, I was able to identify causal relationships between the themes and their subsequent effects (McDermott, 2002). I employed a post-test-only experimental design, for two reasons. First, I was interested in testing whether the messages provoked international attitudes and not the other way around (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). That is, I did not want pre-test questions to prime respondents to think about the news article in any specific way, which could then affect their post-test answers. Second, with the inclusion of a control group, which received no message stimulus, I was able to obtain a sort of quasi pre-test measurement of the groups receiving the experimental stimulus. In short, I employed this experimental design to identify the effects that distinct emphases on American exceptionalism have on domestic and international audiences.

After reading the news articles, respondents were asked to answer a series of questions about their impressions of various facets of national exceptionalism, of other countries, and of America's role in the world. As a final step, respondents were asked to answer a series of demographic questions. Each component is discussed at length below.

The first battery of questions measured respondents' agreement with statements about the exceptionalism of their respective nations —what I would come to call “National exceptionalism worldview.” These questions tapped the degree to which participants believed their own country to be exceptional. For example, questions asked respondents' agreement on a range from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” with statements such as the following: “The

American/Mexican people are the greatest people in the world”; “The United States/Mexico is different from every other country on earth”; “God has chosen the United States/Mexico to play a special role in the world.” I shifted the particular country included in the statement according to the experimental population of relevance. I also designed a small portion of statements for reverse coding.

Interspersed among these questions, I also asked respondents about their levels of agreement with statements about the exceptional qualities of other countries—what I would come to call “Degradation of others.” I designed the content of the questions to be similar to those above and to include both positive and negative statements for reverse coding purposes. For example, one statement was, “In comparison to the United States/Mexico, other countries are simply inferior.” Another example was, “No other country will ever be as great as the United States/Mexico.” Other examples of these types of questions include: “In the eyes of God, other countries are inferior to the United States/Mexico”; “Other countries have inferior values to those in the United States/Mexico.” I shifted the particular country included in the statement according to the experimental population of relevance. In other words, the country mentioned in the questions was the home of the respondents. Table 2.2 presents these questionnaire items.

Table 2.2: *National exceptionalism bias measures.*

| Measures for “National Exceptionalism Worldview” | Measures for “Degradation of Others” |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The American people are the greatest people in the world. | In comparison to the United States, other countries are simply inferior. |
| Americans are a uniquely blessed people. | People in other countries are not as blessed as Americans are. |
| The United States is different from every other country on earth. | No other country will ever be as great as the United States. |
| America is not the greatest country on earth (reverse coded). | People in other countries don’t value freedom like we do in the United States |
| America has a unique set of values that set it apart from the world. | In the eyes of God, other countries are inferior to the United States. |
| God has chosen the United States to play a special role in the world. | Other countries have inferior values to those in the United States. |
| Answered on a 4-point Likert-type scale, where 1 meant “strongly disagree” and 4 meant “strongly agree.” | |

The second battery of questions measured one’s degree of agreement with a number of policies about the role of the United States in the world. Specifically, these questions gauged how respondents believe the United States should act on the international stage, in regard to positions as a global model, a global leader, or as exempt from the rules bounding other nations. For example, questions asked respondents’ degree of agreement with the following statements: “The United States should no longer be a member of the United Nations”; “The United States should be the world’s leader on all international affairs”; “The United States should sometimes follow the lead of other countries.” Table 2.3 presents these questionnaire items. A full version of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix E.

Table 2.3: *Measures of global roles for the United States.*

| Measures for “Global Model” | Measures for “Global Leader” | Measures for “Exempt” |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Other countries should try to make their government as much like ours as possible. | It is America’s responsibility to promote democracy in other countries. | The United States should abide by all international laws even if they conflict with America’s national interests (reverse coded). |
| Other countries should be allowed to decide their own economic system, even if they don’t choose capitalism (reverse coded). | The United States should focus less on international affairs (reverse coded). | It is acceptable for the United States to invade other countries if it is for the right reasons. |
| If another country is better than the United States in some way the United States should model itself after them (reverse coded). | The United States should engage with other countries as their equal, not as their leader (reverse coded). | The United Nations Security Council should have final say over all U.S. military action abroad (reverse coded). |
| The world would be more peaceful if other countries were more like the United States. | The United States should lead the way in spreading freedom around the world. | The United States should not always have to play by the same rules as other countries. |
| The United States has much to learn from other countries (reverse coded). | America is better off when the government focuses its attention on domestic issues (reverse coded). | The United States should always have to consult with other powerful countries before taking any serious action in world affairs (reverse coded). |
| Other countries should be allowed to decide their own style of government, even if they don’t choose democracy (reverse coded). | It is not the responsibility of the United States to protect the peace in world affairs. | The United States should always stand up for what is right, even if it means breaking the rules. |
| The United States should follow the examples set by other successful countries (reverse coded). | The United States should engage in international affairs only when there are clear benefits from doing so (reverse coded). | The United States should be able to sidestep the United Nations when necessary. |
| | Sometimes the United States should let other countries take the lead in world affairs (reverse coded). | |
| Answered on a 4-point Likert-type scale, where 1 meant “strongly disagree” and 4 meant “strongly agree.” | | |

Participants in both studies were asked additional questions about their attitudes toward a range of U.S. foreign policies. Specifically, the battery addressed contemporary international

issues concerning the United States. These questions asked respondents' degree of agreement with the following statements: The United States should encourage countries like China and North Korea to become democracies; Whenever natural disasters hit other countries, the United States has a responsibility to be the most generous contributor; The United States should always defend human rights in the world, even if doing so is against America's own national interests to do so; The United States should invade Iran if it does not dismantle its program to build nuclear weapons; The United States should no longer be a part of the United Nations; The United States should be able to remove leaders in other countries from power if necessary. Furthermore, respondents in the Mexico study were asked about their attitudes about a battery of five questions dealing with U.S Mexico relations. Specifically, respondents responded the following questions: The United States needs to take more responsibility in combating narco traffickers in Mexico; Mexico is better off when it does things without the help of the United States; Mexico, Canada, and the United States should eliminate or renegotiate NAFTA; Mexico should work more with other Latin American countries than with the United States. Finally, Mexican respondents were asked to answer the following question: Which comes closest to describing your view? The United States is mostly to blame for the drug violence in Mexico, OR Mexico is mostly to blame for the drug violence, OR both are to blame. Full versions of the questionnaires can be found in Appendixes E and F.

Participants in the Mexico study were asked an additional battery of questions tapping into their attitudes toward the United States and the American people. Specifically, this battery included both positive and negative evaluations of the United States and the American people. Table 2.4 presents these questionnaire items.

Table 2.4: *Measures for evaluations of the United States and the American people.*

| Measures for Evaluations of the United States | Measures for Evaluations of the American People |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The United States is generally a force for good in the world (reverse coded). | Americans are often disrespectful of other cultures. |
| The United States is generally an arrogant country. | The American people are often generous to other countries in need of help (reverse coded). |
| The United States is often disrespectful of other governments. | The American people generally don't care about people in other countries. |
| The United States often defends other countries when they are in trouble or need help (reverse coded). | In general, Americans are good people (reverse coded). |
| Answered on a 4-point Likert-type scale, where 1 meant "strongly disagree" and 4 meant "strongly agree." | |

Finally, I included a battery of demographic and orientational questions. Specifically, I asked respondents to identify their race, gender, age, and political orientation. Notably, I changed some of these questions to account for cross-national differences in the demographic information of each particular country. For example, to identify a respondent's political orientation in the United States I asked subjects to place themselves on two scales, one ranging from "very liberal" to "very conservative" and the other ranging from Democrat to Republican. In Mexico I gauged respondents' political orientation by asking if they were right or left-leaning politically, as well as by asking about their affiliation with parties such as the Partido de Acción Nacional or Partido Revolucionario Institucional. Finally, I asked participants about their orientation toward issues of international importance. Specifically, I asked about the amount of news they watch on international affairs, their experience with international travel, as well as the number of

languages they speak. A full version of the questionnaire in English and Spanish can be found in Appendix F.

The U.S.-based experiment was conducted via Survey Monkey, a survey company that hosts surveys for general population adults throughout the United States. Survey Monkey also allows researchers to pay a fee to randomly recruit U.S. adults to participate in studies for research purposes. For this study, I contracted the services of the online survey company, Survey Monkey, to house the online study and to recruit participants. Potential participants were offered the opportunity to participate in this study in order to earn credits through Survey Monkey that they could then transform into donations to a charity of the participant's choosing. The questionnaire took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. The sample consisted of a total of 1,177 U.S. adults who were randomly assigned to the different experimental conditions. In other words, roughly 250 adults were randomly assigned to each condition, including the control condition. Individuals not 18 or older or not U.S. citizens were discarded from the analysis. The study population was slightly more male (62%) than female and consisted predominantly of white respondents (89%). The mean age of the sample was 40 to 49 years of age. Education was measured on a 6-point scale (*Mdn* and *Mode* = 5, completed college degree). Finally, political ideology was measured on a 7-point scale ranging from "Extremely liberal" to "Extremely conservative" ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.72$). Although my sample is not statistically representative of the U.S. public as a whole, this approach allowed me to gain a diverse participant population of U.S. adults.

For the Mexico experiment, I recruited undergraduate students from the University of Guanajuato. I chose this university (a) because of its central location in one of the most populated regions of Mexico, (b) because it tends to draw students from a diverse range of

geographic and socio-economic backgrounds, and (c) because I already had a number of professional contacts at the University. I specifically chose a student population in Mexico because it represents a class of people who, through their higher levels of education, will be more likely to eventually attain positions of leadership both in the Mexican society and in government. There were a number of steps for this experiment. First, I adapted the questionnaire from the study in the United States to fit the Mexican sample. This meant that I needed to (a) change the questions to deal directly with the Mexican population, and then (b) translate those questions into Spanish. It merits noting that I made subtle changes in the wording of some of the questions because doing so made them more applicable to the Mexican context (Smith, 2003). Next, I personally translated both the questionnaires and the news message conditions into Spanish. Although my abilities in both languages are strong, I worked with two separate native Spanish speakers from Mexico to help check all of my translations for accuracy and meaning. Relying on these outside sources help to ensure that any of my own cultural naiveté or biases did not impact the final questionnaire (Wiarda, 1985). During the translation process, I also did frequent translation checks with my wife who is a Mexican citizen. I then sent it to colleagues at the University of Guanajuato for a final translation check.

Next, I contacted the University's main administration offices to find out what procedures I needed to comply with in order to be able to conduct research on their student population. I was instructed that I would simply need to gain permission from directors of the various colleges throughout the University. After a number of emails and phone calls I was able to obtain permission from directors at the departments of history, education, mines, engineering, and economic and administrative sciences. In each case, the director would introduced me to their staff and then I would directly ask their permission to allow me to implement my study in

their classes. In total, I attended over 20 distinct classes over a two-week timeframe to recruit students for the study. My initial plan was to collect the data by recruiting students and then directing them to an online questionnaire I set up through Survey Monkey. This, however, was not very fruitful. In fact, the response rate for the first three days of recruiting produced a total of 2 online questionnaires completed. To adjust for this, I immediately printed out over 500 copies of the survey and brought them with me to the classes and asked professors if they would afford me 15 to 20 minutes of class time to administer the study. With this slight change, the response rate increased exponentially.

Once students agreed to volunteer, they were randomly assigned to one of the five experimental conditions. Random assignment was achieved through a physical and random mixing of the five distinct questionnaire versions. Specifically, three helpers and I randomly stacked the experimental stimuli so that there was no pattern in the ordering. To ensure random assignment, students were given the questionnaires in this same order. This meant that every student had the same chance of receiving any of the five versions of the questionnaire as any other participant. Once students were given their questionnaire, they were presented with a sheet with basic information about the study and were told that by filling out the questionnaire they were confirming that they were entering into the study voluntarily. At the end of the study, subjects were presented with another form with more specific information about the study and a message explaining that the news article that they had just read was fictitious. Students were instructed before, during, and after completing the questionnaire that they could withdraw their responses at any time. Only 2 students chose to withdraw their questionnaires.

Data were collected between August 24 and September 8, 2012. The sample consisted of a total of 583 students, with roughly 115 students for each experimental condition.

Demographically, respondents' mean age was between 18 and 20 ($SD=.54$), 53.9% were female, 79.6% were Catholic, 43.9% self-identified as politically left-leaning, 43.5% as politically right-leaning, and 12.7% identified as politically centrist. Respondents also identified the political party with which they most identified. A full 73.2% identified with the three largest and most influential parties in Mexico: the PAN (29.7%), PRI (19.4%), and PRD (24.1%), while 26.8% identified with smaller parties or were unaffiliated.

Summary

Ultimately, I chose these methodological approaches so that I could examine both the strategic emphasis on themes of American exceptionalism by U.S. presidents as well as the potential effects of such communications both at home and abroad. I recognize that employing a researching design that transcends national borders can present some extra challenges in implementation, but it provided a more transnational understanding of the roles of such messages in the minds of the distinct international populations who come into contact with them. People often fail to note the international audiences who are ever watchful in this media-dependent and globalizing world. Emphasis on American exceptionalism in political communications may be a positive tool for nation building among domestic audiences, but unintended effects have the potential to span far beyond the border of the United States. In this dissertation therefore I took a first look at the effects that these types of messages have on the way Americans and others view their own countries in relation to the rest of the world. Ultimately, this dissertation serves as a catalyst for a larger research program that looks at the roles of distinct types of patriotic, nation celebrating and even nationalistic messages in how the public, the press and world leaders alike understand the world that surrounds them.

Chapter Three

Invoking American Exceptionalism at Home and Abroad

On June 15, 1960, President Dwight D. Eisenhower arrived in the city of Manila on the first of a four-country visit to the “far east” which included stops in the Philippines, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan. This wasn’t Eisenhower’s first time in the Philippines. He and his wife had lived there when he was stationed there before World War II, and his personal connection was apparent in his exuberant reception by the Filipino government and people. Within minutes of his arrival he was met by thousands of Filipino citizens and an official military parade. One group of citizens even hoisted a giant portrait of the American president. In a speech that afternoon before the Filipino Congress, the U.S. president spoke of the “flood of memories” that swept over him upon returning to the country. He spoke of the growing threat of Communism and the role of the Philippines in keeping it at bay. He declared individual liberty and self-determination to be universal values. And when he addressed the standing of America and the Philippines, Eisenhower called the latter a “sovereign equal” to the United States. He added that each country had its own pathway, offering that “the United States need not believe that all should imitate us.”

Near the end of the speech, however, Eisenhower adopted a different approach. He said the United States was the “first in this era to raise the banner of freedom and decent nationalism” for all of the world to see. He went on: the United States was a country with a “favored position in size and numbers and wealth” in the world and specifically in comparison to this small Pacific country. He then offered that regardless of their nation’s size, Filipinos had “just as much to contribute to the world and to yourselves and to freedom as the greatest and the most powerful

nation in the world,” the United States of America. Touting American exceptionalism so loudly and unapologetically to the Filipino people did not reflect a high level of diplomatic consideration on Eisenhower’s part. It did, however, point to just how deeply entrenched the idea of American exceptionalism has been in U.S. presidential discourse, that it is highlighted even—and perhaps especially—in foreign countries.

In this dissertation I am interested in American exceptionalism—how U.S. presidents communicate the idea to domestic and foreign publics, and the effects that such messages have both on how Americans view their country in relation to the world and how people in other countries view the United States. In this chapter I explored the differing ways in which modern U.S. presidents have invoked American exceptionalism when speaking to foreign or domestic audiences. Specifically, I systematically examined major presidential speeches delivered at home and abroad to assess the ways that U.S. presidents have highlighted the idea of American exceptionalism and specifically, how they communicate this culturally powerful idea when speaking in other countries. The present chapter, therefore, examines the distinct—and at times creative—ways in which U.S. presidents have invoked this important cultural conception in both domestic and foreign speeches.

Theoretical Expectations

I had several expectations that U.S. presidents would differentially employ the idea of American exceptionalism when addressing domestic and foreign audiences. My first expectation was that U.S. presidents would highlight the idea of American exceptionalism *significantly more overall* when addressing U.S. audiences than when addressing foreign ones (H1). I expected this because the idea directly implicates the U.S. audience and in a positive light. American

exceptionalism is likely to resonate much more among the American public because such messages actively elevate the citizenry to the exceptional level. The same is not likely to be true, however, for foreign audiences. They may perceive such an idea to be aggressive or condescending, because they potentially hold very different views about what countries are exceptional and why. U.S. presidents, then, seem likely to highlight the idea of American exceptionalism more in domestic speeches than in foreign speeches.

My second expectation was that when invoking what I call *primary* themes of American exceptionalism—claims of singularity, superiority, or God-favored status—U.S. presidents would favor the *superior* theme when addressing a domestic audience and the *singular* theme when addressing foreign audiences (H2). I expected for U.S. presidents to favor the superior theme when speaking in the United States because it is perhaps the strongest and most culturally impactful expression of the three. By defining the United States as superior to all other countries, U.S. presidents tap directly into the country’s individualistic ideology in which being the best and beating out the competition are highly valued. Such an expression of nation superiority, however, may be less well-received when expressed abroad. As a result, in foreign contexts I expected U.S. presidents to more commonly emphasize the *singular* theme of American exceptionalism. Painting the United States as different or unique is not as aggressive as either of the other two themes. Furthermore, the *singular* theme does not necessarily place the United States hierarchically above other countries. More than one country can be unique or singular, whereas only one can be the best or, for that matter, God’s favored country.² The *singular* theme,

² I expected the *God-favored* theme to be highlighted less than the other two themes in both the domestic and the foreign contexts. Although invoking the idea that God chose the United States can be powerful in some circles domestically, it is also potentially divisive among Americans who are not Christian. I therefore expected to see it highlighted less than the other two themes in a domestic context. At the same time, I expected to see it scarcely, if ever, in foreign contexts.

therefore, allows U.S. presidents going abroad to assert their country's exceptionalism in a more diplomatic manner; hence I expected more of it in these contexts.

My third expectation was that when invoking the primary themes of American exceptionalism, U.S. presidents would employ *overtly comparative language* significantly more when addressing a domestic audience than when addressing foreign ones (H3). American exceptionalism is inherently comparative, but there still are ways in which U.S. presidents can make this comparison more emphatic in political speeches. Such a move is likely to be perceived as more appropriate for communicating to domestic audiences than to foreign ones. Overtly comparative language used in tandem with American exceptionalism claims may be seen as aggressive when addressing foreign audiences because such language implicates them in the comparison. For example, saying that the United States is the greatest country is already aggressive, but saying that it is the greatest country "of all countries on earth" further clarifies the distinction being made between the United States and all other countries. Such language is likely to help further exalt the United States in the eyes of its own public and so it is likely to be employed much more often in domestic contexts.

My fourth expectation was that U.S. presidents would highlight what I call *secondary* themes of American exceptionalism—America as a model, leader, or exempt from international laws and institutions—substantially more when addressing foreign audiences than they would the primary themes (H4). I expected this because the secondary themes allow U.S. presidents to express the idea of American exceptionalism in less aggressive ways. These themes implicitly communicate the idea that the United States is qualitatively different or superior. For example, saying that the United States is a model for the world places the United States at the relative top of the international hierarchy, but in a way that only implicitly compares it to other countries.

Similarly, saying that the United States should be the leader for other countries again places the United States in an exceptional position, but in less aggressive way. A final way of invoking the idea of American exceptionalism in a more implicit manner is to talk about the United States as being exempt from international laws or institutions. Each of the secondary themes, therefore, invokes the idea of America's exceptional status, but in less-aggressive ways. U.S. presidents are likely to favor these secondary themes over primary ones as a way of asserting American exceptionalism when addressing foreign audiences. In contrast, I expected U.S. presidents to employ primary and secondary themes in roughly comparable numbers in domestic speeches.

My fifth expectation was that U.S. presidents would highlight what I call *mutual exceptionalism* substantially more when addressing foreign audiences than when addressing domestic ones. In fact, such an expression is the ideal manner for U.S. presidents to assert their country's exceptional status abroad because it couches it in language that elevates another country to an exceptional level at the same time (H5). Invoking mutual exceptionalism reminds other countries of the United States' supposed superior status while softening the blow by exalting another country in the process. Such an idea, however, is less likely to be perceived positively when addressing a domestic audience, because it would chip away at the idea that the United States is *alone* exceptional, a viewpoint deeply embedded in the public psyche. Such invocations, therefore, are likely to be offered relatively scarcely by U.S. presidents when addressing a domestic audience.

To examine these expectations I conducted a content analysis of major speeches by modern presidents delivered both in the United States and abroad. These populations of presidential speeches ranged from Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1933 Inaugural address through Barack Obama's State of the Union address in January 2012. The first population of speeches

consisted of all major speeches delivered by U.S. presidents on U.S. soil. The second population of speeches consisted of all major addresses delivered by U.S. presidents in foreign legislatures, the United Nations, and joint press conferences conducted with foreign heads of state. When analyzing these I determined if U.S. presidents highlighted one of the *primary*, *secondary*, or *mutual* themes of American exceptionalism. Additionally, when U.S. presidents invoked the primary themes, I identified whether overtly comparative language was employed with the invocation. Furthermore, I identified when any of the three types of themes were used on their own or in tandem with other themes.

Each step in this chapter examines from a comparative perspective how U.S. presidents highlighted the types of American exceptionalism. I begin with an analysis of the overall usage of American exceptionalism in domestic and foreign presidential speeches. I then delve into each of the three types of American exceptionalism to examine how they were employed across domestic and foreign contexts. Finally, I examine how this repertoire of American exceptionalism themes has been invoked differently by presidents across political ideologies, in times of war and peace, and in times of recession and prosperity. Together, these components provide a robust examination of the distinct—and at times creative—ways that U.S. presidents have highlighted American exceptionalism for U.S. public and international audiences.

American Exceptionalism in Domestic and Foreign Speeches

In this section I present evidence for my hypotheses in three stages. First, I present data on how prevalent the idea of American exceptionalism has been in presidential speeches delivered to U.S. and foreign audiences. I then examined the differences in how U.S. presidents have highlighted this idea across domestic and international contexts. I present both quantitative

data to show overall trends and qualitative examples from speeches to concretely illustrate these differences. I then present data in both forms to show how U.S. presidents have sought to communicate the idea of American exceptionalism in more subtle—and perhaps more diplomatic—ways when addressing foreign audiences.

Overall emphases

The first hypothesis examined how commonly U.S. presidents invoked American exceptionalism in speeches delivered in the United States and abroad. I expected U.S. presidents to invoke the idea of American exceptionalism in any of its three forms—primary, secondary, mutual—significantly more in domestic speeches than in ones delivered to foreign audiences. With this in mind, I determined the amount of major speeches, at home or abroad, in which U.S. presidents invoked the idea of American exceptionalism, what portion contained more than one invocation, and the average amount of invocations across all speeches. I was interested in comparing totals between domestic and foreign speeches. Results are in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: *American exceptionalism invocations in domestic and foreign speeches by U.S. presidents, 1933 to 2012*

| | Domestic Speeches (<i>n</i> =359) | Foreign Speeches (<i>n</i> =470) |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| American exceptionalism invocations present in | 67% | 34% |
| Speeches with two or more invocations present | 45% | 15% |
| Average invocations per speech | 3.0 | 0.7 |

There are several findings here, and all lend support to Hypothesis 1. First, the top row of Table 3.1 shows that U.S. presidents invoked the idea of American exceptionalism substantially more in domestic speeches (67% of them) than in foreign (34%) ones. Specifically, U.S.

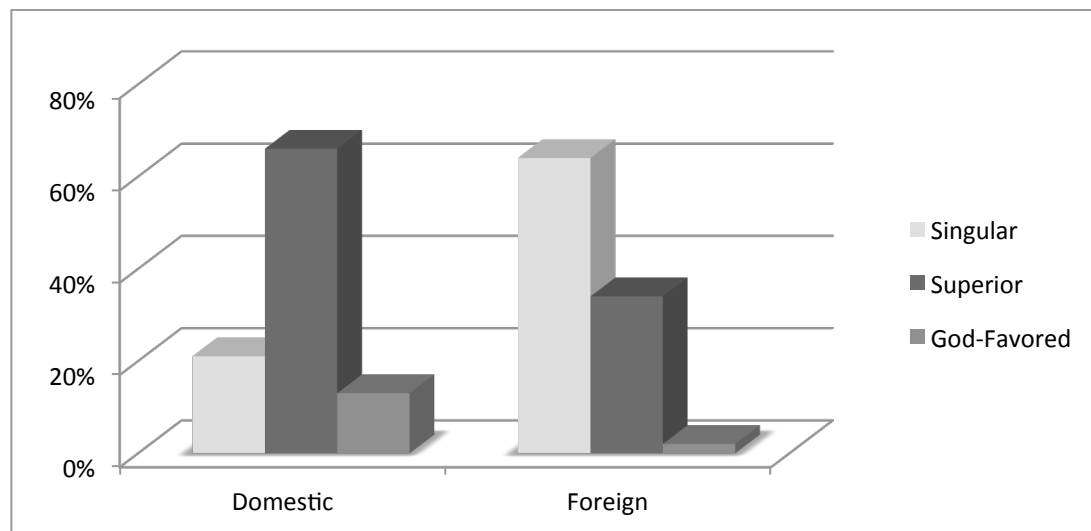
presidents were twice as likely to invoke the country's exceptional status when addressing a domestic audience than when addressing foreign ones. Next, the second row of Table 3.1 shows that when addressing a domestic audience, U.S. presidents were far more likely to invoke American exceptionalism more than once in domestic speeches than in foreign ones. Once U.S. presidents determined American exceptionalism to be a useful perspective for a particular speech, they were much more likely to highlight it often when addressing American audiences than when addressing foreign ones. To further explore the point, I calculated the average amount of invocations: U.S. presidents invoked the idea of America's exceptional status on average 3 times per domestic speech, whereas only .7 times per foreign speech. In other words, American exceptionalism invocations were over four times as likely to appear in domestic speeches than in foreign ones. At the aggregate level, therefore, these results suggest that presidents have invoked American exceptionalism far more often when addressing American audiences than when addressing foreign ones.

Primary themes of American exceptionalism

The second hypothesis addressed the types of *primary* American exceptionalism that were invoked by U.S. presidents. In the case of speeches delivered to domestic audiences, I expected U.S. presidents to be more overt and aggressive in the ways they invoked primary American exceptionalism. Specifically, I expected them to favor the *superior* theme over the *God-favored* or the *singular* themes. Alternatively, I expected that when U.S. presidents invoked the idea of American exceptionalism before foreign audiences they would do so in a less overt and aggressive manner. In particular, I expected them to favor the *singular* theme of American exceptionalism over the more aggressive *superior* and *God-favored* themes (H2). To test this

hypothesis I determined the distinct types of American exceptionalism themes invoked in domestic and foreign speeches. The findings are shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: *Primary American exceptionalism invocations in domestic and foreign speeches by U.S. presidents, 1933 to 2012*



Hypothesis 2 was supported. Figure 3.1 shows that U.S presidents did, in fact, favor the *superior* theme over the *God-favored* and *singular* themes when addressing U.S. audiences. Specifically, the superior theme was invoked almost twice as much (65%) as the other two themes combined (35%). These findings indicate that when U.S. presidents have articulated American exceptionalism to domestic audiences, they have done so in a direct and strongly hierarchical manner. In other words, when addressing the American public, U.S. presidents were more likely to feature the theme that most strongly painted the United States as being not only different, but outright superior in any number of ways.

Such a rhetorical approach, however, was less likely in foreign contexts. Figure 3.1 shows how dominant the *singular* theme was when U.S. presidents addressed foreign audiences. Over 66% of all primary American exceptionalism themes articulated in foreign speeches described the United States as being a distinct or special country, whereas 32% painted the

United States as being superior and only 2% as being God-favored. These findings indicate that in the fewer moments when U.S. presidents painted their country as exceptional when addressing foreign audiences, they did so in a way that was less explicitly hierarchical—and therefore likely to be perceived as generally less aggressive.

Examples of these differences were widespread in presidential discourse. Consistent with Hypothesis 2, U.S. presidents tended to be more overt and, at times, aggressive when highlighting primary themes of American exceptionalism for domestic audiences throughout the time period covered in the present study. For example, Franklin Roosevelt in his first Inaugural address in 1933 invoked the Constitution to convey a superior foundations for the country:

Our Constitution is so simple and practical that it is possible always to meet extraordinary needs by changes in emphasis and arrangement without loss of essential form. That is why our constitutional system has proved itself *the most superbly enduring political mechanism the modern world has produced*. It has met every stress of vast expansion of territory, of foreign wars, of bitter internal strife, of world relations (italics added).

Similarly, in Gerald Ford's 1976 State of the Union Address he invoked the idea of America's form of government to bolster the image of the country: "The truth is we are *the world's greatest democracy*. We remain the symbol of man's aspiration for liberty and well-being. We are the embodiment of hope for progress." Other presidents pointed to the country's quick growth in international political, economic and military power as signs of American exceptionalism. For example, in an October 8, 1964 speech to the country on the subject of international affairs, Lyndon Johnson said, "But the key to peace is to be found in the strength and the good sense of the United States of America. Tonight we are *the strongest nation in all the world*, and the world knows it."

Bill Clinton further bolstered the United States' relative superior status when he spoke of how the world might not survive without it. In his 1997 second Inaugural he said, "America

stands alone as *the world's indispensable nation*.” This view that the world would lose something vital if it found itself without the United States was common in subsequent speeches by Clinton and by his two successors. For example, in a February 24, 2009 speech on the economy, Barack Obama said:

In words and deeds, we are showing the world that a new era of engagement has begun. *For we know that America cannot meet the threats of this century alone, but the world cannot meet them without America.*

This tactic of characterizing the United States as indispensable marked a creative invocation of superior American exceptionalism not seen before in presidential discourse. Not only was the United States different or better, its survival was essential to that of the world.

At the same time, U.S. presidents occasionally painted a picture of the United States as a divine force placed on earth to do good. For instance, Dwight Eisenhower in his 1954 State of the Union speech said, “We can be Americans. We can stand up and hold up our heads and say: *America is the greatest force that God has ever allowed to exist on His footstool.*” Richard Nixon echoed such sentiments in his 1970 State of the Union address: “May God give us the wisdom, the strength and, above all, the idealism to be worthy of that challenge, so that America can fulfill its *destiny* of being *the world's best hope for liberty, for opportunity, for progress and peace for all peoples.*” Such invocations were periodically found in domestic speeches across the time span studied.

These types of invocations, however, did not exemplify the types of American exceptionalism seen in foreign speeches. As the findings show, U.S. presidents favored the *singular* theme in foreign speeches. For example, in a speech to the United Nations General Assembly in 1982, Ronald Reagan talked of how the United States was thrust into its singular global status role after the war:

[A]t the end of World War II, we were the *only undamaged industrial* power in the world...we could have achieved world domination, but that was contrary to the character of our people. Instead, we wrote a new chapter in the history of mankind. We used our power and wealth to rebuild the war-ravaged economies of the world, both East and West, including those nations who had been our enemies. We took the initiative in creating such international institutions as this United Nations, where leaders of good will could come together to build bridges for peace and prosperity.

Another way that U.S. presidents highlighted the United States' *singular* status in the world was to talk about the United States as having a special role to play in global affairs. Such invocations were common. For example, in the first major address ever given by a U.S. president before the United Nations General Assembly, Harry Truman (1946) said:

The course of history has made us one of the stronger nations of the world. It has therefore placed upon us *special responsibilities* to conserve our strength and to use it rightly in a world so interdependent as our world today. The American people recognize these *special responsibilities*. We shall do our best to meet them, both in the making of the peace settlements and in the fulfillment of the long-range tasks of the United Nations.

This idea has been robust in U.S. presidential discourse since then. In his 1963 address before the United Nations General Assembly, John Kennedy offered:

The fact remains that the United States, as a major nuclear power, does have a *special responsibility* in the world. It is, in fact, a threefold *responsibility*—a *responsibility* to our own citizens; a *responsibility* to the people of the whole world who are affected by our decisions; and to the next generation of humanity.

Bill Clinton in 1994 offered a similar sentiment in a speech to the United Nations: “The United States recognizes that we also have a *special responsibility* in these common endeavors that we are taking, the responsibility that goes along with great power and also with our long history of democracy and freedom.” Similar invocations were common as a way of invoking American exceptionalism for foreign audiences. The majority of American exceptionalism themes highlighted in foreign speeches followed a similar vein. In particular, these invocations about America's exceptional status and its special responsibilities in the world were—more often than not—couched in ideas that have the potential to appeal to audiences around the globe such as the

preservation of international peace, the promotion of democracy and freedom, as well as the protection of human rights.

To further explore domestic and foreign speeches, I identified the proportion of primary American exceptionalism invocations that were connected with other primary invocations. That is, I examined in each population of speeches (domestic and foreign) whether two or more invocations of primary American exceptionalism—singular, superior, God-favored—were featured together. For instance, a president might favor the *superior* theme, invoking it two or three times closely together, or a president might pair a *singular* invocation with a *superior* one. Either approach would help to “drive home” the point of America’s exceptional status through reiteration. I did not hypothesize specifically about this tactic, nor about potential differences between foreign and domestic speeches, but the data align with the expectations of Hypothesis 2. When addressing domestic audiences, U.S. presidents invoked primary themes of American exceptionalism in combination in 42% of all domestic speeches. In contrast, when addressing foreign audiences U.S. presidents combined invocations of American exceptionalism a total of 8 times in 3 speeches (0.6%), most of which came in Eisenhower’s speech to the joint session of Congress in the Philippines. In short, once the idea of American exceptionalism was invoked in a domestic speech, U.S. presidents were not reserved about bringing more attention to it through repetition. It was a different story in foreign contexts.

Examples of these stacked invocations abound in domestic presidential discourse. For example, Ronald Reagan in his 1984 State of the Union address combined the singular and superior themes in a succinct, yet compelling manner: “We are *first*; we are *the best*; and we are so because we’re free.” In his 1952 State of the Union Address, Harry Truman leaned heavily on the *superior* theme when he offered:

We are engaged in a great undertaking at home and abroad—*the greatest*, in fact, that any nation has ever been privileged to embark upon. We are working night and day to bring peace to the world and to spread the democratic ideals of justice and self-government to all people. Our accomplishments are already remarkable. We ought to be full of pride in what we are doing, and full of confidence and hope in the outcome. No nation ever had *greater resources*, or *greater energy*, or *nobler traditions* to inspire it.

In fact, highlighting the superior theme in repetition was favored by U.S. presidents. Richard Nixon on August 8, 1969 offered a similarly appreciative interpretation of the country, saying, “I realize how fortunate we are to live in this rich land. We have the world’s *most advanced industrial economy*, the *greatest wealth* ever known to man, the *fullest measure of freedom* ever enjoyed by any people, anywhere.” Similarly, in his final State of the Union address, President George H. W. Bush in 1992 said, “We are still and ever the *freest* nation on Earth, the *kindest* nation on Earth, the *strongest nation* on Earth. And we have always risen to the occasion.” More recently, Barack Obama took this practice up a level when in his 2011 State of the Union Address he said:

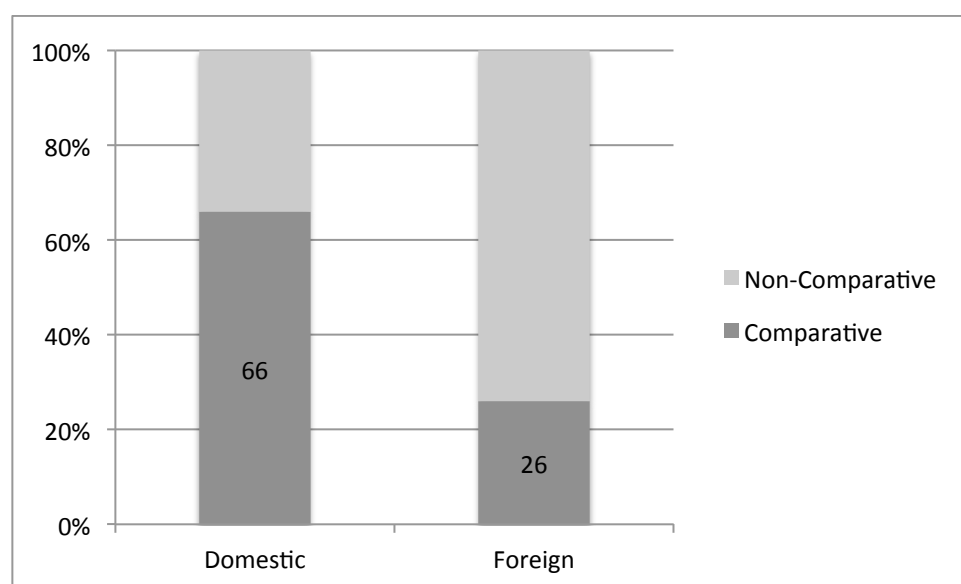
Remember, for all the hits we’ve taken these last few years, for all the naysayers predicting our decline, America still has *the largest, most prosperous* economy in the world. No workers are *more productive* than ours. No country has *more successful companies* or *grants more patents* to inventors and entrepreneurs. We’re the home to the *world’s best colleges* and *universities*, where *more students* come to study than any place on Earth. What’s more, we are the *first nation* to be founded for the sake of an idea: the idea that each of us deserves the chance to shape our own destiny.

In short, once a president invoked the idea, he often went further to reassert it.

The third hypothesis examined whether U.S. presidents utilized overtly comparative language when invoking primary themes of American exceptionalism. Specifically, I expected that when invoking any of the primary themes for domestic audiences, U.S. presidents would robustly employ comparative language. For instance, U.S. presidents might say, “This country is the greatest country *of all countries* that populate the earth.” In contrast, I expected U.S. presidents to limit their use of such language when addressing foreign audiences. For instance, a

U.S. president might say, “This country is the greatest” but leave out explicit, direct reference to another country. Explicitly comparative language, therefore, was expected to be substantially more common in domestic speeches than in foreign ones. To test this hypothesis, I examined the proportion of primary American exceptionalism invocations containing comparative language in domestic and foreign speeches. Results are presented in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2: *Primary American exceptionalism invocations containing overtly comparative language in domestic and foreign speeches by U.S. presidents, 1933 to 2012*



Hypothesis 3 was supported. The findings presented in Figure 3.2 show that when invoking primary American exceptionalism themes for domestic audiences, U.S. presidents included comparative language the majority of the time (66%). In contrast, when invoking America’s exceptional status for foreign audiences, presidents did so less than half as often—in only 26% of invocations. U.S. presidents, then, were more than two times as likely to employ comparative language when addressing domestic audiences. These findings suggest that U.S. presidents have been cognizant of the fact that foreign audiences are apt to perceive such language as especially setting the United States either aside or above their own countries. Such language is likely to be perceived as unnecessarily aggressive.

Examples of these overtly comparative invocations were abundant in domestic speeches. For example, in his 1997 State of the Union address, Bill Clinton said, “America is far more than a place. It is an idea, the most powerful idea *in the history of nations*.” Ronald Reagan in his 1986 State of the Union stated, “If the United States can trade *with other nations* on a level playing field, we can outproduce, outcompete, and outsell *anybody, anywhere in the world*.” At times one or two overt comparisons were not enough. Commonly, U.S. presidents would drive the comparison home by repetitively employing comparative language when invoking American exceptionalism. For instance, Richard Nixon in 1972, in a his nomination acceptance speech to the Republican National Convention, said:

Every time I come home to America, I realize how fortunate we are to live in this great and good country. Every time I am reminded that we have more freedom, more opportunity, more prosperity than *any people in the world*, that we have the highest rate of growth of *any industrial nation*, that Americans have more jobs at higher wages than in *any country in the world*; that our rate of inflation is less than that of *any industrial nation*, that the incomparable productivity of America’s farmers has made it possible for us to launch a winning war against hunger in the United States, and that the productivity of our farmers also makes us the best fed people *in the world* with the lowest percentage of the family budget going to food of *any country in the world*.

Such overtly comparative language also sometimes amplified the exceptional status of the United States by making it not only grander than any other country at the time, but over any other that had ever existed. For instance, Lyndon Johnson in 1965 speech on “the American Promise” he told the nation, “This is the richest and most powerful country *which has ever occupied the globe*. The might of *past empires* is little compared to ours.” Similarly, in a speech on the beginning of U.S. military involvement in Korea, Harry Truman (1950) said, “Think of this, not as a sacrifice, but as an opportunity, an opportunity to defend the best kind of life that men have *ever devised on this earth*.” In short, such overtly comparative language served as a mainstay in

domestic presidential speeches, whereas such comparative language was more an exception in foreign speeches.

Secondary themes of American exceptionalism

I next examined how U.S. presidents invoked types of *secondary* American exceptionalism—leader, model, and exempt—in domestic and foreign speeches. For the fourth hypothesis I expected that when addressing foreign audiences, U.S. presidents would highlight the secondary themes of American exceptionalism significantly more overall than they would the primary themes, while in domestic speeches I expected secondary theme invocations to be roughly as common as primary themes (H4). To test these expectations, I examined the total percentage of speeches in which primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism were invoked and then compared the results between the domestic and foreign contexts. The results are presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: *Primary and secondary American exceptionalism invocations in domestic and foreign speeches by U.S. presidents, 1933 to 2012*

| | Domestic Speeches (<i>n</i> =359) | Foreign Speeches (<i>n</i> =470) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Primary American exceptionalism invocations present in | 55% | 7% |
| Secondary American exceptionalism invocations present in | 40% | 21% |

In foreign speeches, U.S. presidents invoked secondary themes of American exceptionalism 21% of the time, whereas they only invoked primary themes 7% of the time. That is, U.S. presidents invoked secondary themes in three times as many foreign speeches as they did the primary themes. In contrast, as expected, when addressing a domestic audience, U.S.

presidents invoked both types of themes widely, but with primary ones (55%) a bit more than secondary ones (40%). Hypothesis 4, therefore, was supported. These findings suggest that when addressing a domestic audience, U.S. presidents have viewed both primary and secondary themes as similarly beneficial to invoke. In foreign contexts, however, they tend to favor the less aggressive secondary themes.

Examples of these secondary themes across domestic and foreign speeches provide insight. In a domestic speech on July 19, 1950 concerning the escalating police action in Korea, Harry Truman said, “Our country stands before the world *as an example* of how free men, under God, can build a community of neighbors, working together for the good of all.” Similarly, Jimmy Carter sought to further this idea of the United States’ standing as a model in his 1976 Inaugural Address when he said, “Our nation can be strong abroad only if it is strong at home. And we know that the best way to enhance freedom in other lands is to demonstrate here that our democratic system is *worthy of emulation*.” Even more common was the idea of the United States as a global leader. Richard Nixon invoked it in 1973 in a speech on the Watergate investigations: “I deeply believe that America is the *hope of the world*. And I know that in the quality and wisdom of the *leadership* America gives lies the only hope for millions of people all over the world that they can live their lives in peace and freedom.” At times, U.S. presidents invoked America’s global leadership various times in the same speech, even before foreign audiences. For instance, in 1993 in addressing the South Korean National Assembly, Bill Clinton offered:

We must and we will *continue to lead*. To some in America there is a fear that America’s *global leadership* is an outdated luxury we can no longer afford. Well, they are wrong. In truth, our *global leadership* has never been a more indispensable or a more worthwhile investment for us. So long as we remain bordered by oceans and powered by trade, so long as our flag is a symbol of democracy and hope to a fractious world, the imperative of America’s *leadership* will remain.

Similarly, when addressing the Australian Parliament in 2011, Barack Obama said, “And we will continue to do more, because our economic strength at home is the foundation of our *leadership* in the world.” Such invocations, therefore, were more than common across presidential discourse, both in the United States and abroad.

To further explore the secondary themes of American exceptionalism, I examined how often they were used in tandem with the more explicit primary themes of American exceptionalism. Specifically, I determined what percentage of secondary invocations were highlighted in conjunction with any of the primary themes (singular, superior, or God-favored) and then compared how these findings differed between domestic and foreign speeches. The distinctions lend further support for Hypothesis 4. When invoking a secondary theme of American exceptionalism for a domestic audience, U.S. presidents also invoked one of the primary themes 33% of the time. In other words, almost one out of each three secondary exceptionalism themes was invoked in tandem with a primary theme of American exceptionalism. In the case of foreign speeches, however, U.S. presidents highlighted secondary and primary themes in distinct contexts. Specifically, presidents only highlighted these two types of American exceptionalism in tandem 5% of the time. The great majority of secondary themes (95%) were invoked in separate contexts than the more aggressive primary themes.

Examples of these combinations were common in domestic presidential discourse. For instance, in his Farewell Address in 1961, Dwight Eisenhower combined a number of primary themes with the idea of America’s global leadership when he said:

We now stand ten years past the midpoint of a century that has witnessed four major wars among great nations. Three of these involved our own country. Despite these holocausts America is today the *strongest*, the *most influential* and *most productive* nation in the world. Understandably proud of this pre-eminence, we yet realize that *America's leadership* and prestige depend, not merely upon our *unmatched* material progress, riches

and military strength, but on how we use our power in the interests of world peace and human betterment.

Three decades later, George H. W. Bush in his 1991 State of the Union address, echoed these sentiments, offering:

For two centuries, America has served the world as an inspiring *example* of freedom and democracy. For generations, America has *led* the struggle to preserve and extend the blessings of liberty. And today, in a rapidly changing world, American *leadership* is *indispensable*. Americans know that *leadership* brings burdens and sacrifices. But we also know why the *hopes of humanity* turn to us. We are Americans; we have a *unique responsibility* to do the hard work of freedom. And when we do, freedom works.

In a speech to the American people about the conflict in Bosnia, Bill Clinton in 1995 reinforced these connections: “After World War II, we continued to *lead the world*. We made the commitments that kept the peace, that helped to spread democracy, that created *unparalleled prosperity*, and that brought victory in the Cold War.” Similarly, in his 2004 State of the Union address, George W. Bush linked these two types of American exceptionalism succinctly when he offered, “America acts in this cause with friends and allies at our side, yet we understand our *special calling*: This great Republic will *lead* the cause of freedom.” In a domestic context, therefore, these two types of American exceptionalism were often linked. Such larger-than-life invocations fusing these distinct types of American exceptionalism, however, were perhaps too aggressive to be highlighted abroad.

Mutual exceptionalism

The final hypothesis addressed a potential third and distinct way in which U.S. presidents might invoke the idea of American exceptionalism: mutual exceptionalism. In particular, I expected U.S. presidents to highlight mutual exceptionalism more in foreign speeches than in domestic ones, both in general and in relation to primary and secondary types of American exceptionalism. To test the first part of this expectation, I examined the total amount of speeches

in both domestic and foreign contexts in which U.S. presidents invoked the idea of mutual exceptionalism. The findings are presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: *Mutual exceptionalism invocations in domestic and foreign speeches by U.S. presidents, 1933 to 2012*

| | Domestic Speeches (<i>n</i> =359) | Foreign Speeches (<i>n</i> =470) |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Mutual exceptionalism invocations present in | 4% | 18% |
| Average invocations per speech | 0.04 | 0.27 |

The findings in Table 3.3 show that mutual exceptionalism was indeed invoked far more often in foreign speeches than in domestic ones. Specifically, U.S. presidents invoked this idea in 18% of foreign speeches and in only 4% of domestic ones. In other words, U.S. presidents invoked this idea in over four times as many foreign speeches than in domestic ones. Furthermore, on average U.S. presidents invoked this idea .27 times per speech given to foreign audiences, compared to .04 times per domestic speech.

In addition, I suspected that U.S. presidents have been more likely to elevate their country along with other powerful countries than to do so with smaller, less internationally influential countries. To examine this informal expectation, I determined which countries were most frequently invoked as being “exceptional” along with the United States. To capture relative levels of global status, I coded each country as being members—or not—in the Group of Eight (G8), a globally recognized international organization of eight of the world’s largest economic and political powers (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, and United Kingdom). In a second step, I sorted countries a second time as being members of the newer G8+5, which includes G8 countries as well as the world’s five leading emerging economies (India, Mexico,

Brazil, China, and South Africa). I then analyzed all mutual exceptionalism invocations across these categories. And indeed, U.S. presidents highly favored G8 countries when elevating nations to the “exceptional” plane of the United States. Specifically, U.S. presidents invoked G8 countries 72% of the time when highlighting mutual exceptionalism. It was even higher when the G8+5 was the reference group. In these cases, a full 88% of all mutual exceptionalism invocations involved G8+5 countries. These findings suggest that U.S. presidents have been intentional in choosing which countries to “exceptionalize” in discourse.

Examples of these invocations were apparent in the foreign speeches. One of the most commonly “exceptionalized” countries was Japan. For example, in a speech before the Japanese Diet (legislature) in 1996, Bill Clinton said, “Today I ask you to look with me ahead to the next 50 years of our partnership. What will it bring and how shall we build it? As the *world’s two largest economies* and two of its strongest democracies, Japan and the United States must forge an alliance for the 21st century.” At the same time, invocations of mutual exceptionalism needn’t directly mention the United States. At times, such a claim was invoked in creative ways. For instance, in his address to the Japanese Diet, Ronald Reagan in 1983 said:

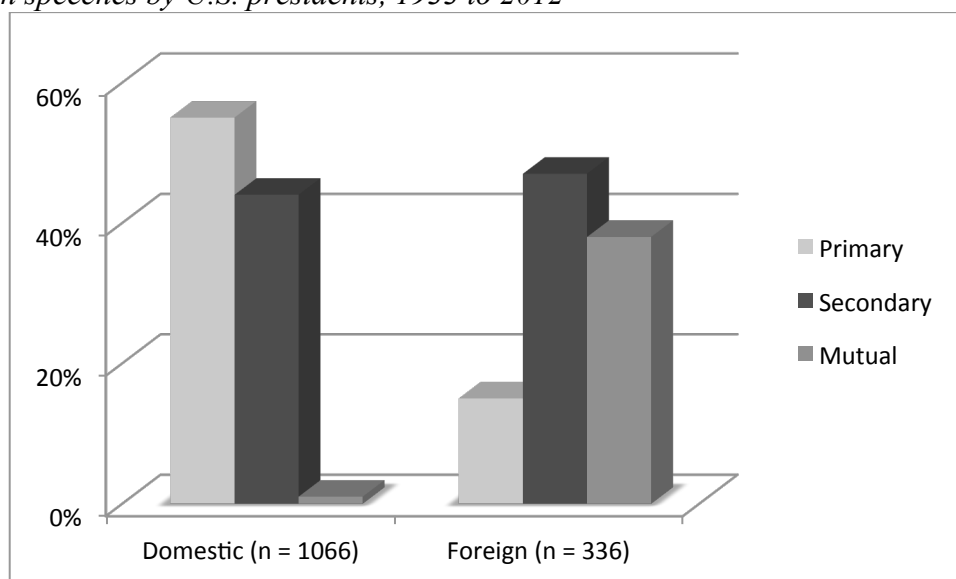
To all those who lack faith in the human spirit, I have just three words of advice: Come to Japan. Come to a country whose economic production will soon surpass the Soviet Union’s, making Japan’s economy the *second largest* in the entire world.... We believe that the currency of the world’s *second largest* free-market economy should reflect the economic strength and political stability that you enjoy.

Similarly, in a joint press conference with Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa of Japan in 1994, Bill Clinton echoed this implicit mutual exceptionalism invocation: “As the world’s *second largest market*, Japan must be our strategic partner in efforts to spur global growth.” By bringing attention to Japan’s standing as the world’s “second” largest economy, U.S. presidents suggested that audiences should fill in the fact that the “first” largest economy was the United States.

Overall U.S. presidents were creative in the ways in which they invoked mutual exceptionalism. For instance, Bill Clinton in 1997 invoked a regionally-derived mutual exceptionalism in a press conference with Brazilian president Fernando Cardozo: “Because we have the *largest economies* and the *most diverse* populations in the hemisphere, Brazil and the United States have both a *special ability* and a *special responsibility* to help lead the Americas into the 21st century.” Many times presidents elevated other countries by likening them to American democracy. Similarly, in a speech before the Parliament of India in 1978, Jimmy Carter said, “I bring with me the warm greetings and good wishes of the people of the *second largest democracy* on Earth, the United States of America, to the people of the *largest democracy*, the Republic of India.” This potential inequality, however, was remedied when Barack Obama addressed the same legislative body in 2010, saying, “I thank you for the great honor of addressing the representatives of more than 1 billion Indians and the world’s *largest democracy*. I bring the greetings and friendship of the world’s *oldest democracy*, the United States of America.” Such creative invocations were evident throughout presidential discourse.

In a final step to understand mutual exceptionalism in the landscape of U.S. presidential addresses both at home and abroad, I examined it in relation to the other two types of explicit American exceptionalism themes, primary and secondary. Specifically, I tallied the amount of all three types of American exceptionalism invocations together and then examined them comparatively to determine which were more common in speeches in both contexts. The results are presented in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3: *Primary, secondary, and mutual themes of American exceptionalism within domestic and foreign speeches by U.S. presidents, 1933 to 2012*



There are several findings of note in Figure 3.3. First, we see the centrality of mutual exceptionalism in highlighting American exceptionalism when U.S. presidents addressed foreign audiences. In these contexts, mutual exceptionalism was highlighted more than twice as many times (38%) as the three primary emphases—singular, superior, and God-favored—combined (15%). Second, when addressing a domestic audience, American presidents have emphasized the primary ideas of American exceptionalism that maintain the United States’ image as the *only* exceptional country. Third, U.S. presidents have invoked American exceptionalism in less assertive manners when addressing foreign audiences, highlighting secondary or mutual exceptionalism themes a full 85% of the time. These findings suggest that these two forms of American exceptionalism were viewed as more strategically beneficial or valuable in foreign contexts because they assert American exceptionalism in potentially less aggressive manners for foreign audiences, while still reaffirming the idea for watchful audiences at home. To those crafting speeches, mutual exceptionalism presents U.S. presidents with a potential “win-win” as it can appeal to audiences abroad and those watching from the United States.

Additional perspectives

The findings provide comparative perspectives on how presidents have invoked American exceptionalism in domestic and foreign contexts. As a final step, I conducted some additional analysis: I examined the types of American exceptionalism themes—primary, secondary, mutual—from three separate perspectives. As a first step, I examined whether presidents in the two major political parties differentially invoked American exceptionalism. Specifically, I compared invocations across political parties. The data are presented in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: *Primary, secondary, and mutual themes of American exceptionalism by Democratic and Republican presidents, 1933 to 2012*

| <i>Types of invocations</i> | Democrats (n=378) | Republicans (n=451) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Primary Speeches present in Average invocations per speech | 28% 0.81 | 27% 0.72 |
| Secondary Speeches present in Average invocations per speech | 39% 0.84 | 31% 0.79 |
| Mutual exceptionalism Speeches present in Average invocations per speech | 18% 0.27 | 7% 0.10 |

Democratic and Republican presidents invoked the primary themes of American exceptionalism in nearly identical amounts, suggesting that the idea of American exceptionalism is so intrinsic in the American psyche that no party “owns” it. Rather, it is an idea that resonates far and wide across the ideological divide. At the same time, there were differences across parties in presidential invocation of secondary and mutual exceptionalism themes. Specifically, Democratic presidents invoked both of these types of American exceptionalism more than Republicans. Specifically, Democrats invoked the secondary themes in 39% of speeches,

whereas Republicans did so in 31% of speeches; Democrats also had a slight edge (.84) over Republicans (.79) in average invocations per speech. Similarly, Democratic presidents invoked mutual exceptionalism in more than twice as many speeches (18%) as Republicans (7%), and on average Democrats highlighted mutual exceptionalism themes almost three times (.27) more per speech than Republican presidents (.10). These findings suggest that Democratic presidents were more willing to highlight American exceptionalism in what have been potentially less aggressive, and therefore more diplomatic, manners.

To further examine this perspective, I next examined how each individual president invoked the three types of American exceptionalism. First I examined these distinctions in domestic speeches. The data are presented in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4: *Primary, secondary, and mutual themes of American exceptionalism by individual presidents in domestic speeches, 1933 to 2012*

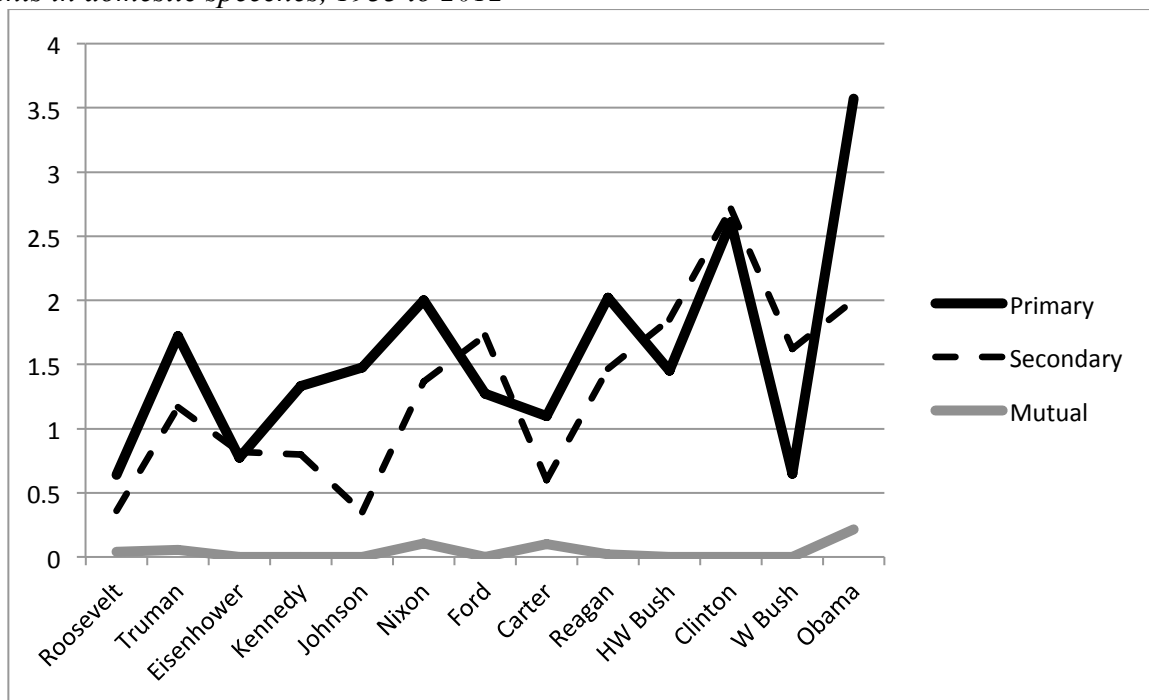


Figure 3.4 shows a number of interesting findings. First, there is an evident spike in the average invocation of primary and secondary exceptionalism in the Truman administration. This

spike, therefore, comes directly following the victory of the United States in World War II, and its emergence as one of two global superpowers. Second, the invocation of the distinct types of American exceptionalism for domestic audiences tends to vary depending more on the individual president than on their party affiliation. For instance, Republican presidents Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan invoked American exceptionalism frequently in speeches, while other Republicans Dwight D. Eisenhower and George W. Bush did so much less frequently. Similarly, Democratic president Jimmy Carter invoked the distinct types of American exceptionalism substantially less than other Democrats Bill Clinton or Barack Obama. Third, in the post Cold-War era (since George H.W. Bush) Democratic presidents have tended to highlight American exceptionalism more on average than Republican counterparts. This finding again runs contrary to the idea that Republican, not Democrats, “own” the idea of patriotism in American politics. These findings suggest that the individual distinctions between presidents are likely more impactful on the way they invoke American exceptionalism for domestic audiences than perhaps their party affiliation.

I then examined these distinctions in foreign speeches. For this particular analysis, I only examined speeches delivered by the four most recent U.S. presidents. I did this for two reasons. First, only these four presidents had enough foreign speeches to analyze to gain a clear average of American exceptionalism invocations. This is because only since the George H. W. Bush administration have joint press conferences become a common practice for U.S. presidents. The addition of these foreign speeches, therefore, provided me with a sufficient number of speeches for examination. Second, the time period chosen represents the post-Cold War era where the United States has been the undisputed political and economic superpower. It is important, then,

to understand how the leaders of a global hegemon communicates their country's power abroad.

These data are in Figure 3.5.

Figure 3.5: *Primary, secondary, and mutual themes of American exceptionalism by individual presidents in foreign speeches, 1989 to 2012*

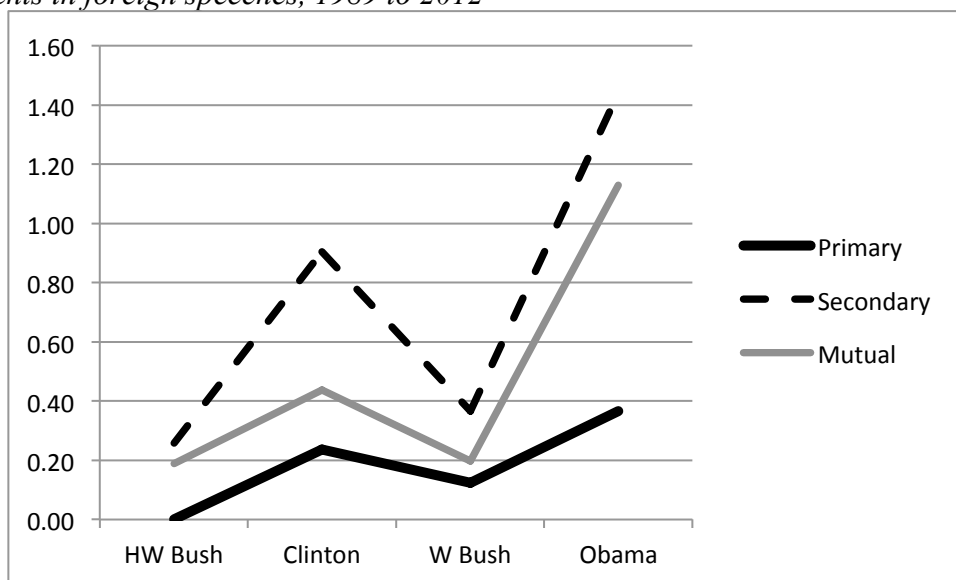


Figure 3.5 shows an interesting story. It merits noting that Democratic presidents invoked all three types of American exceptionalism substantially more than their Republican counterparts. These findings suggest that since the end of the Cold War, Republican presidents have tended to be less aggressive and therefore arguably more diplomatic when they address foreign audiences. One explanation for this is that Republican presidents come under less pressure from their U.S.-based political opposition to assert their patriotism abroad than Democrats. In other words, because Democratic presidents are more frequently challenged about their own patriotism, they might feel a greater need to assert American exceptionalism abroad as a way of disproving these challenges. Of further interest is the fact that regardless of the individual presidents invoking the ideas, the more U.S. presidents invoked any one type of American exceptionalism abroad, the more they were likely to invoke all types of American exceptionalism. For instance, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama highlighted all types of American

exceptionalism on average when addressing foreign audiences, whereas both George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush were much less likely to invoke any of the three. Overall, these findings suggest that since the end of the Cold War, Democrats, and not Republicans, have tended to “own” the idea of American exceptionalism, at least when addressing foreign audiences.

I next examined how U.S. presidents invoked the themes of American exceptionalism in contexts of wartime or peace. For this analysis I adopted the Correlates of War project (2012) definition for when a country is officially involved in an “inter-state” war: the war must involve sustained combat and organized armed forces, resulting in at least 1,000 battle-related combatant fatalities within a 12-month period.³ I determined if a speech was delivered—or not—during a time in which the United States was involved in an inter-state war. The data are presented in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: *Primary, secondary, and mutual themes of American exceptionalism by U.S. presidents in times of war and peace, 1933 to 2012*

| <i>Types of invocations</i> | Wartime (n=347) | Peacetime (n=482) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Primary Speeches present in Average invocations per speech | 22% 0.66 | 31% 0.84 |
| Secondary Speeches present in Average invocations per speech | 27% 0.66 | 40% 0.95 |
| Mutual exceptionalism Speeches present in Average invocations per speech | 13% 0.18 | 11% 0.17 |

³ The dates of wartime included: World War II from 12/07/1941 to 08/14/1945, Korean War from 06/25/1950 to 07/27/1953, Vietnam (Phase II) from 02/07/1965 to 01/27/1973, Gulf War from 01/16/1991 to 04/11/1991, Kosovo from 03/24/1994 to 06/10/1994, and the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars from 10/07/2001 to present time.

Table 3.5 shows that U.S. presidents invoked the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism substantially less in times of war than they did during peacetime. In the case of primary themes, U.S. presidents invoked these themes in 31% of speeches during peacetime but only 22% during wartime, and they invoked these themes more per speech during peacetime (.84) than in times of war (.66). Similarly, U.S. presidents invoked the secondary themes in 40% of speeches during peacetime but in only 27% of speeches in times of war, and they invoked these themes more on average per speech in peacetime (.95) than in times of war (.66). In contrast, there was negligible difference between U.S. presidents' invocation of mutual exceptionalism in peacetime (13%) and wartime (11%). These findings suggest that U.S. presidents were more motivated to invoke the idea that the United States is exceptional when the country was at peace, rather than when it was engaged in armed conflict with another country.

Finally, I examined how U.S. presidents invoked the themes of American exceptionalism in times of U.S. economic recession, compared to times of relative prosperity. For this analysis I consulted the *Timeline of Early Recessions and Depressions (2012)* published by the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* to determine the start and end dates of U.S. economic recessions and depressions since 1933.⁴ I then determined if a speech was delivered—or not—during a time in which the United States was in a recession or depression. The data are in Table 3.6.

⁴ The *Timeline of Early Recessions and Depressions* was constructed from data collected by the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the National Bureau of Economic Research, the Economic History Association, and Duke University. Dates of recession included 08/29 to 03/33, 05/37 to 06/38, 02/45 to 10/45, 11/48 to 10/49, 07/53 to 05/54, 10/57 to 04/58, 04/60 to 02/61, 12/69 to 11/70, 11/73 to 03/75, 01/80 to 07/80, 07/81 to 11/82, 07/90 to 03/91, 03/01 to 11/01, and 12/07 to 06/09.

Table 3.6: *Primary, secondary, and mutual themes of American exceptionalism by U.S. presidents by times of national economic recession and not, 1933 to 2012*

| <i>Types of invocations</i> | In Recession (n=130) | No Recession (n=699) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Primary Speeches present in Average invocations per speech | 40% 0.97 | 25% 0.72 |
| Secondary Speeches present in Average invocations per speech | 37% 0.92 | 34% 0.80 |
| Mutual exceptionalism Speeches present in Average invocations per speech | 10% 0.13 | 12% 0.18 |

There are a number of findings of note in Table 3.6. First, the first row shows that in times of recession, U.S. presidents invoked the primary themes of American exceptionalism substantially more than in times of relative prosperity. Specifically, presidents invoked these themes in 40% of recession-time speeches, but in only 25% of speeches delivered in times of no recession or depression. Furthermore, on average presidents invoked the idea more times per speech in recessions (.97) than in times of relative prosperity (.72). At the same time, there were no real differences in presidential emphasis on secondary or mutual exceptionalism across these contexts. Specifically, in times of recession U.S. presidents invoked the secondary themes in roughly the same amount of speeches (37%) as those delivered in times of growth (34%), and invoked mutual exceptionalism in 10% of speeches during recession compared to in 12% of

speeches during times of growth. There seems, then, to be meaningful differences in presidential emphasis across the types of invocations depending on the state of the economy.

Discussion

In this chapter I examined how U.S. presidents have invoked the idea of American exceptionalism in major speeches before domestic and foreign audiences. I argued that such a culturally potent idea, which positively elevates the United States above other countries, is likely to be pervasive in both domestic *and* foreign speeches, but in differing ways. A number of important findings emerged. First, as expected, U.S. presidents were significantly more likely to emphasize the idea of American exceptionalism in any of its forms—primary, secondary, mutual—when addressing a domestic audience than when speaking to audiences abroad. This is not to say, however, that the idea was rare in presidential discourse abroad. In fact, U.S. presidents invoked the idea in just over one third of foreign speeches. Second, I found, as expected, that when articulating primary themes, U.S. presidents tended to heavily favor the *superior* theme at home and the *singular* theme abroad. This is the first finding that points to the less-aggressive tone that U.S. presidents take when speaking abroad. In that same vein I also found that when invoking the primary themes of American exceptionalism, U.S. presidents used less overtly comparative language when addressing foreign audiences than when speaking in the United States.

Third, as expected, I found that when addressing audiences abroad, U.S. presidents tended to favor the secondary themes of American exceptionalism—model, leader, exempt—significantly more than the more aggressive primary themes. Alternatively, in domestic speeches,

U.S. presidents invoked the secondary themes almost as pervasively as the primary themes and commonly together. Fourth, I found that U.S. presidents invoked the idea of mutual exceptionalism significantly more abroad than in the United States, while I also found that such invocations were not doled out to just any country. In particular, U.S. presidents “exceptionalized” countries that are global economic and political powers more so than less powerful countries. Together these findings suggest that American exceptionalism is at the heart of the image that U.S. presidents seek to paint both at home and abroad. At the same time, however, these findings also indicate that U.S. presidents tend to use very distinct brushes when addressing domestic audience and foreign ones.

In regards to foreign speeches, the results point to two central tendencies in how U.S. presidents articulate American exceptionalism when addressing audiences abroad. On the one hand, the results suggest that U.S. presidents perhaps understand the potentially divisive quality of highlighting such an explicitly comparative idea when addressing foreign audiences. In other words, U.S. presidents employ American exceptionalism themes less in foreign speeches because doing so involves trumpeting the country’s status over supposedly “un-exceptional” others. There is more risk involved, therefore, when employing it abroad than in a domestic setting. On the other hand, the findings also show that U.S. presidents continue to find ways to assert their country’s exceptional status when addressing foreign audiences. Even though they tend to employ more diplomatic ways in which to talk about American exceptionalism, U.S. presidents highlight the idea in one out of every three speeches delivered abroad. These findings support the idea that as part of maintaining the United States’ image as the sole global superpower, U.S. presidents continually assert the country’s exceptional status. In short, U.S. presidents inform their allies and competitors that the United States is the world’s greatest, most powerful country.

In the domestic context, by contrast, the power of highlighting such a cultural idea is perhaps more self-evident because it directly implicates—and in a positive manner—the audience itself (Tajfel, 1981). When U.S. presidents affirm and reaffirm the idea that the United States is the greatest country on earth, the American people in particular are able to derive a sense of pride in playing a part in something so exceptional.

Regardless of *where* the speech was delivered, however, the data also suggest that invoking the idea of American exceptionalism may be more appealing for presidents in certain circumstances or contexts. Specifically, in one body of analysis I found that U.S. presidents highlighted America's exceptional status more in peacetime than in times of war. U.S. presidents perhaps have found it easier—or more essential—to elevate their country to a superior level over other countries at times when it is not in a military competition with any of them. I also found that U.S. presidents have highlighted American exceptionalism themes more when the country is in difficult economic times than when in times of relative prosperity or growth. These findings support the idea that highlighting American exceptionalism in political speeches is a strategic act in attempting to connect with or motivate the American public (see Domke & Coe, 2010). In the case of economic recession, such a rhetorical tactic can be employed to help American citizenry to believe that the United States—over any other country—is uniquely capable of recovering from difficult economic woes. Such an idea, therefore, may inspire the American people to believe in their own unique ability to bring on a more prosperous future. It also, of course, may politically benefit the president who offers such discourse.

Overall, the present study shows just how pervasive the idea of American exceptionalism has been over the past 80 years. It has become a mainstay in U.S. presidential discourse and is infused in the way that many Americans choose to view their own country. As suggested by

these analyses, it is also a concept that transcends political rivalries and ideological divides. Presidents from both major political parties have emphasized it with regularity because it highlights qualities about the country that most every American can relate to, regardless of party orientation. American exceptionalism is therefore a useful rhetorical tool for U.S. presidents within the borders of the United States because it has such wide appeal. American exceptionalism, however, is an idea that has been talked about and debated not only inside the borders of the United States, but in countries around the world. No country in the world is unaware of the hegemonic position of the United States in international relations, nor are they naïve to the fact that many Americans believe themselves and their country to be greater than all others. Such competitive positioning in U.S. presidential discourse, which elevates the United States above other countries, is likely to be less resonant abroad. It is quite possible that people in other countries even agree with certain assertions of American exceptionalism (i.e., the United States is the most powerful country in the world), but may not want to be reminded of their own country's relatively inferior status. And although the present study suggests that U.S. presidents strategically seek ways to highlight this idea in more diplomatic ways when abroad, people in other countries may also see such "diplomatic" language as condescending or inauthentic. Such relationships, therefore, are the focus on Chapter Five.

At the same time, the potential hazards of highlighting American exceptionalism in the United States are also commonly overlooked. For example, the idea continues to be pervasive in American political discourse regardless of its links to more isolationist international attitudes in the American public (Lipset, 1996). Furthermore, the idea has been linked to the belief that the United States should be able to operate outside of international law (Pease, 2009). It is therefore important to understand the impact of this idea in inspiring these and other potentially

controversial domestic and foreign policies in the future. In particular, it is imperative to examine if such messages might spur such attitudes as ethnocentrism, a disregard for international laws, and even support for more aggressive U.S. foreign policies. With this in mind, the next chapter explores the potential effects of messages containing American exceptionalism themes on the way that Americans view the United States' role in the world and the policies it should employ in international affairs.

Chapter Four

American Exceptionalism, Presidential Discourse, and the American Mind

In his 1966 treatise *America and Americans*, John Steinbeck argued that a sense of exceptionalism is deeply embedded in U.S. citizens' understanding of their country. In his words: "We speak of the American Way of Life as though it involved the ground rules for the governance of heaven." Such a perspective, he said, had both positive and negative implications. On the positive side, American exceptionalism is linked to the ideas that the United States should lead the global community, that the United States stands as a symbol of hope and liberty for those who are downtrodden in home countries, and that in the United States anyone, from any place of beginning, can succeed. On the negative side, American exceptionalism is self-aggrandizing, a perspective that encourages citizens to think their country can play by its own rules and need not respect the sovereignty of other countries. In the words of Steinbeck, so entrenched is exceptionalism that even though "[Americans] believe that our government is weak, stupid, overbearing, dishonest, and inefficient," they remain "deeply convinced that it is the best government in the world, and we would like to impose it upon everyone else."

Part of the reason this perspective is so culturally resonant is that U.S. presidents have consistently promoted it to the American people, as we saw in Chapter Three. It is common for people in every country to look to their political leaders when formulating their opinions about their country, its role in the world, and its relative standing compared to the rest of the world

(Anderson, 1986). In the United States, promulgation of American exceptionalism is at the heart of the nation-building process because it works to unite the public under a shared, positive national identity, it lends legitimacy to governmental actions at home and abroad, and it casts a sense of purpose for the country. Putting forth a philosophy of national exceptionalism commonly begins with the president. Regardless of how well the country is doing—whether it is at peace or mired in a war, whether it is soaring in the World Bank’s economic index or in the depths of recession—U.S. presidents have regularly deployed the idea of American exceptionalism. Little is known, however, about the impact of these types of messages on the ways that Americans view the world.

In this chapter I take an important step in exploring the impact that an emphasis on American exceptionalism, by political leaders, may exert on U.S. adults. Specifically, I conducted a message experiment to examine how the articulation of differing types of national exceptionalism impacts impressions of Americans about their country and its relation to the rest of the world. The findings in this chapter present insight regarding the influence of American exceptionalism claims on (1) how Americans conceive of their country as being (or not) exceptional, (2) how they characterize other countries in relation to their country, and (3) the roles they view their country taking in the world. Finally, I examined the effects of these communications on people’s positions and support for a range of contemporary U.S. foreign policy issues.

Theoretical Expectations

The idea of American exceptionalism is deeply infused in U.S. presidential discourse, yet the effects of these communications have not been extensively explored. It is important to

examine the impact of claims about the nation's supposed exceptionalism because of the central role of presidents in defining and perpetuating how the American people understand the political world. In particular, scholarship suggests Americans actively look to their president for cues on how to understand a wide range of issues including domestic and foreign policies, as well as on issues relating to the economy and even morality (Domke & Coe, 2010; Neumann & Coe, 2012). This is particularly true in the context of international affairs because the majority of Americans are simply not commonly exposed to information and perspectives on these issues. In other words, Americans are dependent upon their president—more than any other national political leader—for cues on their country's standing in the world. The fact that U.S. presidents invoke the idea of American exceptionalism so regularly, in a diverse range of contexts, and in repeated fashion all but assures its continued and vibrant position in the American consciousness. In this chapter I seek to understand the effects of such discourse.

Research has shown just how influential political communications can be in a wide range of contexts. For instance, McLeod, Kosicki and McLeod (2009) summarize evidence that communications by political leaders can impact people's electoral choices, civic participation, causal attributions, cultural worldviews, stereotypes, and other impressions. An idea as politically powerful as American exceptionalism, therefore, is likely to have considerable impact when it is articulated by the nation's most powerful and only nationally elected official. Specifically, Neumann and Coe (2012) suggest that the ubiquitous nature of American exceptionalism in U.S. presidential discourse likely also raises the salience of related ideological perspectives and attitudes; for example, an emphasis on American exceptionalism in political messages might spur attitudes Americans hold about the role of the United States in the world, or attitudes about people in other countries and how they compare to Americans in any number of

ways. With this in mind, I have several specific theoretical expectations related to an emphasis on American exceptionalism by presidents.

My first two expectations involve the potential impacts on a cognitive construct I call the *national exceptionalism bias*. This cognitive bias involves the relationship between two distinct types of impressions about national exceptionalism. The first is the belief that one's own country—in this case, the United States—is exceptional in the world. Building on the presidential discourse identified in Chapter Three, I am interested in the perspective that one's country is singular, superior, or God-favored in the world. The second is the overt belief that other countries are inferior by comparison to one's country. In other words, this is the view that other countries are explicitly not exceptional in comparison to one's own country. The national exceptionalism bias is the *combination* of the first, one's belief in their country as exceptional, with the second, their belief in others as inferior by comparison. In conceptual and operational terms, these beliefs can be distinct or can be closely connected.

My first hypothesis focused on the influence of communications invoking any of the three types of American exceptionalism—primary, secondary, mutual—relative to messages containing non-exceptionalism themes. Specifically, I expected that the three types of American exceptionalism would spur a strong national exceptionalism bias in U.S. respondents (H5)—that is impressions of national superiority and foreign inferiority would be strongly linked. I expected this because all three either explicitly or implicitly highlight the nation's supposed superiority and others' supposed inferiority. In other words, because these communications emphasize the idea that the United States is in some way set apart from or above other countries, it will spur people who encounter the messages to think so well of America and so poorly of other nations. Furthermore, because these approaches define the relationship between the United States and the

rest of the world in comparative terms, respondents are likely to link impressions of America with impressions of others. In contrast, when exposed to a message which places the United States on an equal playing field with all other countries around the world, U.S. respondents will be less likely to think in terms of national superiority or other inferiority, spurring a lower national exceptionalism bias.

My second expectation delved further into the potential distinct impacts of each type of American exceptionalism on U.S. respondents' national exceptionalism bias. Specifically, I expected messages employing *mutual exceptionalism* themes to spur a stronger national exceptionalism bias in U.S. respondents than those with the *primary* or *secondary* American exceptionalism ones (H6). I expected this because unlike primary and secondary American exceptionalism, mutual exceptionalism ties the United States' elevated status to the "exceptional" image of the other country. This perspective seems likely to create dissonance in the minds of U.S. respondents because it does not match their own understanding of the United States as being the *only* exceptional country. Such rhetoric, therefore, is likely to spur a national exceptionalism bias. In other words, I expected these respondents to react by accentuating not only their own sense of the United States' *singularly* exceptional status, but their idea that other countries are specifically inferior by comparison. The other two themes, in contrast, do not challenge the idea that the United States alone is exceptional. So mutual exceptionalism is more threatening to U.S. self-identity at some important level, and as a result I expect it to trigger more of a national exceptionalism bias.

My third expectation examined the impacts of distinct American exceptionalism—or non-exceptionalism—messages on U.S. respondents' attitudes about the role of the United States in the world. Specifically, I expected emphases on primary and secondary American

exceptionalism to spur stronger support among Americans for the ideas that the United States should stand as a model, a global leader, or exempt from international rules and institutions (H9). I expected this because both primary and secondary American exceptionalism explicitly place the United States in a special category in relation to the rest of the world. In both of these messages, the relationship between the United States' special status and the idea that it should have similarly "special" roles in the world is facilitated. The mutual exceptionalism and non-exceptionalism, in contrast, do the exact opposite. Both deemphasize America's special or singular status in the world, making it more difficult for respondents to argue that the United States should have a similarly *singular* role in the world.

In addition to examining these hypotheses, I also explored the distinct effects of these communications on people's attitudes regarding a range of contemporary U.S. foreign policy matters. I did not have specific expectations here, but I wished to understand the impact of American exceptionalism themes on the common situations, concerns, and emergencies faced or spurred by United States on a daily basis. Specifically, I examined the impact of these messages on American attitudes about the following real world issues: whether the United States should employ military to deter Iran from gaining nuclear weapons; whether the United States should encourage countries such as North Korea and China to become democracies; whether the United States should cease to be a part of the United Nations; whether the United States should intervene in the current conflict in Syria; whether the United States should be the most generous international donor in cases on natural disaster abroad; whether the United States should protect human rights in the world even if it conflicts with national interests; and whether the United States should be able to remove foreign leaders from power if leaders deem it necessary. Taken together, all of these components provide unique perspectives on how such a culturally resonant

concept as American exceptionalism can impact how Americans understand their country's role in the complicated world of international relations.

Experiment Procedures and Measurements

To examine these expectations I conducted a message experiment in which respondents were randomly assigned to one of five conditions. In four of the conditions, respondents were asked to read a news article and then to fill out a questionnaire. The fifth condition was a control condition in which respondents were not presented with a news story and were asked only to fill out a questionnaire. All four of the articles simulated actual news reports by the Associated Press on a recent State of the Union address. Each one reported exclusively on the speech itself, including quotes and paraphrasing from the address. I specifically chose the State of the Union because of its official importance in the U.S. political landscape and because it is a presidential context in which invocations of American exceptionalism are regularly present. As a result, an article on this particular address lent itself to my ability to repeatedly emphasize American exceptionalism without it seeming unnatural or contrived.

The four news story conditions were set up to test the potential impact of the distinct types of American exceptionalism on U.S. respondents. The first news article contained a number of all three *primary* American exceptionalism themes—singular, superior, God-favored. In crafting the story, I attempted to employ the types of primary themes in accord with the relative amount that they have been articulated in domestic presidential discourse, as identified in Chapter Three. This meant that I favored the *superior* and *singular* themes over the *God-favored* one, which I invoked only once in the entire news story. The second news story featured *secondary* American exceptionalism. I created this news condition by swapping out each

American exceptionalism invocation in the primary story with secondary invocations. As a result, the invocations were the only parts manipulated in the news story. This article presented the secondary themes in rough proportionality to their presence in presidential speeches. The third news story contained mutual exceptionalism themes. All invocations from the primary story were again replaced. Notably, I chose to compare the United States in this condition to Great Britain, Japan, and China because of their relative power *and* because they were not all distinctly allies with the United States. The final news condition contained what I call “non-exceptional” messages. Specifically, I replaced all American exceptionalism invocations from the other conditions with statements about the United States’ relative equal status with the rest of the world. Each step in this chapter examines the differing effects of these message conditions.

Data were collected throughout the month of June 2012. The questionnaire took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. The sample consisted of a total of 1177 U.S. adults who were randomly assigned to the different experimental conditions. Individuals not 18 or older or not U.S. citizens were discarded from the analysis. The study population was slightly more male (62%) than female and consisted predominantly of white respondents (89%). The mean age of the sample was 40 to 49 years of age. Education was measured on a 6-point scale (*Mdn* and *Mode* = 5, completed college degree). Finally, political ideology was measured on a 7-point scale ranging from “Extremely liberal” to “Extremely conservative” ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.72$).

Before testing my expectations, I ran reliability tests on a number of composite variables central to this study. I started first with the two separate components of the national exceptionalism bias. The first component, a belief in America’s special status, contained seven items measured on a four-point scale with the following options: 1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Agree, 4 – Strongly Agree. The measures were: Americans are a uniquely blessed

people ($M=2.78$, $SD=.89$); God has chosen the United States to play a special role in the world ($M=1.90$, $SD=.90$); The United States is different from every other country on earth ($M=2.76$, $SD=.75$); America has a unique set of values that sets it apart from the world ($M=2.72$, $SD=.73$); The American people are the greatest people in the world ($M=2.34$, $SD=.80$); America is not the greatest country on earth (reverse coded, $M=2.71$, $SD=.77$); No other country will ever be as great as the United States ($M=2.04$, $SD=.76$). I combined all of these items into a composite variable, which received a Cronbach's alpha of .81. According to Reinard (2006), scores above .70 are deemed acceptable levels of reliability for indexes.

The second component of the national exceptionalism bias consisted of six measures that were measured on the same four-point scale. This second component, a degradation of others, consisted of the following measures: In comparison to the United States, other countries are simply inferior ($M=2.09$, $SD=.73$); People in other countries are not as favored by God as Americans are ($M=1.50$, $SD=.68$); People in other countries don't value freedom like we do in the United States ($M=2.06$, $SD=.84$); In the eyes of God, other countries are inferior to the United States ($M=1.40$, $SD=.58$); Other countries have inferior values to those in the United States ($M=1.92$, $SD=.64$); Other countries are just as unique as the US (reverse coded, $M=2.03$, $SD=.67$). I combined all of these items into a composite variable, which received a Cronbach's alpha of .77.

I then examined the reliability of the three measures of people's attitudes about "global roles" for the United States. The first examined people's belief that the United States should stand as a *global model* for the rest of the world. This component consisted of seven items measured on the same four-point scale: Other countries should try to make their governments as much like America's as possible ($M=2.13$, $SD=.66$); The world would be more peaceful if other

countries were more like the United States ($M=2.47$, $SD=.64$); If another country is better than the United States in some way the United States should model itself after them ($M=2.56$, $SD=.77$); The United States has much to learn from other countries (reverse coded, $M=2.07$, $SD=.67$); Other countries should be allowed to decide their own economic system, even if they don't choose capitalism (reverse coded, $M=1.80$, $SD=.52$); Other countries should be allowed to decide their own style of government, even if they don't choose democracy (reverse coded, $M=1.80$, $SD=.53$); The United States should follow the examples set by other successful countries (reverse coded, $M=2.24$, $SD=.62$). I combined all of these items into a composite variable, which received a Cronbach's alpha of .67. Coefficient scores between .60 and .70 represent marginal, albeit adequate, levels of reliability (Reinard, 2006).

The second global role tapped whether the United States should stand as a *global leader*. This component consisted of the following seven items on the same four-point scale: It is America's responsibility to promote democracy in other countries ($M=2.40$, $SD=.74$); The United States should lead the way in spreading freedom around the world ($M=2.72$, $SD=.71$); The United States should focus less on international affairs (reverse coded, $M=2.52$, $SD=.81$); America is better off when the government focuses its attention on domestic issues (reverse coded, $M=2.16$, $SD=.73$); It is not the responsibility of the United States to protect the peace in world affairs (reverse coded, $M=2.24$, $SD=.64$); The United States should engage with other countries as their equal, not as their leader (reverse coded, $M=1.93$, $SD=.67$); The United States should let other countries take the lead in world affairs (reverse coded, $M=2.58$, $SD=.63$). I combined all of these items into a composite variable, which received a Cronbach's alpha of .69.

The third global role tapped whether the United States should be *exempt* from the same rules and regulations followed by other countries. This component consisted of the following

seven items on the same four-point scale: It is acceptable for the United States to invade other countries if it is for the right reasons ($M=2.41$, $SD=.81$); The United States should always stand up for what is right, even if it means breaking the rules ($M=2.58$, $SD=.71$); The United States should be able to sidestep the United Nations when necessary ($M=2.50$, $SD=.88$); The United States should not always have to play by the same rules as other countries ($M=2.07$, $SD=.74$); The United Nations Security Council should have final say over all U.S. military action abroad (reverse coded, $M=3.02$, $SD=.82$); The United States should have to abide by all international laws even if they conflict with America's national interests (reverse coded, $M=2.40$, $SD=.86$); The United States should always have to consult with other powerful countries before taking any serious action in world affairs (reverse coded, $M=2.42$, $SD=.80$). I combined all of these items into a composite variable, which received a Cronbach's alpha of .78.

Respondents were also asked about their attitudes toward a range of seven contemporary American foreign policy issues. These measures consisted of the following: The United States should pressure countries like China and North Korea to become democracies ($M=2.20$, $SD=.65$); Whenever natural disasters hit other countries, the United States has a responsibility to be the most generous contributor ($M=2.20$, $SD=.72$); The United States should always defend human rights in the world, even if doing so is against America's own national interests ($M=2.62$, $SD=.75$); The United States should invade Iran if it does not dismantle its program to build nuclear weapons ($M=2.14$, $SD=.80$); The United States should no longer be a part of the United Nations ($M=1.92$, $SD=.89$); The United States should be able to remove leaders in other countries from power when necessary ($M=2.04$, $SD=.77$). Each of these items was treated as a stand-alone item in my analysis.

Results

In my analysis, I examined the distinct impacts of each of the types of American exceptionalism messages—primary, secondary, mutual—relative to the non-exceptional emphasis or control condition. First, I expected that the three news articles containing *any* kind of exceptionalism claims would induce a stronger national exceptionalism bias than the other conditions. Second, I expected that the news article highlighting the *mutual* exceptionalism themes would provoke a stronger national exceptionalism bias than the other two exceptionalism themes. Third, I anticipated that the news articles with the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism—more than mutual exceptionalism, non-exceptionalism, and control—would spur stronger support for the positions that the United States should be a model for the world, a global leader, or a country that does not have to abide by the same rules as other countries. In the following sub-sections, I examine each of these predictions and then dive deeper into some interesting patterns of data.

American exceptionalism themes and bias

I tested the chapter's first hypothesis (H5)—that U.S. adults exposed to messages containing any type of exceptionalism theme would exhibit a stronger national exceptionalism bias than those not exposed to such themes or any message at all—in two separate ways. First, I ran independent sample t-tests between the aggregated exceptionalism message conditions and the combined non-exceptionalism message and control conditions to compare mean scores on national exceptionalism bias. To fully examine this cognitive bias, I first ran t-tests on each separate component—American exceptionalism worldview and degradation of others. I then examined the mean scores of those components combined as a cognitive bias. As context for the analysis, responses on the dependent variables ranged from -2.67 to 2.82 for American

exceptionalism worldview, -1.74 to 3.52 for degradation of others, and -4.40 to 6.34 for national exceptionalism bias. The results are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: *Mean scores on national exceptionalism bias, between message condition types.*

| | Non-Exceptionalism Conditions | Exceptionalism Conditions |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| American Exceptionalism Worldview | -.080 (n=390) | .051 (n=607) |
| <i>t=1.72, df 995, p<.05</i> | | |
| Degradation of Others | -.075 (n=390) | .046 (n=607) |
| <i>t=2.06, df 995, p<.05</i> | | |
| National Exceptionalism Bias | -.169 (n=390) | .108 (n=607) |
| <i>t=2.07, df 995, p<.05</i> | | |

There are a number of interesting findings in Table 4.1. First, the bottom row of the table shows that respondents exposed to one of the three message conditions containing the ideas of American exceptionalism in any form showed a higher national exceptionalism bias ($M=.108$) than those who were not exposed to the idea ($M=-.169$). These findings support Hypothesis 5. Second, the findings in the first two rows indicate that the exceptionalism emphases sparked an increase in both respondents' own sense of American exceptionalism ($M=.051$ vs. $M=-.080$) and in their willingness to evaluate other countries in a more negative comparative light ($M=.046$ vs. $M=-.075$). In other words, American exceptionalism messages impacted both components of the cognitive bias.

The second hypothesis delved into the potential differing impacts of the three types of American exceptionalism emphases on national exceptionalism bias. Specifically, I expected that respondents exposed to the mutual exceptionalism condition would exhibit a higher national

exceptionalism bias than those exposed to the primary or secondary themes. To test this expectation, I ran a one-way ANOVA; it indicated that national exceptionalism bias differed significantly across the three message conditions, $F(2, 593) = 9.42, p < .001$. However, post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test showed that Hypothesis 6 was not supported: the news article highlighting the primary themes of American exceptionalism spurred the strongest national exceptionalism bias. Specifically, those exposed to primary themes had a significantly higher national exceptionalism bias ($M=.540$) than those exposed to messages highlighting secondary ($M=-.226, p < .001$) and mutual exceptionalism themes ($M=.080, p < .05$). There were no significant differences in the cognitive bias between those exposed to the secondary and mutual exceptionalism themes.

To obtain a more complete understanding of these relationships, I examined the impacts of these three types of exceptionalism on the two distinct components of the national exceptionalism bias. Specifically, I ran two one-way ANOVAs to test each component independently. The first ANOVA compared the impacts of primary, secondary, and mutual exceptionalism on the American exceptionalism worldview. The ANOVA showed significant differences in this component of the cognitive bias across the three message conditions, $F(2, 615) = 6.38, p < .01$, but post-hoc comparisons showed only a significant difference between the primary ($M=.220$) and secondary ($M=-.119$) message conditions, with the mutual message condition ($M=.082$) not significantly different from either. I then tested the impacts of the types of American exceptionalism on the second component of the national exceptionalism bias, degradation of others. The one-way ANOVA showed significant differences in the cognitive bias across the three messages, $F(2, 625) = 9.59, p < .001$. Post-hoc comparisons indicated that respondents exposed to the primary themes of American exceptionalism ($M=-.295$) degraded

other countries at a higher level than respondents in both the secondary ($M=-.090$) and mutual message conditions ($M=-.028$). In sum, the primary themes spurred much more harsh reactions toward other nations than the other two American exceptionalism conditions, and more favorable impressions of America relative to the people who received the secondary themes.

The third hypothesis addressed the potential impacts of the messages on attitudes about distinct roles for the United States in the world. Specifically, I expected emphases on primary and secondary American exceptionalism to spur stronger support for the ideas that the United States should stand as a model, as a global leader, or be exempt from international rules and institutions. To test these impacts, I conducted three one-way ANOVAs examining the differences between all five conditions—primary, secondary, mutual, non-exceptionalism, and control. I first tested the impacts of these messages on the idea that the United States should stand as a global model for the rest of the world to follow. The ANOVA showed no significant differences between conditions, $F(4, 989) = 1.89, p = n.s.$ Next, I ran an ANOVA to test the impacts of these communications on people's attitudes about the United States' role as a global leader. Results again showed no significant differences between conditions, $F(4, 980) = .49, p = n.s.$ Finally, I ran a third ANOVA to test the impact of these messages on people's attitudes about whether the United States should be exempt from the rules that other countries follow. Again, the results showed no significant differences between conditions, $F(4, 971) = 1.29, p = n.s.$ In sum, study participants' attitudes about the United States' role as a global model, as a global leader, or as a country exempt from international rules were not significantly differentially affected by any of the conditions. Hypothesis 9 was not supported.

Primary themes of American exceptionalism

The impact of the primary themes of American exceptionalism in testing hypothesis 2 led me to conduct some further analysis exploring how this message condition fared relative to all other conditions combined. A message containing the primary, and therefore overt, themes of American exceptionalism may, in fact, exert a stronger impact on U.S. audience members than all the other message types in this experiment combined. This may be because this emphasis is explicit; that is, it does not “sugarcoat” the claims of American distinctness and superiority in the world. As a result, such explicitly comparative messages likely make distinctions between the United States and other countries highly salient in the minds of U.S. respondents. In contrast, none of the other conditions communicate as starkly a hierarchical distinction between the United States and other countries. With this in mind, I combined the secondary, mutual, non-exceptionalism, and control conditions into a single category so as to contrast it directly with the primary message condition. In particular, I tested the distinct impacts of these differing conditions on: (1) the national exceptionalism bias, as well as its components; (2) the three global roles (model, leader, exempt); and (3) distinct attitudes people hold about a specific range of American foreign policy options.

I first evaluated the relative impact of the primary American exceptionalism message—in comparison to all other conditions—on national exceptionalism bias. I tested the differential impacts of this message in two steps. First, I ran independent samples t-tests to examine potential differences in means on each separate component—American exceptionalism worldview and degradation of others—between the primary exceptionalism condition and all other conditions. I then ran a separate t-test on the constructed variable of national exceptionalism bias. The findings are in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Mean scores on national exceptionalism bias, between primary exceptionalism and all other conditions

| | All Other Conditions | Primary Exceptionalism |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| American Exceptionalism Worldview | -.052 (n=820) | .221 (n=194) |
| | $t=3.47, df 1012, p<.001$ | |
| Degradation of Others | -.068 (n=845) | .295 (n=191) |
| | $t=4.60, df 1034, p<.001$ | |
| National Exceptionalism Bias | -.126 (n=797) | .540 (n=185) |
| | $t=4.51, df 980, p<.001$ | |

Table 4.2 shows a number of interesting findings. First, the bottom row shows that those exposed to the primary themes of American exceptionalism exhibited a significantly stronger national exceptionalism bias than those in the other conditions ($M=.540$ vs. $M=-.126$, $p<.001$). Second, the top row indicates that U.S. adults who were exposed to the explicit primary themes of American exceptionalism exhibited a stronger sense of American exceptionalism than those in the other conditions ($M=.221$ vs. $M=-.052$, $p<.001$). Third, findings in the second row show that U.S. respondents exposed to primary themes of American exceptionalism exhibited a significantly stronger tendency to degrade other countries than those in the other conditions ($M=.295$ vs. $M=-.068$, $p<.001$). These findings suggest that U.S. respondents exposed to the more hierarchically comparative themes of American exceptionalism often went a step farther and painted other countries in an inferior light. Overall, these findings suggest that the primary themes of American exceptionalism were singularly impactful on people's national exceptionalism bias in all of its forms.

To further examine these impacts, while controlling for other potential predictive factors, I conducted a hierarchical linear regression across experimental conditions with *national exceptionalism bias* as the dependent variable. In this analysis, I included an examination of political ideology as a potential mediating factor between communication emphasis on American exceptionalism and people's national exceptionalism bias. I entered predictive variables in three distinct blocks, in the following order: gender, level of education, age, race, religion, income, political ideology, and party affiliation in the first block; experimental version (primary exceptionalism themes vs. all other conditions combined) in the second block; and a single item in the third block that accounted for interactions between (a) experimental condition and political ideology. The results are in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: *Predicting national exceptionalism bias, isolating the impact of the primary American exceptionalism message*

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------|---------|
| | β | β | β |
| Gender | -.10** | -.09** | -.09** |
| Education Level | -.09** | -.09** | -.09** |
| Age | .15*** | .16*** | .16*** |
| Race (White/Other) | .07** | .07** | .17* |
| Religion (Christian/Other) | -.18*** | -.18*** | .18*** |
| Income | -.02 | -.02 | -.01 |
| Ideology | .33*** | .33*** | .28*** |
| Party | -.06 | -.05 | -.06 |
| Condition (Primary vs. Others) | | -.12*** | -.26** |
| Condition x Political Ideology | | | -.15* |
| | R^2_{Adjusted} | | |
| | .28 | .30 | .30 |
| | F for change in R^2_{Adjusted} | 18.05*** | 3.92* |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 4.3 shows some interesting findings. First, 30% of variance in national exceptionalism bias was accounted for by this particular model; one would always like more, but this is fairly sizeable. Second, a number of factors are statistically significant in predicting national exceptionalism bias. For instance, the model shows that gender, education, age, race, religion and political ideology were among the significant predictors of the cognitive bias. Third, the model shows that exposure to the primary themes of American exceptionalism, in contrast to

the other experimental conditions, had a significant and positive impact on people's national exceptionalism bias. Furthermore, experimental condition had the second-highest standardized beta ($\beta = -.26$) in the final model. This means that among all the significant predictors for national exceptionalism bias, the primary themes were among the strongest. Fourth, political ideology was particularly impactful on people's national exceptionalism bias, in two ways. For one, political ideology had the strongest standardized beta ($\beta = .28$) in the final model, with conservatives more likely than liberals to exhibit the cognitive bias. And secondly, there was a statistically significant interaction between political ideology and experimental condition, which indicates that the primary themes of American exceptionalism were particularly impactful on liberals' cognitive biases. Overall, these findings bolster earlier findings and suggest that the more explicit themes of American exceptionalism exhibit deep impacts on the attitudes of Americans about their country's relative standing in comparison to the rest of the world.

Next, I evaluated the relative impact of primary American exceptionalism themes on people's attitudes about three distinct global roles for the United States in the world—that is, should it be a global model, should it be a global leader, or should it be exempt from the same rules as other countries? To test the potential differential impacts of primary American exceptionalism themes against all other conditions in the experiment, I ran independent samples t-tests on all three composite variables to examine the means differences of each separate global role. The results are in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4. Mean scores on potential global roles for the United States, between primary exceptionalism and all other conditions

| | All Other Conditions | Primary Exceptionalism |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Global Model | -.035 (n=810) | .144 (n=184) |
| | <i>t</i> =2.20, <i>df</i> 992, <i>p</i> =.05 | |
| Global Leader | -.023 (n=804) | .074 (n=181) |
| | <i>t</i> =1.19, <i>df</i> 983, <i>n.s.</i> | |
| Exempt | -.025 (n=795) | .128 (n=181) |
| | <i>t</i> =1.86, <i>df</i> 974, <i>p</i> <.05 | |

There are several findings in Table 4.4. First, the findings in the top row show that those exposed to primary themes of American exceptionalism were more likely than those in the other conditions to think that the United States should stand as a model for the rest of the world to follow ($M=.144$ vs. $M=-.035$, $p=.05$). These findings suggest that overt language about America's exceptional status spurs U.S. adults to think that other countries would benefit from emulating America. Second, the second row shows a similar pattern in the data in that those exposed to the primary themes of American exceptionalism were more likely to think of the United States as a global leader than those in the other conditions, but the differences were not statistically significant ($M=.074$ vs. $M=-.023$). Third, findings in the third row show that U.S. respondents exposed to the primary themes of American exceptionalism were more likely than those in the other conditions to think that the United States should be exempt from international laws and rules ($M=.128$ vs. $M=-.025$, $p<.05$). These findings suggest that messages with a strong emphasis on the United States' exceptional, and even superior, status seem to spur a similarly

strong sense that international laws and institutions are more for governing other countries than for the United States.

To gain a more robust understanding of these impacts I conducted regression analyses on each of the three global roles. Specifically, I conducted separate hierarchical linear regressions across experimental conditions (primary vs. all others) with *model*, *leader* and *exempt* as the dependent variable. At the same time, I was interested in determining whether people's national exceptionalism bias mediated the impact of the messages emphasizing the primary themes of American exceptionalism on people's attitudes regarding global roles for the United States. To explore these relationships, I entered the independent variables in three distinct blocks, in the following order: gender, level of education, age, race, religion, income, political ideology, and party affiliation in the first block; experimental version (primary exceptionalism themes vs. all other conditions combined) in the second block; national exceptionalism bias in the third block; and a single item in the fourth block that accounted for interactions between (a) experimental condition and political ideology. The results are in Tables 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7. I address each in turn.

Table 4.5: *Predicting attitudes that the United States should stand as a global model, isolating the impact of the primary American exceptionalism message*

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | β | β | β | β |
| Gender | -.01 | -.01 | .05 | .04 |
| Education Level | -.15*** | -.15*** | -.09** | -.09** |
| Age | .17*** | .18*** | .08** | .09** |
| Race (White/Other) | .02 | .02 | -.02 | -.02 |
| Religion (Christian/Other) | -.14*** | -.15*** | -.04 | -.04 |
| Income | .03 | .03 | .04 | .04 |
| Ideology | .26*** | .26*** | .06 | .06 |
| Party | -.08 | -.08 | -.05 | -.06 |
| Condition (Primary vs. Others) | | -.08** | -.01 | -.02 |
| National Exceptionalism Bias | | | .59*** | .55*** |
| Condition * Bias | | | | .05 |
| | R^2_{Adjusted} | | | |
| | .22 | .23 | .47 | .47 |
| | F for change in R^2_{Adjusted} | 7.30*** | 361.60*** | 2.41 |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The findings in Table 4.5 indicate that, in the final equation, the variables account for 47% of variance in people's views whether the United States should be a global model. The data, however, show that experimental condition was not a statistically significant predictor once national exceptionalism bias was entered into the model. Further, no interaction effect was found between the experimental condition and national exceptionalism bias. In other words, there were other stronger factors in the equation. Most notably, national exceptionalism bias was by far the

strongest predictor of attitudes about the U.S. role, with a standardized beta ($\beta=.55$) five times larger than any other significant factors. This illustrates the dominant predictive power that the cognitive bias played in this equation. Furthermore, the cognitive bias alone accounted for 24% of variance in the equation. This is important to note because U.S. respondents' national exceptionalism bias was so strongly impacted by the primary themes of American exceptionalism. These findings also further point to the central role that this cognitive bias, regardless of message conditions, plays in predicting U.S. respondent attitudes about the United States' stance in the world.

Table 4.6 shows the regression results for people's impressions of whether the United States should be a global leader.

Table 4.6: *Predicting attitudes that the United States should stand as a global leader, isolating the impact of the primary American exceptionalism message*

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | β | β | β | β |
| Gender | -.09** | -.09* | -.06 | -.06 |
| Education Level | .11** | .11** | .15*** | .15*** |
| Age | .10* | .10** | .03 | .04 |
| Race (White/Other) | .05 | .05 | .02 | .02 |
| Religion (Christian/Other) | -.10** | -.10** | -.03 | -.03 |
| Income | -.02 | -.02 | -.01 | -.01 |
| Ideology | .13* | .13* | -.01 | -.01 |
| Party | .04 | .04 | .06 | .06 |
| Condition (Primary vs. Others) | | -.04 | -.01 | .00 |
| National Exceptionalism Bias | | | .41*** | .39*** |
| Condition * Bias | | | | .03 |
| | R^2_{Adjusted} | | | |
| | .06 | .06 | .18 | .18 |
| | F for change in R^2_{Adjusted} | 1.60 | 116.46*** | .494 |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Findings in Table 4.6 indicate that exposure to a message stressing the primary themes of American exceptionalism was not a significant predictor upon people's attitudes about their country's role as a global leader, once the additional variables were taken into account.

Furthermore, these findings indicate that there was not an interaction effect between experimental condition and national exceptionalism bias. There are a few findings of note, though. First, the total variance explained by the equation was 18%, much lower than in the

regression analysis focused on the United States as a global model. Second, in the final equation there were only two variables found to be predictive of these attitudes. On the one hand, level of education was found to be significant predictor with a standardized beta of .15 in the final model. Specifically, respondents with higher levels of education were found to be more supportive of this global role than their lower educated counterparts. On the other hand, national exceptionalism bias was the strongest of the two predictors ($\beta=.39$) and captured more than half (12%) of the total variance accounted for in the final equation. These findings suggest that while national exceptionalism bias played a central role in predicting these attitudes, there were perhaps other important factors that were not accounted for in this model.

Table 4.7 shows the regression results for people's impressions of whether the United States should be exempt from international rules.

Table 4.7: *Predicting attitudes that the United States should be exempt from international laws and institutions, isolating the impact of the primary American exceptionalism message*

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | β | β | β | β |
| Gender | -.14*** | -.14*** | -.10*** | -.10*** |
| Education Level | .03 | .12 | .06 | -.06 |
| Age | .03 | .04 | -.02 | .02 |
| Race (White/Other) | .00 | .00 | -.03 | -.03 |
| Religion (Christian/Other) | -.08* | -.09** | -.01 | -.01 |
| Income | .05 | .05 | .06 | .06 |
| Ideology | .44*** | .44*** | .31*** | .31*** |
| Party | -.04 | -.03 | -.02 | -.02 |
| Condition (Primary vs. Others) | | -.05 | .00 | .01 |
| National Exceptionalism Bias | | | .39*** | .41*** |
| Condition * Bias | | | | .03 |
| | R^2_{Adjusted} | | | |
| | .31 | .31 | .41 | .41 |
| | F for change in R^2_{Adjusted} | 2.69 | 140.73*** | .549 |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Similar to the two previous regression models, the findings in Table 4.7 show that exposure to the primary themes of American exceptionalism was not a significant predictor upon people's views of whether their country should have to abide by similar rules as other countries, once the additional variables were taken into account. Additionally, these findings indicate again that there was no significant main effect for experimental condition or interaction effect between experimental condition and national exceptionalism bias. At the same time, there are a number of

findings worth noting. First, the final model accounted for a substantial amount of variance in attitudes about U.S. exemption (41%). Second, gender was found to be a significant predictor in the model ($\beta = -.10$), with men more likely than women to support the idea that the United States should be exempt from international laws. Third, political ideology was the second largest predictor in the model ($\beta = .31$), with conservatives more likely than liberals to support United States exemption. Finally, and most notably, national exceptionalism bias again was the largest significant predictor in the model ($\beta = .41$), accounting for 10% percent of variance in the equation. These findings further support the idea that this cognitive bias plays a significant and central role—and notably more so than political ideology—in predicting U.S. adult attitudes about the United States' role in the world.

I then turned to examine the impact of the primary themes of American exceptionalism on responses to a range of distinct types of foreign policies that the United States might employ in contemporary world politics. In particular, I was interested in the impacts that these messages might exert on different types of international stances. For instance I was interested in the potential impacts of primary exceptionalism on whether U.S. adults thought the United States (1) should be the most generous contributor whenever natural disasters hit other countries, (2) should always defend human rights even if doing so is against American national interests, (3) should pressure other countries to become democracies, (4) should no longer participate in the United Nations, (5) should be able to remove other countries' leaders if deemed necessary by the U.S. government, and (6) should invade Iran if it doesn't dismantle its nuclear weapons program. To test these impacts I ran separate independent samples t-tests on the four single-item measures. Results are in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: *Mean scores on distinct foreign policy stances by the United States, isolating the impact of the primary American exceptionalism message*

| | All Other Conditions | Primary Exceptionalism |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Whenever natural disasters hit other countries, the United States has a responsibility to be the most generous contributor | 2.19 (n=841) | 2.24 (n=190) |
| | $t = .84, df 1029, n.s.$ | |
| The United States should always defend human rights in the world, even if doing so is against America's own national interests | 2.63 (n=829) | 2.59 (n=187) |
| | $t = -.64, df 1014, n.s.$ | |
| The United States should pressure countries like China and North Korea to become democracies | 2.19 (n=845) | 2.27 (n=191) |
| | $t = 1.66, df 1016, p < .05$ | |
| The United States should no longer be a part of the United Nations | 1.90 (n=797) | 2.02 (n=185) |
| | $t = 1.67, df 1025, p < .05$ | |
| The United States should be able to remove leaders in other countries from power when necessary | 2.00 (n=797) | 2.18 (n=185) |
| | $t = 2.79, df 1013, p < .01$ | |
| The United States should invade Iran if it does not dismantle its program to build nuclear weapons | 2.11 (n=820) | 2.24 (n=194) |
| | $t = 1.88, df 996, p < .05$ | |

Findings in Table 4.8 present a consistent pattern regarding the impact of messages employing primary exceptionalism themes relative to subjects in the other conditions. First of all, the findings show no significant differences in the first two statistical tests on the more soft, diplomatic foreign policy positions. On the other hand, in all of the final four statistical tests U.S. adults exposed to primary themes of American exceptionalism were more likely to support the more assertive U.S. foreign policies than people in the other experimental conditions. The

differences across conditions were not especially large, but they were consistently statistically significant due to the large number of subjects. Overall, these findings suggest that touting American exceptionalism in an overt fashion spurs a stronger national bravado when it comes to American foreign policy. Furthermore, these findings suggest that the other experimental messages or control condition did not evoke such an assertive stance in U.S. adults because the messages themselves were less boisterous.

In a final step, I wanted to test the differential impacts of primary exceptionalism messages among two distinct demographic groupings in the sample. Specifically, in the data analysis for this chapter I noticed that both age and education levels played central roles in several instances. Specifically, both were found to be predictive in three of the four regression analyses above. I therefore wanted to examine how the different message types—primary versus all other conditions—impacted impressions for people of differing education or age. For age, I divided the age groups at the 40-year-old line because scholarship suggests that voters roughly over 40 generally tend to be more attentive to political news (Mindich, 2005) and therefore may be more likely to be impacted by these types of messages. For education, I split the measure into two separate groups—high (respondents with bachelor degrees or higher) and low (respondents with less than a bachelor degree)—because levels of education have been found to be predictive of political attitudes, and in particular of more tolerant attitudes across cultures (Bobo and Licari, 1989; Galston, 2001).

To test possible differential impacts among people at differing positions of age and education, I ran separate independent sample t-tests within each demographic category to determine the impact of the primary exceptionalism condition on attitudes toward the three global roles. First I ran t-tests within each education level—high and low. I then tested the

impact of these messages within each age range—under 40 and those 40 and older. The results are in Tables 4.9 and 4.10. I address each in turn.

Table 4.9: Mean scores on attitudes toward global roles, between primary exceptionalism and all other conditions, by education level

| | Model | | Leader | | Exempt | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| | All other conditions | Primary exceptionalism | All other conditions | Primary exceptionalism | All other conditions | Primary exceptionalism |
| Low Education | | | | | | |
| Mean attitude | .102 (n=305) | .383 (n=66) | -.153 (n=308) | -.002 (n=66) | -.047 (n=302) | .171 (n=63) |
| Difference statistic | $t=2.05, df\ 369, p<.05$ | | $t=1.12, df\ 372, n.s.$ | | $t=1.69, df\ 363, p<.05$ | |
| High Education | | | | | | |
| Mean attitude | -.127 (n=480) | -.008 (n=112) | .063 (n=474) | .112 (n=109) | -.005 (n=469) | .087 (n=112) |
| Difference statistic | $t=1.17, df\ 590, n.s.$ | | $t=.46, df\ 581, n.s.$ | | $t=.85, df\ 579, n.s.$ | |

There are a couple notable findings in Table 4.9. First, for those with lower levels of education, the message condition highlighting the primary themes of American exceptionalism elicited significantly stronger attitudes on both the view that the United States should be a global model and that it should be exempt from the international rules that govern all countries. Second, the different conditions were not found to have a significant impact on respondent attitudes about whether the United States should be a global leader. Although, the mean score was higher for the primary condition, the difference was not found to be statistically significant. Third, for

respondents with higher levels of education, the findings show no discernable differences toward any of the global roles between people receiving the primary themes and other conditions. These findings show that the messages explicitly highlighting the country's exceptional status were more impactful on how less-educated U.S. adults viewed their country's role in the world than their more-educated counterparts.

Table 4.10 shows the t-test results for people's impressions about the different international roles of the United States, divided by age range.

Table 4.10: Mean scores on attitudes toward global roles, between primary exceptionalism and all other conditions, by age range

| | Model | | Leader | | Exempt | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| | All other conditions | Primary exceptionalism | All other conditions | Primary exceptionalism | All other conditions | Primary exceptionalism |
| Under 40 | | | | | | |
| Mean attitude | -.403 (n=184) | -.223 (n=48) | -.321 (n=180) | -.039 (n=46) | -.227 (n=179) | -.251 (n=49) |
| Difference statistic | $t=1.11, df 230, n.s.$ | | $t=1.59, df 224, n.s.$ | | $t=-.16, df 226, n.s.$ | |
| 40 and over | | | | | | |
| Mean attitude | .073 (n=601) | .265 (n=131) | .068 (n=601) | .116 (n=130) | .040 (n=589) | .275 (n=127) |
| Difference statistic | $t=2.06, df 730, p<.05$ | | $t=.52, df 729, n.s.$ | | $t=2.40, df 714, p<.01$ | |

Table 4.10 has a couple of interesting findings. First, the data show that for U.S. adults under the age of 40, the primary themes of American exceptionalism elicited no substantial

distinction in attitudes about any of the global roles that the United States should take. In other words, regardless of the condition they received, their attitudes stayed relatively similar. Second, and in contrast, the data show that for U.S. adults 40 years of age and older there were significant differences between conditions in attitudes about two of the three global role categories.

Specifically, older U.S. adults exposed to the primary themes of American exceptionalism were more likely to support the views that the United States should stand as a global model and that it should be exempt of international rules than those exposed to any of the other conditions. Third, it merits noting that the mean scores on all three of the global roles were substantially higher for U.S. adults 40 years of age and older than their younger counterparts. In other words, they not only supported these global roles on average more than younger respondents, but these attitudes were impacted more by the primary message condition. These findings indicate that U.S. adults 40 years of age and older were more likely to be impacted by messages containing those ideas than younger participants.

Discussion

In this chapter I explored how U.S. adults respond to political messages that emphasize, or not, the idea that the United States is a unique, and perhaps superior, country to the rest of the world. The findings in Chapter Three showed these types of communications to be widespread in U.S. presidential discourse, indicating that U.S. adults have been exposed extensively to this cultural idea throughout their lifetimes. The findings in the previous chapter, however, also suggested that presidents communicate American exceptionalism in a number of creative ways, both when addressing foreign and—directly relevant to the purposes of the present chapter—domestic audiences. Specifically, Chapter Three showed that U.S. presidents have highlighted

three separate types of American exceptionalism in their discourse—primary, secondary, and mutual exceptionalism. It is my theoretical position that the American public is likely to react in distinct manners to these distinct themes. The goal of the present chapter, therefore, was to test the differential impacts of messages highlighting these types of American exceptionalism on a number of attitudes including: whether Americans view their own country as exceptional; how they characterize other countries in relation to the United States; the roles they believe their country should play in the world; and a number of distinct foreign policy positions. A number of important findings emerged from this analysis.

First, U.S. adults who were exposed to any of the three types of American exceptionalism exhibited a stronger national exceptionalism bias than those either in the control condition or those exposed to messages not highlighting any American exceptionalism themes. Specifically, those exposed to the primary, secondary, or mutual exceptionalism themes tended to have a relatively greater sense that the United States is different from or superior to all other countries. Furthermore, these impacts were found upon both components of the cognitive bias. In other words, when exposed to any theme of American exceptionalism—whether it highlighted the country’s special status explicitly, implicitly, or in combination with another country—U.S. adults were more likely to think of their country as exceptional in comparison with all other countries. These findings are revealing for two reasons. On the one hand, they illustrate the outright power of the idea of the United States as an exceptional place in the world on the American public. In particular, people’s own sense on national exceptionalism can be amplified through exposure to presidential rhetoric, which makes the idea salient in their minds. Such a direct and unimpeded effect is likely highly desired by U.S. presidents. On the other hand, such rhetoric can have what is arguably a more contentious effect. In the process of priming a sense of

national exceptionalism for their national public, U.S. presidents also evoke a stronger sense that other countries are inferior by comparison to the United States. The danger of the type of rhetoric then, is that it might also spur negative attitudes toward other national groups as inferior, such as xenophobia and discrimination against immigrant groups.

Second, I found that the primary themes of American exceptionalism in particular evoked the strongest sense of national exceptionalism. This finding ran contrary to my expectation that mutual exceptionalism, and not the primary themes, would spur the strongest cognitive bias in U.S. respondents. I had expected this dynamic because the mutual themes challenge the idea held by many Americans that their country is *alone* exceptional by explicitly pointing out relationships of equal or relatively equal status between the United State and other countries. I, therefore, expected U.S. adults to feel the need to make up for this discrepancy by heightening their own sense of national exceptionalism. Instead, messages underscoring the *primary* themes of American exceptionalism by far had the strongest impact on the cognitive bias. The results, however, are not counterintuitive. They suggest that the actual impact of this cultural idea was much more straightforward. In other words, when told by their president that their country is the greatest on earth, U.S. adults tend to believe it more than when the idea of American exceptionalism is more nuanced or implicit in the message itself. This is particularly important to note because, as Chapter Three showed, these explicit, primary themes are by far the most prominently emphasized by U.S. presidents in their domestic national speeches.

Third, I found the national exceptionalism bias to be a product of a number of contributing factors among my sample of U.S. respondents. In particular, political ideology exhibited a strong two-fold impact on people's sense of national exceptionalism. On the one hand, I found that Republicans—more so than both Independents and Democrats—were more

likely to hold a stronger national exceptionalism bias in general. This was true of both components of the cognitive bias. Specifically, Republicans were much more likely in general to view the United States as exceptional and to paint other countries as inferior. On the other hand, I found that the different message conditions impacted Democrats more than Republicans when it came to national exceptionalism bias. In other words, Democrats (but not Republicans) exposed to the primary themes exhibited a significantly higher cognitive bias than those exposed to any of the other messages. One explanation for this dynamic might be that respondents on the distinct sides of the political divide reacted differently to the messages because of their overall opinion of President Barack Obama. It is possible that the messages may have had a stronger impact on Republicans had the source been a president from their own party. Employing Obama as the primary source for the messages, however, increased the external validity of the findings overall because it emulates the real conditions under which Americans are exposed to such rhetoric.

Fourth, I found that messages highlighting the primary themes also exhibited a strong impact on U.S. adult attitudes toward the specific global roles that the United States should play in the world. It is important to note that the findings, however, showed differential support for only two of the three global roles contained in the present study. Specifically, the findings did not show a differential impact of the primary themes of American exceptionalism (versus all others) on attitudes on the view that the United States should stand as a global leader. One possible explanation is that the idea of American leadership is so engrained in the U.S. consciousness that the message conditions had little impact overall on U.S. adult attitudes about it. At the same time, the primary themes *did* have strong differential impact on the other two global roles. Specifically, the data show that those exposed to the messages containing primary themes were more likely to support the idea that the United States should stand as a model for

the rest of the world to follow. In other words, when exposed to messages that overtly set the United States on a superior pedestal, U.S. respondents were more likely to think that other countries should be more like their country. Such attitudes may seem on the surface to be generally positive because in this view the United States stands exemplary of country-based “best practices” from which other countries could benefit. At the same time, however, such attitudes may also be linked to negative attitudes such as the forceful expectation that other countries *have* to become like the United States.

Similarly, the findings show that exposure to the primary themes of American exceptionalism also spurred stronger support for the idea that the United States should be exempt from the same rules that other countries have to follow. The idea that the United States has special responsibilities in the world has long been tied to the perspective that the only way to live up to those responsibilities is to sidestep the rules followed by other countries (Hietala, 2003; Pease, 2009). Such an idea is widely contentious both at home and abroad. My findings show just how impactful it can be when a president invokes the idea of American exceptionalism, that exposure to just the suggestion of America’s superior place in the world can spur strong support for more unilateral and isolationist approaches to international relations. At the same time, the analysis also showed that these impacts were moderated by two separate, but centrally important demographic criteria—age and level of education. Specifically, I found that U.S respondents 40 years of age and older and less-educated respondents were more likely to be impacted by the primary themes of American exceptionalism.

Finally, the findings also showed that messages with the primary themes of American exceptionalism exhibited strong, differential impact on U.S. adult attitudes on a range of assertive U.S. foreign policies. Specifically, I found that those exposed to the primary themes

were more likely than in the other experimental conditions to support the ideas that the United States should: (1) pressure countries such as China and North Korea to become democracies, (2) withdraw as a member of the United Nations, (3) be able to remove leaders in other countries from power when necessary, and (4) invade Iran if it does not dismantle its nuclear weapon program. At the same time, I found that these messages did not have the same effect on the two more diplomatic postures included in the analysis. Specifically, I found no differential impact of primary themes on whether Americans thought the United States should be the largest contributor in cases of natural disasters abroad or whether they agreed that the United States should always defend human rights abroad, even when it ran contrary to national interests. These findings lend support to the assertion that by trumpeting American exceptionalism in domestic speeches, U.S. presidents can spur an array of potentially aggressive and negative attitudes in the American public when it comes to international relations. This means that even when U.S. presidents employ American exceptionalism as a simple tool of national motivation and inspiration, such a rhetorical act might also spur a more assertive stance in the American public when it comes to their relations with the rest of the world. With this in mind, I now turn to examine the impacts that these messages have on how people in another country view Americans and their government.

Chapter Five

American Exceptionalism, Presidential Discourse, and the *Mexican* Mind

In a famous essay *Mexico and the United States*, Mexican author and Nobel laureate Octavio Paz (1985) argued that Mexico's proximity to the United States is an omnipresent reality in the minds of Mexican people. In his words, "Ever since we Mexicans began to be aware of national identity—in about the middle of the eighteenth century—we have been interested in our northern neighbors" (p. 357). Over time, the United States has not always had a positive image in the minds of the Mexican people. According to Paz, many Mexicans view the United States as a country that regularly forgets that "exceptional" is a quality that applies not only to itself, but to the rest of the world as well, countries that Paz refers to as the "others." Indeed, he wrote, Americans often fail to remember that the rest of the world might have their own ideas about what country is exceptional, saying "[n]ot only do we 'others' make up the majority of the human race, but also each marginal society, poor though it may be, represents a unique and precious version of mankind" (p. 376). It well may be, therefore, that espousing American exceptionalism can be seen as a direct affront to the national character of other countries and to the value they place on their cultures.

It is possible, however, that U.S. presidents have not always been aware of the potential negative inter-cultural impacts of trumpeting the idea of American exceptionalism. According to former U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Jeffery Davidow (2004), the United States can be likened to a bear in a forest. In his view, the bear is aggressive when it needs to be and makes no apologies for doing what is necessary to keep itself on the top of the food chain. Most of the time, however, the bear simply saunters through the forest unaware that because of its size it regularly steps on

other animals without noticing. Mexico, according to Davidow, is more like a porcupine that is sensitive to everything the bear does and is prepared to release its spines at any potentially threatening move by the bear. In other words, Mexicans are ever watchful of what the United States does. Little empirical research, however, has explored how this dynamic plays out when U.S. presidential communications traverse the U.S.-Mexican border.

In this chapter I explore whether U.S. presidential emphases on the idea of American exceptionalism influence the impressions of foreign audiences. Specifically, I conducted a message experiment with a Mexican population to gain insight into how the identified American exceptionalism themes affect Mexicans' views and understandings of the standing of their own country and the United States. The findings provide insight into the impacts of American exceptionalism claims on (1) conceptions among Mexicans of their country as exceptional (or not), (2) how they characterize other countries in relation to Mexico, (3) attitudes toward the United States in particular, and (4) views of the roles of the United States in the world. Finally, I examined the potential effects of these communications on people's support for a range of contemporary U.S. foreign policies, including issues of bilateral importance between the United States and Mexico.

Theoretical Expectations

I have several expectations about how U.S. presidential emphasis on American exceptionalism may influence a Mexican population. My first expectation examines the potential impact of messages highlighting the distinct types of American exceptionalism on Mexican respondents' *national exceptionalism bias*. I adapted my focus on this cognitive bias from my Chapter Four research to this context by asking Mexican respondents to evaluate the exceptional

status of their own country, not the United States. I expected U.S. presidential messages highlighting the *primary* or *secondary* American exceptionalism themes to spur a stronger Mexican national exceptionalism bias among Mexican respondents than messages with *mutual exceptionalism* or *non-exceptionalism* themes (H7). I expected this because both primary and secondary exceptionalism themes provide more of an affront to the way that foreign, and in this case Mexican, citizens prefer to understand their own country. In other words, because primary and secondary American exceptionalism place the United States at a in a singularly powerful position in contrast to other countries, Mexican respondents may feel that their national identity is being threatened. If so, they are likely to reinforce their sense of national exceptionalism by painting their country as being exceptional above all other countries. In contrast, I expected the mutual exceptionalism message to be perceived by Mexican respondents as being less aggressive because it elevates their country to the same level of the United States. Similarly, Mexican respondents are likely to see the non-exceptionalism messages as being conciliatory and less directly aggressive toward their own sense of national exceptionalism.

My second expectation focuses on whether the distinct types of American exceptionalism themes influence the attitudes of Mexican respondents regarding the United States and the American people. Specifically, I expected messages with *primary and secondary* themes to spur less positive attitudes toward the United States and Americans than those in the other conditions (H8). I expected this because the primary and secondary themes are likely to be perceived as more aggressive because, again, they paint the United States as being in a singularly iconic position on the global stage. On the other hand, both the mutual and the non-exceptionalism conditions contain a more diplomatic tone when evaluating the United States in relation to the rest of the world. Specifically, the mutual exceptionalism condition works to elevate the other

country at the same time as it elevates the United States, so Mexicans should be more likely to feel warmly toward the United States. The non-exceptionalism condition accomplishes this in a related, albeit distinct, manner, by placing the United States on an equal playing field with all other countries. Such a rhetorical act is likely to be perceived by a Mexican audience as humble, and therefore, more diplomatic and conciliatory. Mexican respondents, therefore, are more likely to perceive the United States as less aggressive in these conditions.

My third expectation addresses the potential impact of these messages on the types of global roles that Mexican respondents believe the United States should play in the international community. Specifically, I expected messages with *mutual exceptionalism* and *non-exceptionalism* themes to spur stronger support among Mexican respondents than messages with *primary* or *secondary* themes for the ideas that the United States should stand as a model, should be a global leader, or should be exempt from international rules and institutions (H10). I expected this because, as stated above, the primary and secondary themes are more likely to be perceived by Mexican audiences as overly aggressive and potentially threatening to their sense of national exceptionalism. In response, I expect Mexican audiences to seek ways to further level the playing field between the United States and the rest of the world. Such messages, therefore, are likely to spur stronger opposition to any idea that the United States should have a special role to play in the world. In the mutual and non-exceptionalism conditions, however, this threat is likely to be assuaged by the diplomatic tones of the messages themselves, potentially eliciting stronger support for the notion that the United States should hold a special place in the world.

In addition to examining these hypotheses, I also explored the potential effects of the exceptionalism themes on impressions of contemporary U.S. foreign policy, including bilateral relations between the United States and Mexico. I was interested in gaining a deeper

understanding about the range of influences exerted by messages highlighting American exceptionalism on the opinions held by Mexican audiences about their neighbor to the north and its relationship with their country. In regards to general U.S. foreign policies, I examined the impact of the messages on Mexican attitudes on the same matters examined in the previous chapter—regarding U.S. intervention in other countries such as Iran and North Korea, U.S. involvement in the United Nations, and whether the United States should be generous with aid in cases of natural disaster and abuse of human rights. On bilateral policies, I examined the impact of the exceptionalism messages on Mexican attitudes about whether the United States should take more responsibility in combating narcotics traffickers in Mexico, whether Mexico is better off when it does not seek help from the United States, whether NAFTA should be eliminated or renegotiated, whether Mexico should work more with other Latin American countries instead of with the United States, and whether the United States or Mexico (or both) are more to blame for the drug violence in Mexico. Taken together, these components provided a robust understanding of whether and how American exceptionalism messages impact Mexican attitudes about themselves and toward the United States.

Experiment Procedures and Measurements

To examine these expectations I conducted an experiment—similar to the one in Chapter Four—in which respondents were randomly assigned to one of five conditions. In four message conditions, respondents were asked to read a news article and then complete a questionnaire. A fifth condition was a control in which respondents were not presented with a news story, but were directed to fill out the questionnaire. All four of the articles simulated actual news reports by *El Universal*, a large, national Mexican newspaper. I chose *El Universal* because it is

distributed throughout the country and it has a reputation as relatively neutral in political ideology. The news stories reported on a (fictitious) speech delivered by Barack Obama at the opening of the 6th Summit of the Americas in Cartagena, Colombia. Each news story highlighted quotes from Obama and paraphrased other parts of the supposed speech. I chose the Summit of the Americas because of its central importance in U.S.-Latin American relations and because it is an event that is regularly covered in international news. This meant that I was able to repeatedly emphasize the American exceptionalism themes without the news article seeming contrived.

The four news story conditions paralleled those in Chapter Four and were set up to test the potential impact of the distinct types of American exceptionalism on Mexican respondents. The first news article contained quotes of President Obama employing a number of the three *primary* American exceptionalism themes—singular, superior, God-favored. The invocations of American exceptionalism included in this message condition mostly “exceptionalized” the United States in comparison to the rest of the world and not just the Latin American countries involved in the Summit of the Americas. The second news story emphasized the *secondary* themes of American exceptionalism. In this condition each American exceptionalism invocation was replaced with secondary invocations. The secondary themes included references to the United States as a global leader and model, but at times also referred to the United States as taking a leadership role in the Americas specifically. The third news story emphasized *mutual exceptionalism* themes, which again replaced all primary invocations from the first news story. In this news story, I focused all mutual invocations on “exceptionalizing” Mexico with the United States. In other words, the quotes from Obama talked about Mexico and the United States as being the greatest or most economically prosperous countries in the region. The final news condition replaced any exceptionalism themes with “non-exceptional” ones. Specifically, I

replaced all American exceptionalism invocations with statements about how the United States is an equal player among all the countries in the hemisphere.

Data were collected between August 24 and September 8, 2012. Respondents were recruited from undergraduate courses at a large, public university in Guanajuato, Mexico. Students were offered the opportunity to participate in the study, which was conducted on site with paper questionnaires and took students about 15-20 minutes to complete. The sample consisted of a total of 583 students who were randomly assigned to the different experimental conditions, which allowed for high internal validity and control upon analysis. Demographically, respondents' mean age was between 18 and 20 ($SD=.54$), 53.9% were female, 79.6% were Catholic, 43.9% self-identified as politically left-leaning, 43.5% as politically right-leaning, and 12.7% identified as politically centrist. Respondents also identified the political party with which they most identified. A full 73.2% identified with the three largest and most influential parties in Mexico: the PAN (29.7%), PRI (19.4%), and PRD (24.1%), while 26.8% identified with smaller parties or were unaffiliated.

After collecting the data, I ran reliability tests on variables central to the analysis in this chapter. First, I examined the two components of the national exceptionalism bias, Mexican exceptionalism worldview and degradation of other countries. The first component contained seven items measured on a four-point scale with the following options: 1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Agree, 4 – Strongly Agree. The measures were: Mexicans are a uniquely blessed people ($M=1.78$, $SD=.77$); God has chosen Mexico to play a special role in the world ($M=1.97$, $SD=.94$); Mexico is different from every other country on earth ($M=3.37$, $SD=.77$); Mexico has a unique set of values that sets it apart from the world ($M=2.70$, $SD=.88$); The Mexican people are the greatest people in the world ($M=2.23$, $SD=.76$); No other country will ever be as great as the

Mexico ($M=2.22$, $SD=.89$). I combined all of these items into a composite variable, which received a Cronbach's alpha of .60.

The second component of national exceptionalism bias consisted of six measures that were measured on the same four-point scale. This second component, a degradation of others, consisted of the following measures: In comparison to Mexico, other countries are simply inferior ($M=2.13$, $SD=.82$); People in other countries are not as favored by God as Mexicans are ($M=2.12$, $SD=.92$); People in other countries don't value life like we do in Mexico ($M=2.20$, $SD=.84$); In the eyes of God, other countries are inferior to Mexico ($M=1.42$, $SD=.67$); Other countries have inferior values to those in Mexico ($M=2.22$, $SD=.88$); Other countries are just as unique as Mexico (reverse coded, ($M=2.08$, $SD=1.01$)). I combined all of these items into a composite variable, which received a Cronbach's alpha of .53.

Because the reliability scores were not satisfactory for the two sub-components to stand alone, I added all of the items together and created a composite variable of national exceptionalism bias, which received a Cronbach's alpha of .71.

Next, I tested the reliability of respondents' general attitudes toward the United States and the American people. This focus contained these items: The United States is generally a force for good in the world ($M=1.67$, $SD=.66$); The United States is generally an arrogant country ($M=2.75$, $SD=.81$); The United States is often disrespectful of other governments ($M=2.63$, $SD=.84$); The United States often defends other countries when they are in trouble or need help ($M=2.34$, $SD=.81$); Americans are often disrespectful of other cultures ($M=2.73$, $SD=.92$); The American people are often generous to other countries in need of help ($M=2.32$, $SD=.69$); The American people generally don't care about people in other countries ($M=2.52$, $SD=.83$); In general, Americans are good people ($M=2.58$, $SD=.72$). After reverse-coding all of

the negative evaluations to match the positive ones, I combined all of these items into a composite variable, which received a Cronbach's alpha of .70. To be specific, lower scores on this variable indicated more negative evaluations of the United States and Americans, while higher scores indicated more positive evaluations.

I then tested the reliability of the three measures of people's attitudes about "global roles" for the United States. The first examined people's belief that the United States should stand as a global *model* for the rest of the world. This component consisted of six items measured on the same four-point scale: Other countries should try to make their governments as much like America's as possible ($M=1.86$, $SD=.82$); America's economic system should serve as a model for the rest of the world ($M=2.33$, $SD=.83$); Other countries should be allowed to decide their own economic system, even if they don't choose capitalism (reverse coded, $M=1.67$, $SD=.76$); Other countries should be allowed to decide their own style of government, even if they don't choose democracy (reverse coded, $M=1.78$, $SD=.87$); The world would be more peaceful if other countries were more like the United States ($M=1.72$, $SD=.75$); America's democracy should serve as an example for new democracies in the world ($M=2.35$, $SD=.85$). I combined all of these items into a composite variable, which received a Cronbach's alpha of .68. I moved forward with this variable because coefficient scores between .60 and .70 represent an adequate, albeit less than ideal, level of reliability (Reinard, 2006).

The second global role tapped whether the United States should stand as a global *leader*. This component consisted of the following seven items on the same four-point scale: It is America's responsibility to promote democracy in other countries ($M=1.75$, $SD=.87$); The United States should lead the way in spreading freedom around the world ($M=2.22$, $SD=.95$); The United States should focus less on international affairs (reverse coded, $M=2.78$, $SD=.82$);

America is better off when the government focuses its attention on domestic issues (reverse coded, $M=2.67$, $SD=.87$); It is not the responsibility of the United States to protect the peace in world affairs (reverse coded, $M=2.13$, $SD=.90$); The United States should engage with other countries as their equal, not as their leader (reverse coded, $M=1.42$, $SD=.73$); The United States should let other countries take the lead in world affairs (reverse coded, $M=1.91$, $SD=.75$); The United States should lead in the economic development of the world ($M=1.70$, $SD=.87$). The reliability test for these variables received a Cronbach's alpha of .53. Therefore, because these measures did not reach a high enough level of reliability, I did not create a composite variable.

The third global role tapped whether the United States should be *exempt* from the same rules and regulations followed by other countries. This component consisted of the following seven items on the same four-point scale: It is acceptable for the United States to invade other countries if it is for the right reasons ($M=1.65$, $SD=.84$); The United States should always stand up for what is right, even if it means breaking the rules ($M=2.25$, $SD=.97$); The United States should be able to sidestep the United Nations when necessary ($M=1.42$, $SD=.70$); The United States should not always have to play by the same rules as other countries ($M=2.22$, $SD=.93$); The United Nations Security Council should have final say over all U.S. military action abroad (reverse coded, $M=1.97$, $SD=.91$); The United States should have to abide by all international laws even if they conflict with America's national interests (reverse coded, $M=1.93$, $SD=.97$); The United States should always have to consult with other powerful countries before taking any serious action in world affairs (reverse coded, $M=1.71$, $SD=.77$). The reliability test for these variables did not receive a sufficient score (.44), so I did not create a composite variable.

Respondents were also asked about their attitudes toward seven contemporary U.S. foreign policy issues and five issues of bilateral importance to both countries. The first set of

measures consisted of the following: The United States should pressure countries like China and North Korea to become democracies ($M=2.34$, $SD=.91$). Whenever natural disasters hit other countries, the United States has a responsibility to be the most generous contributor ($M=2.32$, $SD=.90$); The United States should always defend human rights in the world, even if doing so is against America's own national interests ($M=2.83$, $SD=.94$); The United States should invade Iran if it does not dismantle its program to build nuclear weapons ($M=2.05$, $SD=.98$); The United States should no longer be a part of the United Nations ($M=1.72$, $SD=.78$); The United States should be able to remove leaders in other countries from power when necessary ($M=1.93$, $SD=.89$). The second set of measures, on U.S.-Mexico relations, consisted of the following: The United States needs to take more responsibility in combating narco traffickers in Mexico ($M=2.72$, $SD=1.03$); Mexico is better off when it does things without the help of the United States ($M=2.47$, $SD=.81$); Mexico, Canada, and the United States should eliminate or renegotiate NAFTA ($M=1.94$, $SD=.91$); Mexico should work more with other Latin American countries than with the United States ($M=2.95$, $SD=.85$). A final question asked which country is most to blame for the drug violence in Mexico (United States 10%, Mexico 11%, both 79%). Each of these items was treated as a stand-alone item in my analysis.

Results

In my analysis I examined the impacts of the three distinct types of American exceptionalism messages—primary, secondary, mutual—in comparison to the non-exceptional and control conditions. First, I expected the primary and secondary exceptionalism themes to spur a stronger Mexican national exceptionalism bias than the mutual, non-exceptional, and control conditions. Second, I expected the mutual exceptionalism, non-exceptionalism, and

control conditions to engender more positive attitudes toward the United States and the American people than the primary and secondary American exceptionalism conditions. Third, I expected the mutual exceptionalism, non-exceptionalism, and control conditions to spur stronger support for the ideas that the United States should stand as a model, should be a global leader, or should be exempt from international rules and institutions than the primary and secondary conditions. In the following sub-sections, I examine these predictions and then explore more in-depth some interesting patterns in the data.

National exceptionalism bias

The first hypothesis was that Mexican respondents exposed to the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism would exhibit a stronger national exceptionalism bias than those exposed to the mutual, non-exceptionalism, and control conditions. To test this, I ran two separate independent sample t-tests. First, I compared the impact of the primary condition versus all other conditions on mean scores of national exceptionalism bias. As context for the analysis, responses ranged from -2.73 to 4.37 for the measure of national exceptionalism bias.

Table 5.1. *Mean scores on national exceptionalism bias, between the primary exceptionalism condition and all other conditions.*

| | All Other Conditions | Primary Exceptionalism |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| National Exceptionalism Bias | .033 (n=446) | -.139 (n=107) |
| <i>t</i> = -1.60, <i>df</i> 551, <i>p</i> = .06. | | |

The results show that the primary themes of American exceptionalism messages did differentially impact Mexican respondents' sense of national exceptionalism, but such influence was *the reverse* of what I had predicted. Specifically, Table 5.1 shows that the primary themes of American exceptionalism spurred weaker ($M = -.139$), not stronger, national feelings in Mexican

respondents than the other messages ($M=.033$). In other words, the trumpeting of America’s exceptional place in the world in the article spurred Mexican respondents *away* from seeing their own country in the same terms. These findings are interesting, but they did not lend support to Hypothesis 7.

Next, I tested the relative impact of the secondary exceptionalism condition compared to all other message conditions. To test this I ran an independent samples t-test between the secondary exceptionalism message and all other conditions on mean scores of national exceptionalism bias. The findings are in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2. *Mean scores on national exceptionalism bias, between secondary exceptionalism condition and all other conditions.*

| | All Other Conditions | Secondary Exceptionalism |
|------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| National Exceptionalism Bias | -.028 (n=445) | .113 (n=108) |
| $t=1.310, df 551, p < .10.$ | | |

The results show that the secondary themes of American exceptionalism also had an impact, albeit more marginal, on Mexican respondents’ national exceptionalism bias—and this time in the hypothesized direction. Specifically, Table 5.2 shows that the secondary themes of American exceptionalism spurred stronger feelings of national exceptionalism ($M= .113$) among Mexican respondents than the other messages combined ($M= -.028$). These findings lend some support for Hypothesis 7.

Attitudes Toward the United States and the American People

The second hypothesis examined the impact of different types of American exceptionalism themes on Mexican respondents’ general positive and negative attitudes toward the United States. Specifically, I expected the primary and secondary message conditions to spur

less positive attitudes toward the United States and Americans than the other conditions. To test this expectation, I ran two separate independent sample t-tests: the first on the impact of the primary condition and the second on the impact of the secondary condition. To gain a more complete understanding of the impact these messages had, I also ran separate t-tests on the two components of the variable—negative evaluations and positive evaluations—to discover which, if any, was impacted more. Overall evaluations were created by reverse-coding the negative attitude measures and adding them to the positive attitude measures. As a result, a high score meant more positive evaluations of the United States and the American people, whereas a low score meant the opposite. The results from the first test are in Tables 5.3 and the results of the second are in Table 5.4.

Table 5.3. *Mean scores on evaluations of the United States, between primary exceptionalism message and all other condition types.*

| | All Other Conditions | Primary exceptionalism |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Positive Evaluations | .012 (n=459) | -.053 (n=111) |
| | <i>t</i> = -.622, <i>df</i> 568, <i>n.s.</i> | |
| Negative Evaluations | -.016 (n=458) | .064 (n=113) |
| | <i>t</i> = .770, <i>df</i> 569, <i>n.s.</i> | |
| Overall Evaluations | .019 (n=455) | -.079 (n=111) |
| | <i>t</i> = -.933, <i>df</i> 564, <i>n.s.</i> | |

The results from the first test between primary exceptionalism and all other conditions did not show significant differences. Specifically, overall attitudes toward the United States and the American people in the primary conditions were more negative ($M = -.079$) but not significantly

different from all the other conditions ($M = .019$), $t = -.933$, $df 564$, *n.s.* These findings, therefore, did not lend support for Hypothesis 8. Table 5.4 shows the results of the second test.

Table 5.4. *Mean scores on evaluations of the United States, between secondary exceptionalism message and all other condition types.*

| | All Other Conditions | Secondary Exceptionalism |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Positive Evaluations | .009 (n=458) | -.039 (n=112) |
| <i>t = -.456, df 568, n.s.</i> | | |
| Negative Evaluations | -.018 (n=461) | .077 (n=110) |
| <i>t = .899, df 569, n.s.</i> | | |
| Overall Evaluations | .020 (n=456) | -.084 (n=110) |
| <i>t = -.987, df 564, n.s.</i> | | |

This analysis did not show significant differences either. Specifically, respondent overall attitudes toward the United States in the secondary thematic condition were found to be more negative ($M = -.084$) than attitudes in the other conditions ($M = .020$) but the differences were not large, $t = -.987$, $df 564$, *n.s.* Hypothesis 8, therefore, did not receive initial support.

To further test the potential impact of these messages I examined the joint impact of the primary and secondary messages compared to all other conditions combined. Specifically, I ran an independent sample t-test between the aggregated exceptionalism conditions—primary and secondary—against the other combined conditions, comparing mean scores on evaluations of the United States. The findings are in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5. Mean scores on evaluations of the United States, between message condition types.

| | All Other Conditions | Primary and Secondary Conditions |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Positive Evaluations | .029 (n=345) | -.045 (n=221) |
| <i>t</i> = -.876, <i>df</i> 568, <i>n.s.</i> | | |
| Negative Evaluations | -.045 (n=348) | .071 (n=223) |
| <i>t</i> = 1.35, <i>df</i> 569, <i>p</i> < .10. | | |
| Overall Evaluations | .052 (n=345) | -.082 (n=221) |
| <i>t</i> = -1.56, <i>df</i> 564, <i>p</i> = .06 | | |

There are a couple findings in Table 5.3. First, the first row shows that the message conditions did not have significant impacts on positive evaluations of the United States. The second row, however, does show a marginal impact of the primary and secondary themes on explicitly negative attitudes toward the United States and the American people. Third, the bottom row shows that the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism spurred a greater overall negative assessment of the United States and the American people ($M = -.082$) than the other message conditions ($M = .052$). In short, more explicit claims of American exceptionalism exerted a more negative impact on the attitudes held by Mexicans about the United States and Americans than the other, less aggressive, conditions.

Global Roles

My third hypothesis addressed the potential impacts of these messages on the attitudes of Mexican respondents about distinct international roles for the United States. Specifically, I expected messages with mutual exceptionalism and non-exceptionalism themes to spur stronger support among Mexican respondents for the ideas that the United States should stand as a model,

should be a global leader, or should be exempt from international rules and institutions than messages with primary or secondary themes. Because I was only able to gain a sufficient measure of reliability for the “model” variable, I ran a single independent sample t-test to examine this expectation. The results of this t-test did not show a significant difference between message conditions. Specifically, the mutual and non-exceptionalism message conditions did not spur higher support for the idea that the United States should stand as a global model ($M = .017$) than did the primary and secondary conditions ($M = -.027$, $t = -.511$, $df = 569$, *n.s.*). Hypothesis 10, therefore, did not receive support.

Primary and Secondary Themes of American Exceptionalism

As a next step of the analysis I wanted to take a more in-depth look into the differential impacts of the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism on a range of Mexican respondent attitudes, relative to the other message types. I was specifically interested in the impact of these types of messages because they aggressively position the United States as holding a relatively higher international status than all other countries, including Mexico. In the case of the primary themes, this positioning is explicit and unapologetic. Saying that the United States is the “greatest country on earth” makes it clear who is on the top of the international pyramid. The secondary themes similarly set the United States apart from the rest of the world, but do so in a slightly more subtle way by characterizing it as the world’s leader or model. None of the other experimental conditions position the United States in such a singularly dominant international role. Mexican respondents, therefore, seem likely to react in a distinct manner to the primary and secondary conditions because they more directly challenge their own country’s relative international status. With this in mind, I combined the secondary and primary conditions into one category and the mutual, non-exceptionalism, and control conditions into a second

category so as to contrast them. In particular, I then examined the potential influence of these differing conditions on (1) respondent attitudes toward the United States and Americans, (2) respondent attitudes toward a range of American foreign policy options; and (3) respondent attitudes about bilateral policies involving the United States and Mexico.

I first evaluated the combined impact of the primary and secondary American exceptionalism conditions—relative to all other conditions—on Mexican respondents' attitudes toward the United States and the American people. I did so while controlling for other potential predictive factors: I conducted a hierarchical linear regression across experimental conditions with *evaluations of the United States and the American people* as the dependent variable. In this analysis, I included an examination of national exceptionalism bias as a potential mediating factor between communication emphasis on American exceptionalism and people's evaluations of the United States. I entered predictive variables in three distinct blocks, in the following order: gender, age, religion, political ideology, party affiliation (PRI, PRD, PAN) in the first block; national exceptionalism bias and experimental version (primary and secondary exceptionalism themes combined vs. all other conditions combined) in the second block; and a single item in the third block accounting for interactions between (a) experimental condition and national exceptionalism bias. The results are in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6: *Predicting attitudes toward the United States and the American people, isolating the primary and secondary American exceptionalism messages.*

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------|---------|
| | β | β | β |
| Gender | .05 | .05 | .05 |
| Age | .03 | .04 | .03 |
| Religion (Catholic/Other) | -.15* | -.14* | -.14* |
| Ideology (Left to Right) | .13* | .13* | .12* |
| PRI | .02 | .02 | .02 |
| PRD | .01 | .01 | .00 |
| PAN | .00 | .00 | .00 |
| National Exceptionalism Bias | | .02 | .05 |
| Condition (Primary/Secondary vs. Others) | | .04 | .04 |
| National Exceptionalism Bias by Condition | | | -.11* |
| | R^2_{Adjusted} | | |
| | .05 | .05 | .06 |
| | F for change in R^2_{Adjusted} | .48 | 6.03* |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

It merits noting at the outset that the total amount of variance accounted for by the final model was low, 6%. At the same time, the model does show a number of interesting findings. First, Catholics and those with more right-leaning political ideology were more likely to have positive evaluations of the United States. Second, there was a clear interaction effect between the condition people were exposed to and their national exceptionalism bias with the second largest standardized beta in the model ($\beta = -.11$). Specifically, respondents with high levels of national exceptionalism bias who were exposed to the primary and secondary conditions were more likely

to have positive attitudes toward the United States and the American people. These findings lend marginal support for the idea that when exposed to messages about the relative exceptional status of the United States, those who hold a similar belief about their own country can identify with such a stance and therefore hold the United States in higher esteem.

I then turned to examine the impact of the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism on responses to a range of foreign policies the United States might pursue. Specifically, I was interested in the potential impacts of primary and secondary exceptionalism on whether Mexican respondents thought the United States (1) should be the most generous contributor whenever natural disasters hit other countries, (2) should always defend human rights even if doing so is against American national interests, (3) should pressure other countries to become democracies, (4) should no longer participate in the United Nations, (5) should be able to remove other countries' leaders if deemed necessary by the U.S. government, and (6) should invade Iran if it doesn't dismantle its nuclear weapons program. To test these impacts I ran separate independent samples t-tests on the four single-item measures. Results are in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7. Mean scores on distinct foreign policy stances by the United States, isolating the impact of the primary and secondary American exceptionalism messages.

| | All Other Conditions | Primary and Secondary Exceptionalism |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Whenever natural disasters hit other countries, the United States has a responsibility to be the most generous contributor. | 2.27 (n=351) | 2.40 (n=229) |
| | $t=1.70, df 578, p<.05$ | |
| The United States should always defend human rights in the world, even if doing so is against America's own national interests. | 2.76 (n=350) | 2.92 (n=229) |
| | $t=1.98, df 577, p<.05$ | |
| The United States should pressure countries like China and North Korea to become democracies. | 2.37 (n=350) | 2.30 (n=227) |
| | $t=-.89, df 575, n.s.$ | |
| The United States should no longer be a part of the United Nations. | 1.70 (n=349) | 1.76 (n=228) |
| | $t=.85, df 575, n.s.$ | |
| The United States should be able to remove leaders in other countries from power when necessary. | 1.95 (n=350) | 1.90 (n=228) |
| | $t=.59, df 576, n.s.$ | |
| The United States should invade Iran if it does not dismantle its program to build nuclear weapons. | 2.10 (n=350) | 1.96 (n=227) |
| | $t=-1.59, df 575, p = .06$ | |

There are some interesting findings in Table 5.7. First, the results show significant differences in the first two tests dealing with the more diplomatic foreign policies. Specifically, Mexican respondents exposed to messages employing the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism were more likely to say the United States has an international responsibility to defend human rights in the world and to be the most generous country in cases of natural disasters abroad. Second, the findings show no significant difference on three of the

four more aggressive U.S. foreign policies. At the same time, however, respondents who were exposed to the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism were less likely to support the idea of a U.S.-led invasion of Iran. These findings lend marginal support for the idea that when exposed to the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism, which champion the United States role as a global leader or hegemon, Mexican respondents are more likely to expect the United States to use its exceptional status for more “soft” policies in international relations.

I next turned to examine the impact of the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism on responses to a range of questions dealing with bilateral relations between the United States. Specifically, I tested the impact of these messages on Mexican attitudes about the following statements: (1) the United States needs to take more responsibility in combating narco traffickers in Mexico, (2) Mexico is better off when it does things without the help of the United States, (3) Mexico, Canada, and the United States should eliminate or renegotiate NAFTA, and (4) Mexico should work more with other Latin American countries than with the United States. The findings are in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8. Mean scores on attitudes regarding distinct bilateral policies between the United States and Mexico, isolating the impact of the primary and secondary American exceptionalism messages.

| | All Other Conditions | Primary and Secondary Exceptionalism |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| The United States needs to take more responsibility in combating narco traffickers in Mexico. | 2.71 (n=345) | 2.74 (n=224) |
| | <i>t</i> = .32, <i>df</i> 567, <i>n.s.</i> | |
| Mexico is better off when it does things without the help of the United States. | 2.45 (n=344) | 2.50 (n=221) |
| | <i>t</i> = .78, <i>df</i> 563, <i>n.s.</i> | |
| Mexico, Canada, and the United States should eliminate or renegotiate NAFTA. | 1.92 (n=343) | 1.98 (n=223) |
| | <i>t</i> = .75, <i>df</i> 564, <i>n.s.</i> | |
| Mexico should work more with other Latin American countries instead of with the United States. | 2.89 (n=344) | 3.05 (n=225) |
| | <i>t</i> = 2.25, <i>df</i> 567, <i>p</i> < .05 | |

There are two findings of note in Table 5.8. First, the findings showed no significant impact of the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism on the first three measures. On the other hand, respondents exposed to the primary and secondary conditions were more likely to support the idea that Mexico should work more with other Latin American countries instead of the United States. These results do not show a strong pattern of impact, but do lend marginal support for the idea that the more aggressive themes of American exceptionalism can have more of a negative impact on people's attitudes toward some issues of bilateral relations.

One final measure tapped into the impact of these messages on *who* Mexican respondents believe holds more responsibility when it comes to the drug trafficking problem between the two countries today: Mexico, the United States, or both equally. The findings are in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9. *Attributions of responsibility to the United States, Mexico, or both countries for the problems with drug violence in Mexico.*

| Country Responsible | All Other Conditions (<i>n</i> = 347) | Primary and Secondary Exceptionalism (<i>n</i> = 223) |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| United States | 8% | 14% |
| Mexico | 12% | 9% |
| Both | 79% | 78% |
| $\chi^2 (2, N = 570) = 5.30, p < .10.$ | | |

The findings in Table 5.9 show a difference in which country Mexican respondents said was responsible for the drug violence in Mexico. Specifically, respondents in the primary and secondary conditions blamed the United States more (14%) for the drug violence problem in Mexico than those in all other conditions (8%). Although the difference is small, a difference of proportions test shows blame of the United States for drug violence to be significantly higher in the primary and secondary conditions than in all other conditions ($p < .05$). These findings support the idea that exposure to the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism might spur more negative or aggressive stances against the United States.

Next, I wanted to test the impacts of the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism on a new concept derived from the *model* and *leader* batteries of questions. To accomplish this, I first ran a factor analysis on both batteries to identify what measures shared

conceptual or statistical consistency. Through this process I was able to identify eight separate measures that spoke to a common idea. Specifically, these eight measures dealt with spreading American values abroad, either by taking American values to the world or the view that the rest of the world should adopt these values. This new composite variable included the following measures: It is America's responsibility to promote democracy in other countries ($M=1.75$, $SD=.87$); The United States should lead the way in spreading freedom around the world ($M=2.22$, $SD=.95$); The United States should let other countries take the lead in world affairs (reverse coded, ($M=1.91$, $SD=.75$); The United States should lead in the economic development of the world ($M=1.70$, $SD=.87$); Other countries should try to make their governments as much like America's as possible ($M=1.86$, $SD=.82$); The world would be more peaceful if other countries were more like the United States ($M=1.72$, $SD=.75$); America's democracy should serve as an example for new democracies in the world ($M=2.35$, $SD=.85$) and America's economic system should serve as a model for the rest of the world ($M=2.33$, $SD=.83$). A reliability test on these eight measures showed a Cronbach's alpha of .73. I then combined them into a single composite variable for the analysis.

I tested the potential impacts of the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism on the idea of spreading American values abroad in a two-step process. First, I tested the direct impact of the primary and secondary conditions by running a t-test between condition types. The findings were not significant: mean scores for the combined primary and secondary conditions were not significantly different from the other conditions ($M=-.03$ vs. $M=.02$, *n.s.*). Delving further, I conducted a hierarchical linear regression across experimental conditions with *spreading of American values abroad* as the dependent variable. In this analysis, I included an examination of national exceptionalism bias as a potential mediating factor

between communication emphasis on American exceptionalism and people's attitudes about whether American values should be spread abroad. I entered predictive variables in three distinct blocks, in the following order: gender, age, religion, political ideology, party affiliation (PRI, PRD, PAN) in the first block; national exceptionalism bias, attitudes toward the United States, and experimental version (primary and secondary exceptionalism themes combined vs. all other conditions combined) in the second block; and a single item in the third block accounting for interactions between experimental condition and national exceptionalism bias. The results are in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10. *Predicting attitudes toward the spreading of American values abroad, isolating the combined impact of the primary and secondary American exceptionalism messages.*

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------|---------|
| | β | β | β |
| Gender | .00 | .01 | .01 |
| Age | -.07 | -.06 | -.05 |
| Religion (Catholic/Other) | -.14** | -.05 | -.05 |
| Ideology (Left to Right) | .13** | .09 | .09 |
| PRI | -.09 | -.10* | -.10* |
| PRD | .05 | .04 | .04 |
| PAN | -.08 | -.07 | -.07 |
| National Exceptionalism Bias | | .24*** | .22*** |
| Evaluations of United States | | .27*** | .28*** |
| Condition (Primary/Secondary vs. Others) | | -.04 | -.04 |
| Condition x National Exceptionalism Bias | | | .09* |
| | R^2_{Adjusted} | | |
| | .09 | .21 | .22 |
| | F for change in R^2_{Adjusted} | 25.23*** | 4.47* |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 5.10 shows a number of interesting results. First, the final model accounted for 22 percent of variance in the dependent variable. Second, respondents' positive evaluation of the United States and the American people was the largest significant factor in the final model with a standardized beta of .28. In other words, the more people said they are positive toward the United States, the more they supported the idea that its values should be emulated abroad. Third, national exceptionalism bias was a significant factor in the model with a standardized beta of .22.

These findings suggest that the more comfortable Mexicans were with their own country's relative international status, the more they accepted the idea of spreading American values abroad. Furthermore, Table 5.8 shows a significant interaction effect between exposure to different experimental conditions and national exceptionalism bias on attitudes about whether American values should be spread abroad. Those with a high national exceptionalism bias, when exposed to the more aggressive exceptionalism messages, were less likely to think that American values should be exported abroad than those exposed to the more diplomatic conditions. In other words, those who believe in the exceptional status of Mexico are more likely to react less favorably toward the United States and its international policies when exposed to messages that explicitly placed the United States over their own country. These findings lend some support to the idea that aggressive American exceptionalism messages can create dissonance abroad toward U.S. foreign policies.

In a final step, I wanted to test the differential impacts of the primary and secondary exceptionalism messages on national exceptionalism bias among respondents affiliated with Mexico's largest and most influential political parties. Mexico is well known for its diversity of political parties, and three are considered to be the main contenders for power in most elections throughout Mexico: the PAN, PRI, and the PRD. There are a number of clear distinctions between the parties in regards to domestic and foreign policies. At the same time, those distinctions extend into their orientation toward the United States as well (Krauze, 1997). First of all, Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN) is the more socially conservative of the three, but is known for favoring free trade and increased relations with the United States. In fact, the other parties regularly accuse PAN of being "too friendly" with the United States (Meyer & Beezley, 2000). PRI, in contrast, is seen as the more politically moderate of the three parties and more

cautious about relations with the United States. Finally, PRD is the most left-leaning party and has a history of being more antagonistic toward the United States and its interests in Mexico than its competitors (Davidow, 2004). It is possible then that participants who identify with these respective parties might have distinct responses to the messages of American exceptionalism.

To test possible differential impacts among respondents affiliated with the political parties, I ran separate independent sample t-tests on national exceptionalism bias for each of the three parties and in each experimental condition for a total of six tests. First, I examined the difference in means scores between members of PAN versus members of all other parties and then compared these differences—or lack thereof—between the combined primary and secondary conditions versus the other experimental conditions combined. Second, I ran the same tests between members of PRI versus members of all other parties. The final tests examined the differences for members of PRD against all other parties. Results are in Tables 5.11.

Table 5.11 Mean scores on national exceptionalism bias, between primary exceptionalism and all other conditions, by political party

| | PAN | Other Parties | PRI | Other Parties | PRD | Other Parties |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Primary and Secondary Exceptionalism | | | | | | |
| Mean attitude | .18 (n=66) | -.10 (n=149) | .13 (n=32) | -.04 (n=183) | -.26 (n=53) | .07 (n=162) |
| Difference statistic | $t=1.90, df\ 213, p<.05$ | | $t=.88, df\ 213, n.s.$ | | $t=-2.05, df\ 213, p<.05$ | |
| All other conditions | | | | | | |
| Mean attitude | .19 (n=94) | -.06 (n=244) | -.01 (n=72) | .01 (n=266) | -.08 (n=71) | .03 (n=267) |
| Difference statistic | $t=2.14, df\ 336, p<.05$ | | $t=-.15, df\ 336, n.s.$ | | $t=-.85, df\ 336, n.s.$ | |

The results in Table 5.11 show distinct results for each party. First, the respondents from more conservative PAN scored consistently higher on national exceptionalism bias than people in the other parties regardless of the message condition. In addition, their level of belief in their country's exceptional status was swayed very little by the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism ($M=.18$ vs. $M=.19$). Second, there were no significant differences between members of more centrist PRI and members of the other parties on national exceptionalism bias regardless of the types of message they encountered. That is, the primary and secondary themes did not sway PRI affiliated respondents' national exceptionalism bias in a fashion that differentiated them from the average respondent in the other parties. Finally, members of PRD were impacted more by the primary and secondary themes of American

exceptionalism than were members of all the other parties. Specifically, the relative national exceptionalism bias among PRD members was already on average lower than other party members, but that difference became starker when they were exposed to the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism. These findings suggest that messages purporting the relative superiority of their northern neighbors impacts members of the three parties in distinct ways. For members of PAN and PRI, these messages spurred or did not affect already high levels of national exceptionalism bias. In contrast, these messages tended to impact the more left-leaning PRD members in a more profound, and perhaps negative manner, spurring lower levels of national exceptionalism.

Discussion

In this chapter I examined the impacts on Mexicans of U.S. presidential messages emphasizing (or not) the idea of American exceptionalism. The findings in Chapter Three showed that U.S. presidents actively highlight this culturally potent idea both in domestic contexts and when addressing foreign audiences. Subsequently, the findings in Chapter Four showed these different messages to have a number of direct and distinct impacts on an audience of adults in the United States. In this chapter I took this research into a foreign context. Specifically, I examined among some Mexican young adults the differential impact of messages championing the three types of American exceptionalism—primary, secondary, mutual—relative to other messages describing the United States as non-exceptional. My expectation was that the distinct message types would impact this audience in distinct manners. A number of interesting findings emerged from the analysis.

First, Mexican respondents who were exposed to the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism exhibited significantly different levels of national exceptionalism bias relative to the other conditions combined. These findings, however, ran opposite to one another. On the one hand, those exposed to the primary themes exhibited the weakest national exceptionalism bias of all respondents in the study. That is, messages explicitly placing the United States in a superior position over all other countries, Mexico included, tended to spur a relative lower sense of Mexican national exceptionalism among Mexican respondents. These findings lend initial support to the idea that the championing of American exceptionalism by a U.S. president might serve to place doubt in the minds of Mexican respondents about their own country's relative international status. Research on social comparison suggests that members of less powerful national groups, such as Mexico in this case, are aware of their country's relative lower status (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). This suggests that perhaps primary exceptionalism messages—as opposed to the other less aggressive or at least more subtle conditions—prompted Mexicans to consider their relative status. On the other hand, those exposed to the secondary themes exhibited the strongest levels of national exceptionalism bias of all respondents across conditions. These findings suggest that because there were no explicit mentions of the United States relative superior international position, Mexican respondents may have found it easier to elevate their own national status. Furthermore, as hypothesized, they suggest that such aggressive positioning of the United States as ahead of Mexico—but not superior to it—might spur Mexican respondents to seek ways to defend and elevate their own country. Finally, further analysis revealed that the impacts of the experimental conditions on national exceptionalism bias were mediated by respondents' political party affiliation, suggesting that the idea of national

exceptionalism—be it framed in a domestic or foreign context—resonate unequally across any given national population.

Second, the distinct message conditions were found to have little impact on respondents' attitudes about whether the United States should be a global model. This finding, therefore, did not support my expectation that respondents in the control, mutual, and non-exceptionalism conditions would be more likely to support this international role for the United States than respondents in the primary and secondary conditions. In other words, respondents in all of the conditions responded similarly to this measure. At the same time, this measure, coupled with the *leader* and *exempt* measures, did not have as much conceptual and statistical consistency as they did in the previous chapter. There are two potential explanations for this. First, it is likely that the measures themselves, because of their similarity to those employed in the United States, did not match Mexican respondents' understanding of the same concepts. Second, it is possible that Mexican respondents have simply not been conditioned to think about the United States as a leader, model, or exempt in international relations in ways that Americans have been. In fact, Mexicans likely conceive of the international system and the role of states in a distinct manner. That was evidenced by the fact that for Mexican respondents there was considerable conceptual overlap in measures from both the *model* and *leader* batteries of questions, which led me to create a new conceptual category of *the spreading of American values abroad*. Attitudes on this measure were impacted—albeit indirectly—by the experimental conditions. Specifically, I found that Mexican respondents' attitudes about the spreading of American values abroad were mediated by their level of national exceptionalism bias as well as the message they encountered. When exposed to the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism, those who had a strong sense of national exceptionalism tended to support this global role less. These findings

lend initial support to the idea that by highlighting the more aggressive forms of American exceptionalism in foreign speeches, U.S. presidents can trigger a stronger connection between national pride and the rejection of U.S. foreign policies that serve to spread American values abroad.

Third, I found the more aggressive forms of American exceptionalism spurred significantly more negative evaluations of the United States and the American people than the other message conditions combined. Specifically, when considered together, those exposed to the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism were more likely to view the United States in a more negative light than those exposed to the less aggressive message conditions. This supports my expectation that Mexican respondents would be more likely to reject the United States in cases where the president chose to employ such aggressive language about the United States' higher position in international affairs. That said, the analysis also found this effect to be mediated by Mexican respondents' relative national exceptionalism bias. Those with a similarly exceptional worldview about their own country tended to react in a more positive manner toward the United States and the American people when exposed to messages purporting America's exceptional status. These findings suggest that there are national "exceptionalists" in every country and perhaps messages highlighting American exceptionalism resonated more with them than with their other compatriots.

Finally, I found mixed results on the impact of the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism on a range of attitudes about U.S. foreign policies and other issues of bilateral importance between the United States and Mexico. First, Mexican respondents who were exposed to the primary and secondary conditions tended to place more international responsibility in the hands of the United States when it came to issues of foreign aid and defense

of human rights. These findings suggest that when told by an American president that the United States holds an exceptional or leadership position in the world, Mexican respondents, in turn, expect that that country to use said exceptional status for more soft, rather than hard, power policies. Second, exposure to the primary and secondary themes also spurred some negative attitudes toward the United States in relation to policies of bilateral importance. Specifically, such messages spurred support for the idea that Mexico should turn more attention to interactions with the rest of Latin America than with the United States. This finding suggest, albeit marginally, that interaction with the United States became less appealing to Mexican respondents when exposed to messages that emphasize America's relative exceptional status. Similarly, these aggressive messages also spurred stronger blame of the United States for the current state of drug-related violence in Mexico. Overall, these findings lend support to the idea that messages championing American exceptionalism are likely to have more mixed reactions in foreign contexts than in the United States.

In sum, this study produced a number of interesting findings about the impacts of the distinct types of American exceptionalism messages. Overall, I expected the different message types to have impacts on the Mexican sample that ran parallel, or at least not in contrast, with the sample of American adults in Chapter Four, but the story was much more nuanced. In fact, I had expected the idea of American exceptionalism to have a much more perceivable impact on Mexican respondents attitudes about the United States. Perhaps, however, these mixed findings are more significant to our understanding about the impacts of when American exceptionalism is communicated in foreign contexts. It is plausible that audiences abroad might be so used to hearing exceptionalistic rhetoric from a U.S. president that they simply overlook it to the more relevant content of the communication. In the case of Mexico, another explanation is also likely.

Because the relationship between the United States and Mexico has such a deep and albeit contentious history, it is possible that the more direct impacts of the idea American exceptionalism might be made salient in the Mexican mind by the simple mention of their northern neighbors. That is, Mexicans likely have been exposed to the idea that Americans believe themselves to be part of a singular, superior, or God-favored country since they were very young. Future studies, then, should delve further into the ways that international audiences understand the idea of exceptionalism, be it American or otherwise. With this in mind, I now turn to the final chapter to explore the wider implications that these findings have on the life of American exceptionalism in global political discourse.

Chapter Six

Insights and Implications

American exceptionalism continues to live a vibrant life in the American public sphere. In fact, despite speculation about whether the United States is ceding its position as the world's most influential and powerful country, the idea of American exceptionalism has experienced a recent resurgence in national politics. For instance, adversaries of President Barack Obama have employed this idea as a political cudgel in an attempt to delegitimize the president's patriotism. Among their criticisms, they note that in 2009 Obama spoke these words to international reporters: "I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism. I am enormously proud of my country and its role and history in the world." In the eyes of his political opponents Obama's statement was a disgraceful dismissal of the United States' unique and exceptional position in the world. The Republican Party presidential nominee in 2012, Mitt Romney published a 2010 book in which he called Obama's diplomatic trips abroad "American Apology Tours" and argued that the president spends time apologizing for the United States instead of defending American exceptionalism for the world to see (Romney, 2010, p. 25).

Obama himself, however, has told a different story. As a presidential candidate, he regularly invoked the idea of American exceptionalism in his stump speeches. For example, on the 2008 campaign Obama often claimed, "Only in America is my story even possible" (Obama, 2008). In fact, in his less than one term as president, Obama in his major speeches has invoked the idea of American exceptionalism more than George W. Bush did in both of his two terms combined. This dissertation research encompassed the 2012 presidential campaign, and

American exceptionalism was front and center throughout. As one example, in the third and final nationally televised debate, both Obama and Romney sought to “out-exceptionalize” the other in their closing remarks. Romney closed by offering, “I’d like to be the next president of the United States to support and help this great nation and to make sure that...America [remains] the hope of the earth.” In his turn, Obama offered, “I will work every single day to make sure that America continues to be the greatest nation on earth” (CNN, 2012). This culturally potent, and at times contentious, idea will continue to define American politics for some time.

My goal with this dissertation was to examine the production and impacts of the idea of American exceptionalism in both national and international political communications. I focused first on the production side. Specifically, I examined the distinct ways in which the idea has been highlighted by presidents in major speeches. In doing so, I identified the distinct strategies employed by U.S. presidents when invoking this powerful idea in domestic versus international contexts. I then turned to examine the impacts of these expressions of American exceptionalism on populations in the United States and Mexico. For the former, I was interested in examining how U.S. adults react to the idea of American exceptionalism when communicated by their country’s Commander in Chief. For the Mexican sample, I was interested in examining the distinct impacts of these messages on how Mexicans understand their country’s relationship with their neighbors to the north.

The research from this dissertation can be distilled into five key components. First, the idea of American exceptionalism has wide appeal in the American people because it encourages a sense of uniqueness, superiority, or even favor with a greater power. Second, for this reason, U.S. presidents invoke this idea regularly when addressing the American public. Third, these messages can have positive impacts on the ways that U.S. adults view their country, but they can

also exert negative impacts on how the same people view the rest of the world by comparison. Fourth, U.S. presidents, because of the desire and need to defend the image of the United States as the sole global superpower, express this potentially dissonant idea even when speaking to foreign audiences. Fifth, such messages tend to be interpreted in a more negative light abroad than at home.

I explored these five ideas via two methodological approaches. First, I conducted an extensive content analysis on major U.S. presidential speeches in both domestic and foreign contexts ranging from 1933 to 2012, presented in Chapter Three. Second, I conducted a split-sample experiment on a population of U.S. adults that examined their responses to a news story about a presidential speech manipulated to emphasize the distinct types of American exceptionalism, presented in Chapter Four. And third, in Chapter Five I conducted a similar split-sample experiment, but this time on a population of students in Guanajuato, Mexico, who were exposed to a similar manipulated news story. The focus of this final analysis was to examine the impacts of the distinct types of American exceptionalism on a foreign, rather than domestic, audience. Taken together, these approaches provide insight into both how American exceptionalism has been employed as a nation-building concept as well as how it impacts some of those who are exposed to it. Furthermore, this work includes a distinctly international perspective on a concept regularly examined solely from a domestic angle. In this chapter, I first examine the conceptual commonalities among the three studies and discuss their limitations. I also discuss the avenues of future research that may be borne out of these studies and discuss their broader implications.

Commonalities, Limitations, and Future Research

In this dissertation, I drew on two related fields of scholarship. The first body of research emphasized the interdisciplinary perspectives addressing American exceptionalism. This included a step away from the research offered in political science and history (Lipset, 1996; Madsen, 1998; McEvoy-Levy, 2001)—which look at the concept as empirically falsifiable—and toward those offered in the field of communication studies (Domke & Coe 2010; Edwards & Weiss, 2011; Ivie & Giner 2009; Pease, 2009), which examine American exceptionalism as an idea and a rhetorical tool common in American political discourse. Specifically, research in this domain suggests that American exceptionalism plays a significant part in the image U.S. politicians, and in particular presidents, seek to paint of the United States for the American people. This scholarship suggests that constructing a positive, and in this case exceptional, image of the country is expected of U.S. presidents because they are premier defenders of “the nation” (Anderson, 1986; Bloom, 1990) The American people, then, look to the president to continually reassure them of the positive standing of their country.

The second foundational area of scholarship focused on social and national identity. This work helped to further explain why such messages play a central role in politicians’ rhetorical handbooks and why they are so resonant with the American public. Specifically, research on social identity theory explains that people’s personal identities tend to be tied to their membership in certain social groups (Tajfel 1981, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). People identify with a number of social groups including religions, political parties, gender, and even universities. At the same time, certain social identities tend to be stronger than the others. In particular, the nation-state has been cited as one of the strongest social identities (Huddy & Khatib, 2007). Once people actively identify with these national groups, they then tend to connect their sense of self-esteem or self-worth to that group’s image. This means that people

actively want the image of their national group to be seen as positive because that positive image then reflects back in a positive manner on the individual member.

In the realm of national politics, presidents are therefore charged with the task of constructing the most positive image of the country as possible. According to Bloom (1990), such acts are an inherent part of nation building and constructing a collective sense of belonging within a population. American exceptionalism is perhaps the ultimate positive construct for a country because it both paints it in a positive light and elevates it to a singular level above all other countries. I expected, therefore, for U.S. presidents to employ this rhetorical act of exceptionalization regularly in their speeches to the American public. The findings in Chapter Three directly supported this idea. In fact, I found that U.S. presidents emphasized the idea of American exceptionalism extensively across all types of domestic speeches and throughout the past 80 years. Furthermore, they tended to highlight this idea in a number of distinct and creative manners.

Specifically, I found that when speaking to the American people, U.S. presidents were vociferous in their celebration of America's special place in the world. They invoked this idea in a wide range of different types of speeches and tended not to beat around the bush about it. In other words, they did little to tone down their invocations of American exceptionalism, favoring the more explicit, *primary*, themes above all other types. Furthermore, U.S. presidents tended to avoid the more diplomatic, mutual exceptionalism invocations altogether in domestic speeches. This idea of America's exceptional status was one U.S. presidents tended to "hammer home." Specifically, they regularly invoked American exceptionalism multiple times in a single speech and commonly combined multiple invocations together. Overall, when addressing the American

public, where this idea was all but guaranteed to resonate, U.S. presidents were unapologetic in their invocations of American exceptionalism.

The findings in Chapter Three also showed that U.S. presidents commonly highlighted the idea of American exceptionalism even when addressing foreign audiences. On the surface, such an act might seem like one that U.S. presidents would be reluctant to employ because of its potential for directly offending other countries. The contrary, however, was found to be the case. Scholarship on social comparison helps to explain why this may be. Specifically, Tajfel (1981) argues that a country in a relative position of hegemony over other countries has a more tenuous national image than others. This is because it has to work to maintain itself at the top of the hierarchy. Although a country such as the United States maintains this relative level of power through a number of domestic and foreign policies, it is similarly important for them to maintain the image of the United States as the world's superpower.

At the same time, such a concept is potentially offensive in international contexts, so I expected U.S. presidents to highlight this idea in more creative and diplomatic ways than when speaking to a U.S. audience. The findings in Chapter Three showed that although U.S. presidents did highlight the more overt, primary themes of American exceptionalism, they tended to prefer forms of elevating the United States to an exceptional level that were less aggressive to other countries. One way was to use the more implicit, *secondary*, invocations of American exceptionalism to both elevate the United States, but in a way that did not directly implicate the other country. Furthermore, I found U.S. presidents to favor one very creative form of reminding others of their country's exceptional status, while maintaining a diplomatic tone. Specifically, the findings in Chapter Three show how U.S. presidents highlighted a form of what I called *mutual exceptionalism*, which couched American exceptionalism in language that elevated the other

country to a similarly exceptional level. These creative tactics serve U.S. presidents greatly because they allow them to assert America's dominant position to their competing international audiences, while also reassuring the ever-watchful audience at home that their country's exceptional status is being defended. Chapter Three, therefore, helped to illustrate the central importance that American exceptionalism plays in the ways that U.S. presidents promote their country to audiences both at home and abroad.

The study in Chapter Three was not without its limitations. One can be found in the conceptualization of the distinct types of American exceptionalism invocations. Specifically, throughout the coding process, I noted other concepts that were related to the idea of American exceptionalism, but not in the way that I had operationalized. In fact, these concepts seemed to emerge in tandem with the distinct types of American exceptionalism invocations that I coded. For example, a number of presidents spoke of the idea that the United States should defend "the weak" of the world. Similarly, it was commonplace for presidents to suggest that the United States should work to spread freedom throughout the world. Each of these concepts seem to be natural conclusions from the idea that the United States is exceptional. Specifically, it was common to read that because of its singular, superior, or even God-favored status, the United States had these specific international responsibilities. A future study, then, could work to unearth other related concepts and attitudes about the world. Furthermore, such studies could examine if individual presidents—or perhaps presidents from different political orientations—employ the idea of American exceptionalism to justify distinct domestic or foreign policies not accounted for in the present dissertation.

In addition, the joint press conferences were quite different in style than the other two speech types analyzed in this study. In many cases, there weren't any opening remarks to analyze

at all. In other cases, the opening remarks contained only an introduction of the other president or foreign leader present at the conference and so they didn't allow for any strategic communication. Ultimately, many didn't really resemble speeches at all. This meant that the final percentages presented in Chapter Three were perhaps lessened by the inclusion of this type of presidential address. In other words, it is likely that when controlling for those joint sessions where the president did not formally give a speech-like opening to the press conference, American exceptionalism was likely far more widespread in foreign speeches than I was able to report. Future research then, could focus on analyzing how this concept is communicated in different ways depending on the distinct types of foreign audiences being addressed.

Given the extensive emphasis by U.S. presidents on the distinct types of American exceptionalism in political speeches, I next sought to understand the potential effects of these emphases on audiences. First, I examined how these messages impacted a sample population of U.S. adults. In particular, I was interested in the impact of these messages on a cognitive concept that I called *national exceptionalism bias*, which coupled the belief in the exceptional status of one's own country with the belief that other countries are inferior by comparison. Scholarship (Kinder and Kam, 2009) suggests that cognitive biases such as this one are borne from the individual's tendency to seek out ways to protect their national—and therefore their individual—identity. For this reason, I expected a number of distinct reactions to the different types of American exceptionalism messages. In Chapter Four we saw that the distinct types of American exceptionalism messages have direct impacts on the national exceptionalism bias in U.S. adults. That is, for those exposed to any notion of America's exceptional status in the world they tended to have a stronger worldview that painted the United States as exceptional. At the same time, notably, they also increased their levels of degradation of other countries and cultures. This

meant that although the American exceptionalism messages did tend to inspire a greater sense of national pride, they also spurred more negative ethnocentric reactions.

In Chapter Four there were also findings that ran contrary to my conceptual expectations. Specifically, I had expected the mutual exceptionalism message condition to provoke strong reaction in U.S. adults. Because the message couples the exceptional status of the United States with that of other countries, I expected for this to create a deeper need in U.S. adults to “make up for” the deficiency of the message itself. In other words, I expected people exposed to this message to have a stronger need to reinforce their sense of national exceptionalism. The findings in Chapter Four, however, point to a less obstructed effect. In this chapter we saw how the primary themes tended to resonate at the deepest level with the American public and have the widest ranging impact. Specifically, these overt expressions of the United States’ superior status in the world spurred the strongest national exceptionalism bias in U.S. adults, as well as the strongest support for a range of internationally contentious and domestically inspirational foreign policies. In essence, Chapter Four showed just how impactful the idea of American exceptionalism can be among Americans in its most distilled state.

The study in Chapter Four also had its limitations. First of all, the batteries of questions tapping into the leader and model concepts did not have as high of reliability scores as I would have liked. This is most likely due to the fact that they consisted of more conceptual categories than was necessary. In the case of the leader battery, I attempted to tap into this idea through direct measures asking about U.S. leadership abroad. These measures seemed to be fairly cohesive on their own, but they did not empirically overlap with those measures tapping into the idea of American isolationism, which I had conceived of as being opposed to the idea of U.S. leadership. For this reason, the “leader” measure that I constructed with these variables was

neither highly reliable, nor was it impacted in the same manner as the others. Moving forward, I could run a factor analysis on these batteries of measures to identify the potential subcategories that may exist within them. For this chapter I conceived of three international “roles” that have been tied to the idea of American exceptionalism. The data from this study suggest, however, that moving forward there are others to be explored.

The second limitation has to do with the role of the national exceptionalism bias in the regression analysis. Specifically, I did not include other measures of patriotism or national identity as a way of ensuring that the potential overlap between them was not significant. I will say, however, that I was pleased with the reliability of the batteries of questions representing both components of the national exceptionalism bias in this study. Future studies, however, need to test how unique this cognitive concept is in relation to other established measures of patriotism or ethnocentrism. Furthermore, I did not include any message condition that directly challenged the idea of the United States’ unique or superior place in the world. I did expect for the mutual exceptionalism message to create some dissonance, but neither this condition, nor the non-exceptionalism condition presented any real challenge to American exceptionalism. In light of the recent arguments that we are living in a “post-American world” (Zakaria, 2011), or one in which other international forces may be supplanting the United States as the most powerful entity on earth, it is important to look into how these challenging messages might impact the American public. Specifically, I would be interested in examining the potential impact of outright challenges to America’s exceptional status in the world on an array of attitudes about domestic and foreign policy, as well as about different cultural and national groups. For instance, do these challenges to American exceptionalism influence people’s own national exceptionalism

bias, or can they impact their attitudes toward immigrant groups within the United States as well as toward other countries perceived as competitors.

Another limitation to the study in Chapter Four is that I employed the services of an online survey company, Survey Monkey, to recruit my study participants. On the one hand, this is beneficial because it provided access to a geographically wider and more demographically representative population than if I was to simply recruit at the University of Washington. That said, the participants in Survey Monkey studies represent a population of people who regularly participate in these types of studies and who do so in support of some social cause. Whereas some survey companies offer participants personal rewards, Survey Monkey donates money to specific social causes in exchange for their participation. This means that the population who participated in my study is perhaps different from the larger U.S. public in one or more particular ways. Further, it is possible that for this reason I did not tap into some of the more extreme attitudes about American exceptionalism and U.S. foreign policy present in the wider U.S. population. Future communication studies on American exceptionalism might examine the impacts of messages on more radical political ideologies in the United States. The online format of this study also meant that only those who have access to and regularly use computers and web technologies were able to participate. Future studies employing an online recruitment and participation format should seek to offer alternative ways of participation for those who are not technologically sophisticated.

The final part of my research, presented in Chapter Five, followed a similar experimental design, but sought to explore the impact of the distinct types of American exceptionalism in a foreign context. Scholarship on social comparison (Tajfel 1981, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) suggests that people react in positive ways when their country is painted as being great or even

superior in comparison with the rest of the world. The other side of the coin, however, is that people tend to engage in behaviors that are protective of their own national group when exposed to information that lessens their own positive or elevated image. In other words, if people are exposed to information that paints another country as being superior to their own, they will tend to react in more negative and aggressive manners. For this reason, I expected messages championing the United States' exceptional status to spur a range of group protective behaviors in Mexican respondents.

The findings in Chapter Five lend some support to this perspective, but they were not clear-cut. Specifically, the first group protective behavior I expected was for people exposed to the primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism to have much stronger national exceptionalism biases than their counterparts in other messages. Although this was the case for secondary exceptionalism themes, those exposed to the primary themes had the *lowest* national exceptionalism biases in the entire sample. On the surface, these findings suggest that respondents were expressing an outward acceptance of Mexico's relatively subordinate international standing. At the same time, however, they may also be a form of rejection by Mexican respondents of the comparative criteria offered by the U.S. president. In other words, it is likely that Mexican respondents prefer to view their own country as exceptional and not the United States. This finding, although contrary to my original conceptual argument, begs new questions about the impact of patriotic messaging on the power dynamics between the United States and countries around the world.

Overall, Chapter Five showed how messages that either explicitly (primary) or implicitly (secondary) position the United States over other countries in the world spurred less supportive attitudes toward that country than other less aggressive messages. This was the case when

dealing with general attitudes about the United States and the American people in general. In addition, these messages had a generally negative impact on Mexican respondents' attitudes about U.S. foreign policies and about issues of bilateral relations. It is important to note here, however, that overall the impacts of the messages were not as strong and direct as those in the U.S. study. This ran contrary to my informal expectation that American exceptionalism messages would be seen by Mexico respondents as much more aggressive than among their American counterparts. There are two potential explanations for these findings.

First, it is possible that because of the historically tense relationship between the United States and Mexico, respondents came in with such firm attitudes about the United States that the messages in this experiment did not sway them as deeply. Because Mexican citizens are regularly exposed to stories and stereotypes about the United States—both positive and negative—throughout their lives, it is possible that these ideas have become entrenched in the way they understand their neighbors to the north. Second, it is possible that because Mexicans are regularly exposed to news about the United States—through both media messages and personal contact—they might already have a saturated understanding of American exceptionalism. Because many Mexicans are aware that the American people like to think of their country as the world's greatest, it is likely that any single instance of messages purveying this idea are not as impactful as I had hypothesized. If this is the case, then Mexicans are likely to have an already well-entrenched association between the United States and American exceptionalism. This would mean that the idea of American exceptionalism could be spurred with the simple mention of the United States. Further research could look into whether or not this phenomenon is U.S.-specific or if similar information offered by other countries provoke similar responses. Such a study could compare the impacts of international speeches from larger

countries such as the United States with those from perceived competitor countries such as Brazil in the case of Mexico.

The research in Chapter Five has a couple of limitations to discuss. First, it is important to address the sample population. The use of student populations for experimental studies has been a favored technique in social science research, but it does bring some shortcomings. Student populations are not close to representative of the larger population of their respective environments. They mostly come from a small age range and tend to be from more affluent backgrounds. Furthermore, younger populations such as these can be less serious about issues of political importance, let alone issues of international affairs, than older counterparts. Indeed, during the implementation process I noted that a number of students tended to be less engaged with the instrument than others. Because this study required that they be focused on the message, this tendency may have altered the potential impact of the experimental stimuli. In addition, a larger proportion of questionnaires were unfinished in this study than in the U.S. study. Although student populations have their shortcomings, they represent the most representative and easy to access population in a country such as Mexico. If a larger budget could be accessed, I would recommend that future studies attempt to replicate an amended version of this study with a more clearly adult sample in Mexico.

Another limitation deals with the distinct measures in this study. As the findings in Chapter Five indicate, the three global roles that were identified in the U.S. study did not have as much conceptual cohesion in the Mexican study. In fact, two of them were disqualified from the analysis because they did not achieve a satisfactory empirical reliability. These findings seem to indicate that Mexicans conceive of the United States and its stance in international politics in very different ways than Americans do. For instance, it may have been more natural to ask

Mexicans about issues of international cooperation involving the United States than of U.S. leadership or exemption abroad. The idea of international exemption for the United States is also likely to have been more foreign to the Mexican respondents than the American ones. Future research might then tap into a range of policy attitudes specifically designed for the Mexican audience. In addition, the measures dealing with issues of bilateral relations between Mexico and the United States was relatively short and therefore provided only a brief look into the full range of issues of importance between these neighbors. For future research I would recommend expanding on this battery of questions to include a wider range of bilateral concerns and policies.

A final limitation of the research in Chapter Five has to do with the possibility that my physical presence at the time of the study could have impacted the responses provided by the sample participants. Although I recruited students in Spanish, I clearly identified myself as an American. My presence could have impacted responses to the questionnaire for a number of reasons. First, students may have felt uncomfortable answering questions about my country of origin in a negative manner. Although I assured them that the responses were anonymous and voluntary, they may still have not wanted to answer in ways that were negative toward my country and government. Second, even though I was clear about the purpose of the study and their rights in participating, it is possible that students were suspicious of whether I was actually collecting data for some U.S. government agency or other organization. Finally, it is also possible that because I was physically present while many students filled out their questionnaires, some may have felt I would be able to connect their responses with them personally. In future studies of this kind, it might be valuable to hire a citizen of the country to be the person who administers the study to help control for some of these potential limitations.

Final Thoughts

This dissertation offers a number of key contributions to our understanding of the role of American exceptionalism—as an idea and rhetorical tool—in both domestic and international politics. In this section I focus on two in particular. First, this research suggests that U.S. presidents are aware of the power involved in invoking the idea of American exceptionalism and they are creative in how they choose to invoke it. It seems reasonable that any president would highlight such a potent idea for the American people. It is at the very core of how Americans want to think about themselves and their country and they have come to expect such a stance from their Commander in Chief, whomever he or she may be. And the findings of the present study show that U.S. presidents disseminate this idea with little discrimination when addressing the American public. The findings also suggest, however, that U.S. presidents are aware of the potency of the idea when they address audiences abroad, and that they actually are speaking to more than just that foreign audience. In other words, in this increasingly globalized world, U.S. presidents understand that they are never speaking to a lone audience in a single geographic location. Rather, in every speech they are potentially speaking to audiences all over the world. And ultimately, in any speech, in any country, they are speaking to and for an attentive American audience at home.

In these international scenarios, then, the stakes are high. On the one hand, U.S. presidents must satisfy the expectations of the ever-watchful audience at home, an audience consisting of not only the general public, but of political adversaries, journalists, as well as an increasingly influential political blogosphere. For this audience, U.S. presidents need to project a strong, if not exceptional, image of the United States to the world. On the other, they must also maintain a diplomatic tone so as to not create unnecessary conflict abroad. The findings in this

dissertation, however, suggest that they walk this line very carefully and creatively. Framing American exceptionalism in more implicit manners, such as secondary themes, is likely to be enough to satisfy the American audience watching from home, but my findings suggest that they are interpreted as being just as aggressive as the more explicit themes. The tactic of mutual exceptionalism, in contrast, seems to represent the best of both worlds. Such a tactic has the potential of pleasing the expectations of the U.S. audience, but without spurring the same negative views of the United States in foreign publics as do the more direct and aggressive primary and secondary themes of American exceptionalism.

A number of studies (Domke & Coe 2010; Edwards & Weiss, 2011; Ivie & Giner 2009)—including the present one—have endeavored to illustrate just how pervasive the idea of American exceptionalism is in American political rhetoric. This dissertation represents the first effort to empirically test the *impacts* that these messages can have on different audiences. The impacts of these messages on the American public and the ways that they understand the world are particularly important. American exceptionalism from a domestic perspective is typically viewed as an inspirational tool in U.S. political rhetoric. U.S. presidents employ this idea to inspire the American public to rally around a cause or to endure and rise above difficult times. Furthermore, American exceptionalism can also help to reinforce the idea that the United States is the white knight of the international community, the one chosen country that can save the world from itself through the promotion of democracy and freedom (Madsen, 1998). And the findings in Chapter Four lend support to these ideas. At the same time, this dissertation revealed a number of concerning impacts as well.

Although American exceptionalism is at the heart of patriotism in the United States, it also conflicts with many of the country's founding principles. Specifically, inside of the borders

of the United States it is widely discouraged to speak of any given people as being superior to any another. In fact, many see such ideas as being archaic, discriminatory, and un-American. At the same time, however, components of American exceptionalism outwardly promote the idea of cultural or national superiority. And, as evidenced in Chapter Five, messages invoking this idea can actively spur attitudes about the United States' exceptional status. At the same time, they also heighten attitudes about other countries or cultures being inferior by comparison. These findings are concerning because this heightened degradation of other cultures could eventually transfer to other negative attitudes toward other cultures. For instance, continued exposure to messages championing American exceptionalism could negatively impact the ways that Americans empathize with people in other countries. Such attitudes might also transfer to negative attitudes toward immigrant populations within the United States. Ultimately, these findings are important because they show a side of American exceptionalism that is commonly overlooked by those who view it as a positive rhetorical tactic.

In sum, this dissertation provides new perspectives on this historically rich national concept. It sheds light on both the creation and the impacts of American exceptionalism as a cultural idea. Specifically, this research offers insight into the regularity with which U.S. presidents invoke American exceptionalism and how they strategically craft their messages to appeal to a diverse range of watchful audiences both at home and abroad. In particular, it looks at how this distinctly American concept is framed or repackaged for foreign audiences. Furthermore, this dissertation takes a first look into the impacts that these messages have on both domestic and foreign audiences. It shows how these messages both can be intrinsically inspirational and spurring deep-seated ethnocentric attitudes at the same time—both at home and

abroad. Ultimately, this dissertation provides much-needed systematic, empirical, and comparative perspectives on this very global concept.

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Appendix A

Content Analysis Codebook

Content Analysis Units

Unit of Observation: Presidential speech

Unit of Analysis: Invocation of American exceptionalism theme in political speeches.

Identifying Information in the speech**1. Speech Identification Number (Speech_ID)**

- a. Each speech has a number assigned to it. Numbers start for each type of speech at 1. Coders will therefore code by adding the speech number to the base number of each category to the beginning of the number.

- i. Domestic Speech – 1000
- ii. Speech to foreign legislature – 2000
- iii. Speech to the United Nations – 3000
- iv. Joint press conference - 4000

- b. Examples of how to code

- i. Foreign Legislature speech number 45 would be coded as – 2045
- ii. Joint press conference speech number 67 will be coded as – 4067
- iii. Domestic speech number 85 would be coded as – 1085

2. Coder Number (Coder_ID)

- a. Each coder will have a unique coder number assigned to him/her and will be recorded in the first column of the code sheet under the variable name **Coder_ID**. The following coders are therefore assigned the following unique coder numbers:

| Coder | Coder Number |
|--------------|---------------------|
| Jason | 1 |
| Lindsey | 2 |
| Other | 3+ (if necessary) |

3. Date (date)

- a. The date the speech was delivered is posted at the top of every speech and will be coded in the third column of the code sheet under the variable name **date**. Date will be coded in the following format: YYYYMMDD

4. Speech Title (Title)

- a. The title of each speech is to be recorded in its entirety. Copy and paste from file.

5. Type of Speech (Speech_type)

- a. The range of speeches to be coded will be identified as pertaining to one of eight categories. They will be coded under the code name **Speech_type** on the code sheet. Speech types include

- i. *Inaugural Speech*
- ii. *Farewell Speech*
- iii. *State of the Union* – All speeches deemed as “State of the Union” or “Yearly address to Congress” shall be coded this way.
- iv. *Major Speech to the Congress* - These speeches included any speech to congress that is NOT a State of the Union address.
- v. *Major Speech to the nation* – Any speech directed at the entire nation, not via congress, shall be coded in this category.
- vi. *Speeches to Foreign Legislatures*
- vii. *Joint Press Conferences*
- viii. *Speech to the United Nations*

| Speech Type | Code |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| Inaugural Address | 1 |
| Farewell Speech | 2 |
| State of the Union | 3 |
| Speech to Congress (Not SOTU) | 4 |
| Major Speech to the nation | 5 |
| Nomination Acceptance | 6 |
| Speech to Foreign Legislature | 7 |
| Joint Press Conference | 8 |
| Speech to United Nations | 9 |

6. Subject of Speech (**Speech_Sub**)

- a. Coder will determine whether the primary subject of the speech has to do with domestic issues, foreign issues or a balance of both. Specifically, a speech will be coded as “combination” if the speech is not more than 70% about domestic or foreign subjects. Other wise, speech should be coded as either domestic or foreign.

| Speech Subject | Code |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Domestic | 1 |
| Combination (Domestic and foreign) | 2 |
| Foreign | 3 |

7. Location of speech (**For_Loc**)

- a. Coder will code for the location of the speech, either in the United States or in a foreign location

| Location | Code |
|----------|------|
| US | 1 |
| ABROAD | 2 |

8. Country of origin of foreign leader in joint press conference (**for_origin**)
- a. Coder will **write in** the name of the country of the foreign leader accompanying the American president in the press conference. (TEXT FIELD)
- b. NOTE: FOR JOINT PRESS CONFERENCES ONLY

9. U.S. President (**President**)

- a. Coder will fill in the appropriate corresponding code for the president delivering the speech.

| President | Code |
|--------------------|------|
| Franklin Roosevelt | 1 |
| Harry Truman | 2 |
| Dwight Eisenhower | 3 |
| John F. Kennedy | 4 |
| Lyndon Johnson | 5 |
| Richard Nixon | 6 |
| Gerald Ford | 7 |
| Jimmy Carter | 8 |
| Ronald Reagan | 9 |
| George H. W. Bush | 10 |
| Bill Clinton | 11 |
| George W. Bush | 12 |
| Barack Obama | 13 |

10. President's Party (**Party_ID**)

- a. Coder will record the party of the president
- i. Codes are as follows:
1. 1 = Democrat
 2. 2 = Republican

Primary Variables

11. Type of American Exceptionalism invocations (**Exc_invoc**) - Coders will identify what type of American exceptionalism theme is being invoked.

a. AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM – These themes are:

i. Singular American exceptionalism

1. An invocation should be coded as *singular* if it talks about the United States, its people, government or principles as being different from any other country in the world.
 - a. Example words or phrases to be coded: Unique, different, distinct, unparalleled, unrivaled, only, lone, singular, unmatched, special, distinctive.

ii. Superior American exceptionalism

1. An invocation should be coded as *superior* if it talks about the United States as being better than any other country or as being *the best* country in the world. These invocations will also include talk about the United States, its people, government or principles as being more than other countries.
 - a. For example, the following invocation would be coded as superior: “the people of the United States have worked *harder* than any people in the world.”
 - b. Example words or phrases to be coded: better, best, greater, greatest, superior, grander, bigger, stronger, more developed, more resilient, most powerful (any other positive terms describing the United States ending in the letters *-er* or *-est*)
 - c. Example words NOT to code: any words that describe the United States in non-comparative terms such as great or grand or powerful.

iii. God-blessed American exceptionalism

1. An invocation should be coded as *God-blessed* if it talks about the United States, its people, government or principles as being blessed by some higher power.
 - a. For example, the following invocations would be coded as *god-blessed*: “The United States has been blessed by God with a responsibility to watch over the world.”
 - b. Example words or phrases to be coded: God-blessed, doted, consecrated, sanctified, anointed, blessed, etc.
 - c. Do NOT code when a president says “God bless” the United States of America or America people or similar statements

b. MUTUAL EXCPEPTIONLISM

i. Mutual exceptionalization of the United States with another country

1. An invocation should be coded as *mutual exceptionalization* if it talks about another country as being exceptional in tandem with a statement of American exceptionalism.

- a. For example, the following invocations would be coded as *mutual exceptionalization*: “The United States and Mexico are the two most unique countries in the world.” “I am happy to be here in Japan, in a partnership of the two most powerful economies in the world.”
- c. AMERICAN GREATNESS
 - i. Categorization of the United States as “great”
 - 1. This category will be coded when presidents talk about the country as being great, but not in a comparative manner.
 - a. For example, presidents may call the United States (its people, institutions, etc) awesome, great, amazing, astounding, uncanny, or other similar descriptive terms, but does not go as far as to say it is “the most” awesome, great, amazing, etc.
 - b. Examples include: “This great nation was founded on the idea that all people are equal.” “This country is an awesome force in the world’s economy.
- d. GLOBAL ROLES

(NOTE: Code these variables as present only if they are used in isolation from the primary variables listed above.

- i. Categorization of the United States as a global *model*
 - 1. A theme will be coded as *model* if it talks about the United States as standing as a global model or example that the rest of the world should emulate.
 - a. For example, the following theme would be coded as *model*: “The United States should stand as an ideal example that the rest of the world should aspire to.”
 - b. Example words or phrases to be coded: Example, exemplary, model, prototypical, ideal, archetype, etc.
- ii. Categorization of the United States as a global *leader*
 - 1. A theme will be coded as *leader* if it talks about the United States as standing as a leader that the rest of the world should follow. This is distinct from the previous theme in that it posits the United States as actively directing the rest of the world and not simply standing as an ideal model.
 - a. For example, the following theme would be coded as *leader*: “The United States needs to lead the world toward a prosperous future.”
 - b. Example words or phrases to be coded: Leader, direct, lead, manage, etc.
- iii. Categorization of the United States as being *exempt* from international rules and institutions.
 - 1. A theme will be coded as *exempt* if it talks about the United States being excepted from international rules or laws or *above* international institutions such as the UN, International Criminal Court. It will also

include statements about the United States as being above international treaties.

- a. For example, the following two theme would be coded as *exempt*: “If the United Nations will not do its job, the United States will do its job for it.” “American president should not be judged in front of the ICC.”
- b. Example words or phrases to be coded: exempt, above, better than, on a different level, excepted, immune.
- c.

****If coded as *AMERICAN GREATNESS* or *GLOBAL ROLE*: STOP. Do not code any further (variables 12 – 27)****

****If coded as *MUTUAL EXCEPTIONALISM*: STOP and SKIP to #27.**

| American Exceptionalism Themes | Code |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| Singular | 1 |
| Superior | 2 |
| God-favored | 3 |
| Mutual Exceptionalism | 4 |
| American Greatness | 5 |
| Model | 6 |
| Global Leader | 7 |
| Exempt | 8 |

Invocations used in relation to specific subjects

For each American exceptionalism invocation coded above, coders will identify if they are used in relation to one of the subjects listed below.

**** (NOTE that the American exceptionalism invocation and subjects below do not have to be in the same sentence as one another, but they do need to be evidently used in relation to one another. Do not code “present” for any of these categories if the two themes are not used within two sentences before or two sentences after the exceptionalism invocation.)****

12. Is AE invocation used in a general sense (AE_gen**)**

- a. This category will be coded as “present” if the American exceptionalism invocation is used in very general terms and not tied to any specific aspect of the country.
 1. Examples:
 - a. The United States is the greatest nation on earth.
 - b. America is the uniquely blessed by God
 - c. This country is the most amazing place on earth.

2. DO NOT CODE if the AE invocation is related to any tangible characteristic of the United States, its people, government, etc.
13. Is AE invocation used in relation to the subject of the American economy (**AE_econ**)
 - a. This category will be coded as “present” if the American exceptionalism invocation is used to describe the American economy. Examples:
 - i. The United States has the greatest economy on earth.
 - ii. America’s economic power is unmatched in the world.
 14. Is AE invocation used in relation to the subject of the American people (**AE_people**)
 - a. This category will be coded as “present” if the American exceptionalism invocation is used to describe the American people. Examples:
 - i. The American people have worked harder for what they have earned than any other people in the world.
 - ii. The true power of the United States can be found in its people, the greatest and most diverse nation in the world.
 15. Is AE invocation used in relation to the subject of the American military (**AE_military**)
 - a. This category will be coded as “present” if the American exceptionalism invocation is used to describe the American military. Examples:
 - i. America has the greatest military force in the world.
 - ii. The U.S. military is the world’s only true power.
 16. Is AE invocation used in relation to the subject of the political power of the United States (**AE_power**)
 - a. This category will be coded as “present” if the American exceptionalism invocation is used to describe American political power or might. Note that this type of power is not tied explicitly to economic, cultural or military power. This includes general statements about the United States, its power or its force in general. Examples:
 - i. The United States is the most powerful country in the world.
 - ii. America is the greatest political power on earth.
 - iii. The United States is the greatest force on the face of this planet.
 17. Is AE invocation used in relation to the subject of America’s form of government (**AE_gov**)
 - a. This category will be coded as “present” if the American exceptionalism invocation is used to describe the American form of government or any of its institutional principles, laws, founding ideas, etc. Examples:
 - i. America’s democracy is a shining example of the fairest form of government on earth.
 - ii. America electoral system is the most incorruptible system in the world.
 18. Is AE invocation used in relation to the subject of the American values (**AE_values**)
 - a. This category will be coded as “present” if the American exceptionalism invocation is used to describe American values. Examples of American values include:
 - i. The American creed

- ii. Freedom
 - iii. Liberty
 - iv. Equality
 - v. Opportunity
 - vi. Innovation
 - vii. Individualism
 - viii. Pursuit of happiness
 - ix. Family values
 - x. Egalitarianism
 - xi. Humanitarianism
- b. Examples
- i. Unlike any other country on earth, the United States was founded on the ideas of equity and individual opportunity.
 - ii. There is not country that loves freedom more than the United States.

19. What other subject is the AE invocation used in relation to (**AE_other**).

If the AE invocation is used in relation to a subject that is not included above, coder should **write in** that subject in this field. (TEXT FIELD)

Invocation combinations

For each American exceptionalism invocation coded above, coders will identify if they are used in combination with any other theme of American exceptionalism,

******(NOTE: that the American exceptionalism themes do not have to be in the same sentence as one another. They do, however, need to be evidently used in relation to one another. Do not code “present” for any of these categories if the two themes are not used within two sentences before or two sentences after the exceptionalism invocation.)******

Use the following codes for all variables below:

0=Not Present

1=Present

20. Invocation used in combination with Singular AE theme (**Com_Sing**)

- a. This combination will be coded as “Present” if the invocation coded above is used in relation to another invocation of the *singular* American Exceptionalism theme.
 - i. For example, a president might say, “The United States has been blessed by God as the world’s singular country.”
 - ii. Another example is, “The American people are the most unique and greatest people on the face of the planet.”

21. Invocation used in combination with Superior AE theme (**Com_Sup**)

- a. This combination will be coded as “Present” if the invocation coded above is used in relation to another invocation of the *superior* American Exceptionalism theme.
 - i. For example, a president might say, “Because the United States is so unique, it has become the best country in the world.”

- ii. Another example is, “The American people have been doted by God to be the most powerful country in the world.”

22. Invocation used in combination with God-blessed AE theme (**Com_God**)

- a. This combination will be coded as “Present” if the invocation coded above is used in relation to another invocation of the *god-blessed* American Exceptionalism theme.
 - i. For example, a president might say, “The United States has been uniquely blessed by God almighty.”
 - ii. Another example is, “The American people are the greatest people on earth because they have been blessed by God.”

Invocations used in relation to International roles

For each American exceptionalism invocation coded above, coders will identify if they are used in relation to one of the international roles listed below.

(NOTE that the American exceptionalism invocation and international role do not have to be in the same sentence as one another, but they do need to be evidently used in relation to one another. Do not code “present” for any of these categories if the two themes are not used within two sentences before or two sentences after the exceptionalism invocation.)

Use the following codes for all variables below:

0=Not Present

1=Present

23. AE invocation used in relation to the argument that the United States should stand as a global model (**AE_Model**)

- a. This category will be coded as “present” if the American exceptionalism invocation is used in relation to the argument that the United States, its people, or its government should stand as an example for the rest of the world to emulate.
 - i. For example, “America’s democracy stands as the world’s greatest form of government and stands as a global example that every country should seek to emulate.”

24. AE invocation used in relation to the argument that the United States should stand as a global leader (**AE_Leader**)

- a. This category will be coded as “present” if the American exceptionalism invocation is used in relation to the argument that the United States should stand as an example for the rest of the world to emulate.
 - i. For example, “The United States has been blessed by God with the responsibility to lead the world toward prosperity and salvation.”

25. Is AE invocation used in relation to the argument that the United States should stand as exempt from or above international rules, institutions or norms (**AE_Exempt**)

- a. This category will be coded as “present” if the American exceptionalism invocation is used in relation to the argument that the United States, its people, or its government should stand as exempt from international rules, laws or institutions.
 - i. For example, “The United States is the greatest nation in the world. For that reason, we should stand above and not below the control of the United Nations.”

Invocations used for international comparisons

26. AE invocation used to compare the United States with “the world” (**Comp_world**)

- a. This category will be coded as “present” if the American Exceptionalism invocation is used to compare United States with “the world.”
 - i. For example, “The United States is the greatest country in the world.”
 - ii. Another example might be, “There is no other country in the world that is as unique as the United States.”

0=Absent 1=Present

International comparisons for Mutual Exceptionalism

27. What country, countries or region was the United States compared to (**Comp_where**)

- a. **Write in** the name(s) of the country, countries or regions that the United States is compared to. (TEXT FIELD)

Appendix B

Content Analysis Code Sheet

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Unit of Analysis – Invocation of American exceptionalism theme</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">General Variables</p> <p>1. Speech ID: _____ (Speech_ID) Individual ID Code at the top of each speech document 1000 range - Domestic Speeches 2000 range - Speeches to foreign legislatures 3000 range - Speeches to United Nations 4000 range - Joint press conferences</p> <p>2. Coder ID: _____ (Coder_ID) 1=Jason 2=Lindsey 3=Other</p> <p>3. Date of Speech: _____ (Date) Format: YYYYMMDD</p> <p>4. Speech Title: _____ (Title) TEXT FIELD Examples: Second Annual Address State of the Union</p> <p>5. Type of Speech: _____ (Speech_Type) 1=Inaugural 2= Farewell 3=State of the Union 4=Speech to Congress (not SOTU) 5=Major speech to the nation 6=Nomination Acceptance 7=Foreign legislature 8=Joint press conference 9=Speech to the United Nations</p> <p>6. Subject of Speech: _____ (Speech_sub) 1=Domestic 2=Mixed (Domestic/Foreign) 3=Foreign</p> | <p>7. Location of speech: _____ (Speech_Loc) 1=United States 2=Abroad</p> <p>8. Country of origin of foreign leader in joint press conference _____ (for_origin) TEXT FIELD – Fill in country name only Examples: Japan Norway</p> <p>9. U.S. President: _____ (President) 1=Roosevelt 2=Truman 3=Eisenhower 4=Kennedy 5=Johnson 6=Nixon 7=Ford 8=Carter 9=Reagan 10=Bush 11=Clinton 12=Bush II 13=Barack Obama</p> <p>10. President’s Party: _____ (Party_ID) 1=Democrat 2=Republican</p> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Primary Variables</p> <p>Exceptionalism invocation (Exc_invoc)</p> <p>11. Type of Exceptionalism theme</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">1=Singular</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2=Superior</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">3=God-blessed</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">MUTUAL EXCEPTIONALISM</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">4=Mutual exceptionalism</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">AMERICAN GREATNESS</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">5=Great/Awesome</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">GLOBAL ROLES</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">6=Model</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">7=Global leader</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">8=Exempt or above</p> <p>If coded as 4, STOP and skip to #27 below and fill out. If coded as 5–9 STOP do not code below variables</p> | <p>18. Is AE theme used in relation to the issue of the American values _____ (AE_values)</p> <p>19. Is AE theme used in relation to other issues write-in (AE_other)</p> <p>Invocation combinations</p> <p>20. Used in combination with Singular theme _____ (Com_Sing)</p> <p>21. Used in combination with Superior theme _____ (Com_Sup)</p> <p>22. Used in combination with God-blessed theme _____ (Com_God)</p> |
| <p>NOTE: Use the following codes for all variables below:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">0=Absent</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">1=Present</p> <p>Invocations used in relation to other subjects</p> <p>12. Is AE theme used in relation to the issue of the American culture _____ (AE_general)</p> <p>13. Is AE theme used in relation to the issue of the American economy _____ (AE_econ)</p> <p>14. Is AE theme used in relation to the issue of the American people _____ (AE_people)</p> <p>15. Is AE theme used in relation to the issue of the American military _____ (AE_military)</p> <p>16. Is AE theme used in relation to the issue of American political power _____ (AE_power)</p> <p>17. Is AE theme used in relation to America's form of government _____ (AE_gov)</p> | <p>Exceptionalism themes (International roles)</p> <p>23. Is AE theme used in relation to the argument that the United States should stand as a global model _____ (AE_Model)</p> <p>24. Is AE theme used in relation to the argument that the United States should stand as a global leader _____ (AE_Leader)</p> <p>25. Is AE theme used in relation to the argument that the United States should stand as exempt from or above international rules, institutions or norms _____ (AE_Exempt)</p> <p>Invocations used for international comparisons</p> <p>26. Is AE theme used to compare United States with “the world” _____ (Comp_world)</p> <p>Mutual Exceptionalism comparisons</p> <p>27. For MUTUAL EXCEPTIONALISM ONLY: What country, countries or region was U.S. compared to write-in (Comp_where)</p> |

Appendix C

Experimental Manipulations for U.S. Study

Primary Condition

President says: No country greater than U.S.A

Associated Press
By John Gilliam

Washington (AP) –The most important issue facing the country today is to ensure that the United States has a strong standing in the world, the President said during Monday’s State of the Union address. And he wasted little time in making clear where he sees the United States in relation to the rest of the world.

“The United States is the greatest country the world has ever known,” he said to a loud applause. “It is important that we understand that no power on earth is greater than the United States of America today. And none will be greater than the United States of America in the future.”

“America is today the strongest, the most influential and the most generous nation in the world. We have the fullest measure of freedom ever enjoyed by any people, anywhere,” he added. “But it is upon us to make sure we maintain our standing in the world.”

He talked about extending new ties and influence toward South America, while claiming that old alliances in Europe and elsewhere are stronger than ever. The President also cited the example of Japan, where with U.S. has built strong economic and political ties that are likely to last. Ultimately, he offered no apologies for aggressively seeking out new markets and new opportunities.

“If the United States can trade with other nations on a level playing field, we can outproduce, outcompete, and outsell anybody, anywhere in the world,” he said. “America still has the largest, most prosperous economy in the world. No workers are more productive than ours. In fact, we are the most innovative or dynamic country on earth. But we still have work to do.”

In recent years, the economic situation has had many asking where the United States stands in this “new” world order. In fact, some have expressed concern that the United States might be falling from favor and that many countries might be forging new relationships without us.

The President seemed unphased by these opinions, calling the United States the world’s “only indispensable nation.”

“There will always be powerful countries in the world,” the President added, “but the United States is different. We are unique. We have a divine purpose to stand as the world’s greatest power. Without us, the world would be a worse place to live.”

Secondary Condition

President says: U.S. the global leader

Associated Press

By John Gilliam

Washington (AP) –The most important issue facing the country today is to ensure that the United States has a strong standing in the world, the President said during Monday’s State of the Union address. And he wasted little time in making clear where he sees the United States in relation to the rest of the world.

“The United States is the world’s leader,” he said to a loud applause. “It is important that we understand that other countries look to us as the model of strength in today’s world. And they will continue to look to the United States for leadership in the future.”

“America today leads the world in influence, strength and generosity. We are the model of freedom that countries around the world aspire to,” he added. “But it is upon us to make sure we maintain our standing in the world.”

He talked about extending new ties and influence toward South America, while claiming that old alliances in Europe and elsewhere are stronger than ever. The President also cited the example of Japan, where with U.S. has built strong economic and political ties that are likely to last. Ultimately, he offered no apologies for aggressively seeking out new markets and new opportunities.

“If the United States can trade with other nations on a level playing field, we can set an example for the rest of the world to follow,” he said. “America still leads the world in economic growth and prosperity. Our workers are a model of efficiency and productivity that other countries look to for inspiration. But we still have work to do.”

In recent years, the economic situation has had many asking where the United States stands in this “new” world order. In fact, some have expressed concern that the United States might be falling from favor and that many countries might be forging new relationships without us.

The President seemed unphased by these opinions, calling the United States “a beacon of hope and inspiration for the rest of the world.”

“There are many powerful countries in the world,” the president added, “but the United States is the example that all other countries look to. We provide the international community with much needed guidance, so it is up to us to steer the world in the right direction. Our country is a shining light for the rest of the world and we can’t let it go out.”

Mutual Condition

President says: U.S. among global elite

Associated Press

By John Gilliam

Washington (AP) –The most important issue facing the country today is to ensure that the United States has a strong standing in the world, the President said during Monday’s State of the Union address. And he wasted little time in making clear where he sees the United States in relation to the rest of the world.

“The United States is among the greatest countries in the world today,” he said to a loud applause. “It is important that we understand that we are part of an elite group of the most powerful nations in the world today. And we will continue to be a part of this global elite in the future.”

“With nations such as Japan and Great Britain, we are the strongest, the most influential and most generous nations in the world. We each have the fullest measures of freedom ever enjoyed by any people, anywhere,” he added. “But it is upon us all to make sure we maintain our standing in the world.”

He talked about extending new ties and influence toward South America, while claiming that old alliances in Europe and elsewhere are stronger than ever. The President also cited the example of Japan, where with U.S. has built strong economic and political ties that are likely to last. Ultimately, he offered no apologies for aggressively seeking out new markets and new opportunities.

“When countries like the United States, Japan and Great Britain trade on a level playing with other powerful nations, there is almost no one who can top us,” he said. “America and Japan are the two largest economies in the world, with Great Britain right with us. No countries in the world produce more than these three great countries. We are the most innovative and dynamic nations on earth. But all of us still have work to do.”

In recent years, the economic situation has had many asking where the United States stands in this “new” world order. In fact, some have expressed concern that the United States might be falling from favor and that many countries might be forging new relationships without us.

The President seemed unphased by these opinions, calling the United States “one of the few indispensable nations in the world.”

“There will always be powerful countries in the world,” the president added, “but the United States is clearly one of the elite. Today, the United States and countries like Great Britain and Japan stand as the world’s greatest powers. Without us, the world would be a far worse place to live.”

Non-Exceptional Condition

President says: U.S. is a country among equals

Associated Press

By John Gilliam

Washington (AP) –The most important issue facing the country today is to ensure that the United States has a strong standing in the world, the President said during Monday’s State of the Union address. And he wasted little time in making clear where he sees the United States in relation to the rest of the world.

“The United States is one of many countries in this world,” he said to a loud applause. “It is important that we understand that we are an important part of an equal community of nations in the world today. And we will continue to play out this important part in the future.”

“America is a strong, influential and generous nation. And we have a political system that allows us a full measure of freedom,” he added. “It is upon us to make sure we maintain our standing in the world.”

He talked about extending new ties and influence toward South America, while claiming that old alliances in Europe and elsewhere are stronger than ever. The President also cited the example of Japan, where with U.S. has built strong economic and political ties that are likely to last. Ultimately, he offered no apologies for aggressively seeking out new markets and new opportunities.

“If the United States can trade with other nations on a level playing field, we can forge new relationships with countries around the world,” he said. “America still has a strong, prosperous economy. Our workers are very productive. In fact, we have been a very innovative and dynamic country. But we still have work to do.”

In recent years, the economic situation has had many asking where the United States stands in this “new” world order. In fact, some have expressed concern that the United States might be falling from favor and that many countries might be forging new relationships without us.

The President seemed unphased by these opinions, calling the United States “a respected global citizen.”

“There will always be powerful countries in the world,” the president added, “and the United States is willing to work with all of them. Our place in the world is an important one. The other countries of the world need us to work with them as equals and we are ready for the task.”

Appendix D

Experimental Manipulations for Mexico Study

Primary Condition - English Version

OBAMA: U.S.A. is world's strongest country, needs to work with Latin America
El Universal

Cartagena, Colombia (agencias) – In his opening remarks at the sixth Summit of the Americas, the president of the United States, Barack Obama, said he wanted to “revitalize” his country’s involvement in Latin America. And he wasted little time in making clear where he sees the United States in relation to other countries in the region.

“The United States today is the most powerful country in the world,” he said to a large international audience. “America is the most influential and the most generous nation. But with this power comes special responsibilities.”

“It is upon all of us to make sure we continue to work together to move our region forward,” he added.

Obama talked about extending new ties and influence throughout Latin America, while claiming that alliances throughout the region are stronger than ever. The President cited the example of Mexico, where the U.S. has built strong economic and political ties that are likely to last. Ultimately, he offered no apologies for aggressively seeking out new markets and new opportunities in the region.

“America has the largest, most prosperous economy in the world. In order to maintain this level of prosperity, it is imperative that we work with other countries in this region to ensure that all of our economies can continue to grow together,” Obama said. “In the United States, we have the most innovative thinkers on earth and we are willing to put them to work for our collective benefit.”

Obama also addressed the reality that Latin American countries are building stronger ties with Europe or Asia to offset the influence of the United States in the region. According to Obama, however, the United States continues to be the one “indispensable nation” in the region.

“There will always be powerful and influential countries involved in Latin America,” the President added, “but the United States is different. We are unique. We have a special responsibility to make sure that all of our countries have a bright future ahead of us.”

Primary Condition - Spanish Version

Obama: EU el país mas fuerte del mundo, necesita trabajar más con América Latina
El Universal

Cartagena, Colombia (agencias) – En su discurso inaugural de la Sexta Cumbre de las Américas, el presidente de Estados Unidos, Barack Obama, dijo que quería “renovar” la influencia de su país en América Latina. Y fue muy directo en aclarar cómo es que él entiende a su país en relación a los otros países del hemisferio.

“Estados Unidos, hoy en día, es el país mas poderoso del mundo,” dijo Obama ante una audiencia internacional. “Nuestro país es el más generoso y el de mayor influencia mundial. Pero este poder representa responsabilidades especiales.”

“Está en nuestras manos asegurar que continuemos trabajando juntos para que nuestra región avance,” añadió.

El presidente Obama habló de extender la influencia de su país en América Latina, mientras aseguró que las alianzas que Estados Unidos ya tiene en la región son mas fuertes que nunca. El presidente citó el ejemplo de México, donde su país ha construido una fuerte alianza económica y política a través de los años. Sin embargo, no se disculpó por buscar agresivamente a nuevos mercados y nuevas oportunidades en la región.

“Mi país tiene la economía mas grande y próspera del mundo. Para poder mantener este nivel de prosperidad, es imprescindible que trabajemos con otros países en esta región para asegurar que todas nuestras economías puedan crecer juntas,” dijo Obama. “En Estados Unidos tenemos los intelectuales más innovadores del mundo y estamos dispuestos a ponerlos a trabajar para el beneficio colectivo de las Américas.”

Obama también se refirió a la realidad en la cual los países de América Latina están construyendo alianzas cada vez mas fuertes con países en Europa y Asia para compensar por la influencia de Estados Unidos en la región. Según el presidente, sin embargo, Estados Unidos continúa siendo el único país “indispensable” de la región.

“Siempre habrá países poderosos e influyentes en América Latina,” añadió el presidente, “pero Estados Unidos es diferente. Somos únicos. Tenemos una responsabilidad especial de asegurar que todos nuestros países tengan un futuro brillante por delante.”

Secondary Condition - English Version

Obama: U.S.A. is world leader, needs to work with Latin America
El Universal

Cartagena, Colombia (agencias) – In his opening remarks at the sixth Summit of the Americas, the president of the United States, Barack Obama, said he wanted to “revitalize” his country’s involvement in Latin America. And he wasted little time in making clear where he sees the United States in relation to other countries in the region.

“The United States today is the world’s leader,” he said to a large international audience. “Other countries look to us as the global model of strength and generosity. But with this leadership role comes special responsibilities.”

“It is upon all of us to make sure we continue to work together to move our region forward,” he added.

Obama talked about extending new ties and influence throughout Latin America, while claiming that alliances throughout the region are stronger than ever. The President cited the example of Mexico, where the U.S. has built strong economic and political ties that are likely to last. Ultimately, he offered no apologies for aggressively seeking out new markets and new opportunities in the region.

“The United States leads the world in economic growth and prosperity. In order to maintain this level of prosperity, it is imperative that we work with other countries in this region to ensure that all of our economies can continue to grow together,” Obama said. “In the United States, we have the world’s leading thinkers and we are willing to put them to work for our collective benefit.”

Obama also addressed the reality that Latin American countries are building stronger ties with Europe or Asia to offset the influence of the United States in the region. According to Obama, however, the United States continues to be a beacon of hope and inspiration in the region.

“There will always be powerful and influential countries involved in Latin America,” the President added, “but the United States is the example that other countries look to. It is our responsibility to take the lead and make sure that all of our countries have a bright future ahead of us.”

Secondary Condition - Spanish Version

Obama: EU el líder mundial, necesita trabajar más con América Latina
El Universal

Cartagena, Colombia (agencias) – En su discurso inaugural de la Sexta Cumbre de las Américas, el presidente de Estados Unidos, Barack Obama, dijo que quería “renovar” la influencia de su país en América Latina. Y fue muy directo en aclarar cómo es que él entiende a su país en relación a los otros países del hemisferio.

“Estados Unidos, hoy en día, es el líder mundial,” dijo Obama ante una audiencia internacional. “Otros países nos ven como el ejemplo global de poder y generosidad. Pero este papel de liderazgo representa grandes responsabilidades.”

“Está en nuestras manos asegurar que continuemos trabajando juntos para que nuestra región avance,” añadió.

El presidente Obama habló de extender la influencia de su país en América Latina, mientras aseguró que las alianzas que Estados Unidos ya tiene en la región son mas fuertes que nunca. El presidente citó el ejemplo de México, donde su país ha construido una fuerte alianza económica y política a través de los años. Sin embargo, no se disculpó por buscar agresivamente a nuevos mercados y nuevas oportunidades en la región.

“Mi país es el líder mundial en crecimiento económico y prosperidad. Para poder mantener este nivel de prosperidad, es imprescindible que trabajemos con otros países en esta región para asegurar que todas nuestras economías puedan crecer juntas,” dijo Obama. “En Estados Unidos tenemos los líderes en innovación intelectual y estamos dispuestos a ponerlos a trabajar para el beneficio colectivo de las Américas.”

Obama también se refirió a la realidad en la cual los países de América Latina están construyendo alianzas cada vez mas fuertes con países en Europa y Asia para compensar por la influencia de Estados Unidos en la región. Sin embargo, según el presidente, Estados Unidos continúa siendo una inspiración y un símbolo de esperanza en la región.

“Siempre habrá países poderosos e influyentes en América Latina,” añadió el presidente, “pero Estados Unidos es el modelo a seguir. Es nuestra responsabilidad asumir el liderazgo y asegurar que todos nuestros países tengan un futuro brillante por delante.”

Mutual Condition - English Version

Obama: U.S.A. and Mexico, the best of the Americas
El Universal

Cartagena, Colombia (agencias) – In his opening remarks at the sixth Summit of the Americas, the president of the United States, Barack Obama, said he wanted to “revitalize” his country’s involvement in Latin America. And he wasted little time in making clear where he sees the United States in relation to other countries in the region.

“Countries like the United States and Mexico are the most powerful in the Americas today,” he said to a large international audience. “Our two nations are the most influential and the most generous. But with this power comes special responsibilities.”

“It is upon all of us to make sure we continue to work together to move our region forward,” he added.

Obama talked about extending new ties and influence throughout Latin America, while claiming that alliances throughout the region are stronger than ever. The President cited the example of Mexico, where the U.S. has built strong economic and political ties that are likely to last. Ultimately, he offered no apologies for aggressively seeking out new markets and new opportunities in the region.

“Mexico and the United States have the largest, most prosperous economies. In order to maintain this level of prosperity, it is imperative that we work with other countries in this region to ensure that all of our economies can continue to grow together,” Obama said. “In our two nations, we have the most innovative thinkers on earth and we are willing to put them to work for our collective benefit.”

Obama also addressed the reality that Latin American countries are building stronger ties with Europe or Asia to offset the influence of larger countries in the region. According to Obama, however, the United States and Mexico continue to be the most “indispensable nations” in the region.

“There will always be powerful and influential countries involved in Latin America,” the President added, “but the United States and Mexico are different. We are unique. We have a special responsibility to make sure that all of our countries have a bright future ahead of us.”

Mutual Condition - Spanish Version

Obama: EU y México, lo mejor de las américas
El Universal

Cartagena, Colombia (agencias) – En su discurso inaugural de la Sexta Cumbre de las Américas, el presidente de Estados Unidos, Barack Obama, dijo que quería “renovar” la influencia de su país en América Latina. Y fue muy directo en aclarar cómo es que él entiende a su país en relación a los otros países del hemisferio.

“Estados Unidos y México son los países mas poderosos del continente Americano hoy en día,” dijo Obama ante una audiencia internacional. “Nuestras naciones son las mas influyentes y las mas generosas. Pero este poder representa responsabilidades especiales.”

“Está en nuestras manos asegurar que continuemos trabajando juntos para que nuestra región avance,” añadió.

El presidente Obama habló de extender la influencia de su país en América Latina, mientras aseguró que las alianzas que Estados Unidos ya tiene en la región son mas fuertes que nunca. El presidente citó el ejemplo de México, donde su país ha construido una fuerte alianza económica y política a través de los años. Sin embargo, no se disculpó por buscar agresivamente a nuevos mercados y nuevas oportunidades en la región.

“México y Estados Unidos tienen las economías mas grandes y prosperas. Para poder mantener este nivel de prosperidad, es imprescindible que trabajemos con otros países en esta región para asegurar que todas nuestras economías puedan crecer juntas,” dijo Obama. “En nuestras dos naciones tenemos los intelectuales más innovadores del mundo y estamos dispuestos a ponerlos a trabajar para el beneficio colectivo de las Américas.”

Obama también se refirió a la realidad en la cual los países de América Latina están construyendo alianzas cada vez mas fuertes con países en Europa y Asia para compensar por la influencia de Estados Unidos en la región. Sin embargo, según el presidente, Estados Unidos y México continúan siendo los únicos países “indispensables” de la región.

“Siempre habrá países poderosos e influyentes en América Latina,” añadió el presidente, “pero Estados Unidos y México son diferentes. Somos únicos. Tenemos una responsabilidad especial de asegurar que todos nuestros países tengan un futuro brillante por delante.”

Non-Exceptional Condition– English Version

Obama: U.S.A., a country among equals in Latin American
El Universal

Cartagena, Colombia (agencias) – In his opening remarks at the sixth Summit of the Americas, the president of the United States, Barack Obama, said he wanted to “revitalize” his country’s involvement in Latin America. And he wasted little time in making clear where he sees the United States in relation to other countries in the region.

“The United States today is one of many powerful nations in the world,” he said to a large international audience. “America is an influential and generous nation, but we have the same responsibilities as all other countries in the Americas.”

“It is upon all of us to make sure we continue to work together to move our region forward,” he added.

Obama talked about extending new ties and influence throughout Latin America, while claiming that alliances throughout the region are stronger than ever. The President cited the example of Mexico, where the U.S. has built strong economic and political ties that are likely to last. Ultimately, he offered no apologies for aggressively seeking out new markets and new opportunities in the region.

“America is one of many large and prosperous economies in the world. In order to maintain this level of prosperity, it is imperative that we work with other countries in this region to ensure that all of our economies can continue to grow together,” Obama said. “In the United States, we have many innovative thinkers and we are willing to put them to work for our collective benefit.”

Obama also addressed the reality that Latin American countries are building stronger ties with Europe or Asia to offset the influence of the United States in the region. According to Obama, however, the United States continues to be a respected and active country in the region.

“There will always be powerful and influential countries involved in Latin America,” the President added, “and the United States is one of them. Our place in the region is an important one. The other countries in this region need us to work with them as equals to make sure that all of our nations have a bright future ahead of us.”

Non-Exceptional Condition – Spanish Version

Obama: EU, un país entre iguales en América Latina
El Universal

Cartagena, Colombia (agencias) – En su discurso inaugural de la Sexta Cumbre de las Américas, el presidente de Estados Unidos, Barack Obama, dijo que quería “renovar” la influencia de su país en América Latina. Y fue muy directo en aclarar cómo es que él entiende a su país en relación a los otros países del hemisferio.

“Estados Unidos hoy en día es uno de muchos países poderosos en el mundo,” dijo ante una audiencia internacional. “Nuestra nación es influyente y generosa, pero tenemos las mismas responsabilidades que todos los demás países en las Américas.”

“Está en nuestras manos asegurar que continuemos trabajando juntos para que nuestra región avance,” añadió.

El presidente Obama habló de extender la influencia de su país en América Latina, mientras aseguró que las alianzas que Estados Unidos ya tiene en la región son más fuertes que nunca. El presidente citó el ejemplo de México, donde su país ha construido una fuerte alianza económica y política a través de los años. Sin embargo, no se disculpó por buscar agresivamente a nuevos mercados y nuevas oportunidades en la región.

“Estados Unidos es uno de las economías grandes y prosperas en el mundo. Para poder mantener este nivel de prosperidad, es imprescindible que trabajemos con otros países en esta región para asegurar que todas nuestras economías puedan crecer juntas,” dijo Obama. “En Estados Unidos tenemos muchos intelectuales innovadores y estamos dispuestos a ponerlos a trabajar para el beneficio colectivo de las Américas.”

Obama también se refirió a la realidad en la cual los países de América Latina están construyendo alianzas cada vez más fuertes con países en Europa y Asia para compensar por la influencia de Estados Unidos en la región. Según el presidente, sin embargo, Estados Unidos continúa siendo un país respetado y activo en la región.

“Siempre habrá países poderosos e influyentes en América Latina,” añadió el presidente, “y Estados Unidos es uno de ellos. Nuestro lugar en la región es importante. Otros países en la región necesitan que trabajemos con ellos como sus semejantes para asegurar que todos nuestros países tengan un futuro brillante por delante.”

Appendix E

Questionnaire for U.S. Study

EXCEPTIONALISM BIAS

PART 1: The following section asks you about your feelings about the United States. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Agree - Strongly Agree

1. The American people are the greatest people in the world.
2. In comparison to the United States, other countries are simply inferior.
3. Americans are a uniquely blessed people.
4. RC-Other countries are just as unique as the United States.
5. People in other countries are not as blessed as Americans are.
6. The United States is different from every other country on earth.
7. No other country will ever be as great as the United States.
8. People in other countries don't value freedom like we do in the United States
9. RC-America is not the greatest country on earth.
10. In the eyes of God, other countries are inferior to the United States.
11. America has a unique set of values that set it apart from the world.
12. Other countries have inferior values to those in the United States.
13. God has chosen the United States to play a special role in the world.

GLOBAL ROLES

PART 2: As before, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

LEADER

1. It is America's responsibility to promote democracy in other countries.
2. The United States should focus less on international affairs.
3. The United States should engage with other countries as their equal, not as their leader.
4. The United States should lead the way in spreading freedom around the world.
5. America is better off when the government focuses its attention on domestic issues.
6. It is not the responsibility of the United States to protect the peace in world affairs.
7. The United States should engage in international affairs only when there are clear benefits from doing so.
8. Sometimes the United States should let other countries take the lead in world affairs.

MODEL

1. Other countries should try to make their government as much like ours as possible.
2. Other countries should be allowed to decide their own economic system, even if they don't choose capitalism.
3. If another country is better than the United States in some way the United States should model itself after them.

4. The world would be more peaceful if other countries were more like the United States.
5. The United States has much to learn from other countries.
6. Other countries should be allowed to decide their own style of government, even if they don't choose democracy.
7. The United States should follow the examples set by other successful countries.

EXEMPT

1. The United States should abide by all international laws even if they conflict with America's national interests.
2. It is acceptable for the United States to invade other countries if it is for the right reasons.
3. The United Nations Security Council should have final say over all U.S. military action abroad.
4. The United States should not always have to play by the same rules as other countries.
5. The United States should always have to consult with other powerful countries before taking any serious action in world affairs.
6. The United States should always stand up for what is right, even if it means breaking the rules.
8. The United States should be able to sidestep the United Nations when necessary.

REAL WORLD FOREIGN POLICIES

1. The United States should not use military force to stop the government violence in Syria.
2. The United States should encourage countries like China and North Korea to become democracies.
3. Whenever natural disasters hit other countries, the United States has a responsibility to be the most generous contributor.
4. The United States should always defend human rights in the world, even if doing so is against America's own national interests to do so.
5. The United States should invade Iran if it does not dismantle its program to build nuclear weapons.
6. The United States should no longer be a part of the United Nations.
7. The United States should be able to remove leaders in other countries from power if necessary.

DEMOGRAPHICS

PART 5: The following questions are general demographic questions about you.

44. Generally speaking, which of the following do you consider yourself?
- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 = Strong Republican | 4 = Lean Democrat |
| 2 = Lean Republican | 5 = Strong Democrat |
| 3 = Independent | |

45. We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 = Extremely liberal | 5 = Slightly conservative |
| 2 = Liberal | 6 = Conservative |
| 3 = Slightly liberal | 7 = Extremely conservative |
| 4 = Moderate; middle of the road | |

46. What is your gender?

- 1 = Male
2 = Female

47. What racial or ethnic group best describes you?

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| 1 = Black | 5 = Asian |
| 2 = Hispanic | 6 = Native American |
| 3 = Latino/a | 7 = Other _____ |
| 4 = White | |

48. What was the last grade or class that you completed in school?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 = Did not complete high school | 4 = Completed college degree |
| 2 = Completed high school or equivalent | 5 = Some graduate school |
| 3 = Some college | 6 = Completed graduate degree |

49. Last year (2011), what was your total family income from all sources, before taxes? Please choose the appropriate category:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 = Less than \$10,000 | 5 = \$75,000 - \$99,999 |
| 2 = \$10,000 - \$24,999 | 6 = \$100,000 - \$249,999 |
| 3 = \$25,000 - \$49,999 | 7 = Over \$250,000 |
| 4 = \$50,000 - \$74,999 | |

50. In what year were you born? _____

51. Are you a U.S. citizen by birth or by naturalization?

- 1 = U.S. citizen by birth
2 = Naturalized citizen
3 = Not a U.S. citizen

52. Religious affiliation:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 = Evangelical Protestant | 6 = Muslim |
| 2 = Mainline Protestant | 7 = Buddhist |
| 3 = Catholic | 8 = Hindu |
| 4 = Other Christian | 9 = No affiliation |
| 5 = Jewish | 10 = Other |
- _____

53. To what extent do you approve of the job Barack Obama is doing as president of the United States?

- 1 = Strongly Disapprove

- 2 = Disapprove
- 3 = Somewhat Disapprove
- 4 = Neutral
- 5 = Somewhat Approve
- 6 = Approve
- 7 = Strongly Approve

NEWS USE

PART 6: As before, Please indicate your agreement with the following statements about your personal news consumption habits.

- 54. I regularly seek out news about international affairs
- 55. I regularly get news from MSNBC (either online or on TV).
- 56. I regularly get news from CNN (either online or on TV).
- 57. I regularly get news from FOX (either online or on TV).
- 58. I regularly get news from my local TV news (including their websites).
- 59. I regularly get news from my local newspaper (including their website).
- 60. I regularly get news from other online news sources such as blogs.
- 61. I regularly get news from the Daily Show or Colbert Report.
- 62. I regularly get news from NPR.

Appendix F

Questionnaire for Mexico Study

English Version

PART 1: The following section asks you about your feelings about Mexico. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Agree - Strongly Agree

1. The Mexican people are the greatest people in the world.
2. In comparison to the Mexico, other countries are simply inferior.
3. Mexicans are a uniquely blessed people.
4. RC-Other countries are just as unique as Mexico.
5. People in other countries are not as blessed as Mexicans are.
6. Mexico is different from every other country on earth.
7. No other country will ever be as great as Mexico.
8. People in other countries don't value life like we do in the Mexico.
9. RC-Mexico is not the greatest country on earth.
10. In the eyes of God, other countries are inferior to Mexico.
11. Mexico has a unique set of values that set it apart from the world.
12. Other countries have inferior values to those in Mexico.
13. God has chosen the Mexico to play a special role in the world.

PART 2: The following sections ask you about your feelings about the United States. As before, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

1. The United States is generally a force for good in the world.
2. The United States is generally an arrogant country.
3. The United States is often disrespectful of other governments.
4. The United States often defends other countries when they are in trouble or need help.
5. Americans are often disrespectful of other cultures.
6. The American people are often generous to other countries in need of help.
7. The American people generally don't care about people in other countries.
8. In general, Americans are good people.

PART 2: As before, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

1. It is America's responsibility to promote democracy in other countries.
2. The United States should focus less on international affairs.
3. The United States should engage with other countries as their equal, not as their leader.
4. The United States should lead the way in spreading freedom around the world.
5. The world is better off when the government focuses its attention on domestic issues.
6. It is not the responsibility of the United States to protect the peace in world affairs.

7. The United States should take the lead of the global economic system.
8. Sometimes the United States should let other countries take the lead in world affairs.

1. Other countries should try to make their government as much like the United States as possible.
2. Other countries should be allowed to decide their own economic system, even if they don't choose capitalism.
3. If another country is better than the United States in some way the United States should model itself after them.
4. The world would be more peaceful if other countries were more like the United States.
5. The United States has much to learn from other countries.
6. Other countries should be allowed to decide their own style of government, even if they don't choose democracy.
7. The United States should follow the examples set by other successful countries.
8. The economic system in the United States should serve as a model for the rest of the world.
9. America's democratic system should be a model for the world's new democracies.

1. The United States should abide by all international laws even if they conflict with the country's national interests.
2. It is acceptable for the United States to invade other countries if it is for the right reasons.
3. The United Nations Security Council should have final say over all U.S. military action abroad.
4. The United States should not always have to play by the same rules as other countries.
5. The United States should always have to consult with other powerful countries before taking any serious action in world affairs.
6. The United States should always stand up for what is right, even if it means breaking the rules.
7. The United States should be able to sidestep the United Nations when necessary.

1. The United States should not use military force to stop the government violence in Syria.
2. The United States should encourage countries like China and North Korea to become democracies.
3. Whenever natural disasters hit other countries, the United States has a responsibility to be the most generous contributor.
4. The United States should always defend human rights in the world, even if doing so is against America's own national interests to do so.
5. The United States should invade Iran if it does not dismantle its program to build nuclear weapons.
6. The United States should no longer be a part of the United Nations.
7. The United States should be able to remove leaders in other countries from power if necessary.

NEW FOREIGN POLICIES WITH MEXICO

1. The United States needs to take more responsibility in combating narco traffickers in Mexico.
2. Mexico is better off when it does things without the help of the United States.
3. Mexico, Canada, and the United States should eliminate or renegotiate NAFTA.
4. Mexico should work more with other Latin American countries than with the United States.
5. Which comes closest to describing your view? The United States is mostly to blame for the drug violence in Mexico, OR Mexico is mostly to blame for the drug violence, OR both are to blame.

1 = U.S.
 2 = Mexico
 3 = Both

Demographic questions

PART 5: The following questions are general demographic questions about you.

1. Generally speaking, with which party are you affiliated?

| | |
|----------|---------|
| 1 = PRI | 5 = PT |
| 2 = PRD | 6 = PMC |
| 3 = PAN | 7 = PNA |
| 4 = PVEM | |

2. Some people talk about politics in terms of right and left. On a scale of 0 to 6, with 0 indicating extremely left and 6 indicating extremely right, where would you classify yourself?

(left) 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 (right)

3. What is your gender?

1 = Male
 2 = Female

4. What was the last level of schooling you finished?

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| 1 = Primaria | 4 = Propedéutica |
| 2 = Secundaria | 5 = Bachillerato |
| 3 = Prepa | 6 = Maestría o doctorado |

5. In which range is your age?

| | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1 = Less than 18 | 5 = 40 - 49 |
| 2 = 18 - 20 | 6 = 50-59 |
| 3 = 21 - 29 | 7 = 60 or older |
| 4 = 30 - 39 | |

6. Religious affiliation:

1 = Catholic
 2 = Protestant
 3 = Jewish
 4 = Muslim

6 = Buddhist
 7 = Other
 8 = No affiliation

7. To what extent do you approve of the job Barack Obama is doing as president of the United States?

1 = Strongly Disapprove
 2 = Disapprove
 3 = Approve
 4 = Strongly Approve

NEWS USE QUESTIONS

PART 6: As before, please indicate your agreement with the following statements about your personal news consumption habits.

1. I regularly get news from Televisa (either online or on TV).
2. I regularly get news from TV Azteca (either online or on TV)
3. I regularly get news from the national newspaper (Reforma, El Universal).
4. I regularly get news from the local newspaper (AM, Correo).
5. I regularly get news from online sources.
6. I regularly seek out news about international affairs.

Spanish Version

PARTE 1: La siguiente sección se refiere a su opinión acerca de México. Indique en que medida está usted de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones:

Completamente en desacuerdo – En desacuerdo – De acuerdo – Completamente de acuerdo

1. El pueblo de México es el mejor en el mundo.
2. En comparación con México, otros países son simplemente inferiores.
3. El pueblo Mexicano es únicamente bendecido.
4. RC- Otros países son igual de únicos como México.
5. Los pueblos de otros países no son tan bendecidos como los Mexicanos.
6. México es diferente de cualquier otro país en el mundo.

7. Ningún otro país podrá llegar a ser tan grandioso como México.
8. Los pueblos en otros países no valoran la vida como lo hacemos en México.
9. En los ojos de Dios, otros países son inferiores a México.
10. RC- México no es el mejor país del mundo
11. México tiene un sistema de valores único que lo distingue del resto del mundo.
12. Otros países tienen valores inferiores a los de México.
13. Dios ha escogido a México para jugar un papel especial en el mundo.

PARTE 2: Las siguientes secciones solicitan sus opiniones acerca de los Estados Unidos. Como hasta ahora, indique en que medida está usted de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones:

1. Estados Unidos es generalmente una fuerza de bondad en el mundo.
2. Estados Unidos es generalmente un país arrogante.
3. Estados Unidos es a menudo irrespetuoso con otras culturas.
4. Estados Unidos a menudo defiende otros países cuando están en problemas o cuando necesitan ayuda.
5. Los Americanos son a menudo irrespetuosos con otras culturas.
6. El pueblo Americano es a menudo generoso con otros países.
7. El pueblo Americano generalmente no se interesa en la gente de otros países.
8. En general, los Americanos son buenas personas.

PARTE 3: Como hasta ahora, indique en que medida está de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones:

1. Es la responsabilidad de Estados Unidos promover la democracia en otros países.
2. Estados Unidos debe enfocarse menos en relaciones exteriores.
3. Estados Unidos debe relacionarse con otros países como su semejante, no como su líder.
4. Estados Unidos debe liderar la propagación de libertad en el mundo.
5. Es mejor cuando el gobierno de Estados Unidos se enfoca en asuntos domésticos.
6. No es la responsabilidad de Estados Unidos proteger la paz en asuntos de relaciones internacionales.
7. Estados Unidos debería tomar el liderazgo del desarrollo del sistema económico mundial.
8. A veces Estados Unidos debe dejar que otros países tomen el liderazgo en asuntos internacionales.

1. Otros países deberían tratar de hacer sus gobiernos tan parecidos al de los Estados Unidos como sea posible.
2. Otros países deberían poder elegir sus propios sistemas económicos, incluso si no eligen el capitalismo.
3. Si otro país es mejor que Estados Unidos en algún aspecto, Estados Unidos debería aprender de su ejemplo.
4. El mundo sería más pacífico si otros países fueran más como Estados Unidos.
5. Estados Unidos tiene mucho que aprender de otros países.

6. Otros países deberían poder elegir su propio estilo de gobierno, incluso si no eligen una democracia.
7. Estados Unidos debería seguir el ejemplo puesto por otros países exitosos.
8. El sistema económico de Estados Unidos debería servir como modelo para el resto del mundo.
9. La democracia de Estados Unidos debería servir como modelo para las nuevas democracias en el mundo.

1. Estados Unidos debe obedecer toda ley internacional incluso si éstas contradicen sus intereses nacionales.
2. Es aceptable para Estados Unidos invadir otros países si es por las razones correctas.
3. El Consejo de Seguridad de las Naciones Unidas debe tener la última decisión acerca de toda acción militar estadounidense en el extranjero.
4. Estados Unidos no siempre debería acatar las mismas reglas que otros países.
5. Estados Unidos debería siempre consultar con otros potencias mundiales antes de tomar serias acciones en asuntos internacionales
6. Estados Unidos debe defender siempre lo que es correcto, aun cuando significa desobedecer a las reglas.
7. Estados Unidos debe ignorar a las Naciones Unidas cuando sea necesario.

1. Estados Unidos NO debe usar la fuerza militar para detener la violencia del gobierno en Siria.
2. Estados Unidos debe alentar a otros países como China y Corea del Norte a convertirse en democracias.
3. Cuando desastres naturales afectan a otros países, Estados Unidos tiene la responsabilidad de ser el donador más generoso.
4. Estados Unidos debe siempre defender los derechos humanos en el mundo, incluso cuando hacerlo significa ir en contra de sus propios intereses nacionales.
5. Estados Unidos debe invadir Irán si éste no desmantela su programa de armamento nuclear.
6. Estados Unidos debería salir de las Naciones Unidas.
7. Estados Unidos debería ser capaz de remover del poder a líderes en otras naciones en caso de ser necesario.

NUEVA POLÍTICA EXTERIOR CON MÉXICO

1. Estados Unidos necesita tener mayor responsabilidad en el combate contra el narcotráfico en México.
2. A México le va mejor cuando hace cosas sin ayuda de Estados Unidos.
3. México, Canadá y Estados Unidos deben eliminar o renegociar el TLC
4. México debe trabajar más con otros países de América Latina en lugar de Estados Unidos
5. ¿Cuál afirmación se acerca más a su opinión?:
Estados Unidos es mayoritariamente culpable de la narco-violencia en México; o
México es mayoritariamente culpable de la narco-violencia; o
Ambos países son igual de culpables.

- 1= Estados Unidos
- 2= México
- 3= Ambos

PREGUNTAS DEMOGRÁFICAS

PARTE 5: Las siguientes preguntas son de carácter demográfico.

1. En general, ¿con cuál partido político se identifica usted?

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1 = PRI | 5 = PT |
| 2 = PRD | 6 = PMC |
| 3 = PAN | 7 = PNA |
| 4 = PVEM | 8 = Otro |

2. Algunos hablan de la política en términos de izquierda o derecha. En escala de 0 a 6, con 0 indicando extremadamente izquierdista y 6 indicando extremadamente derechista, ¿dónde se colocaría usted?

(izquierda) 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 (derecha)

3. ¿Cual es su género?

- 1 = Masculino
- 2 = Femenino

4. ¿Cuál fue el último grado de escuela que terminó?

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 = Primaria | 4 = Carrera Técnica |
| 2 = Secundaria | 5 = Licenciatura |
| 3 = Preparatoria | 6 = Maestría o doctorado |

5. Indique su rango de edad

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 = Menos que 18 años | 5 = 40 a 49 años |
| 2 = 18 a 20 años | 6 = 50-59 |
| 3 = 21 a 29 años | 7 = 60 o mas grande |
| 4 = 30 a 39 años | |

6. Afiliación religiosa:

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| 1 = Católica | 6 = Budista |
| 2 = Protestante | 7 = Otra religión no listada |
| 3 = Judío | 8 = Ninguna |
| 4 = Musulmán | |

7. ¿En qué medida aprueba o desaprueba el trabajo de Barak Obama como Presidente de Estados Unidos?

- 1 = Repruebo completamente
- 2 = Repruebo
- 3 = Apruebo
- 4 = Apruebo completamente

USO DE NOTICIAS

PART 6: Como hasta ahora, indique en que medida está de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones acerca de sus hábitos de consumo de noticias:

1. Regularmente busco noticias en Televisa (incluyendo su sitio web)
2. Regularmente busco noticias en TV Azteca (incluyendo su sitio web)
3. Regularmente busco noticias en periódicos nacionales (Reforma, El Universal).
4. Regularmente busco noticias en periódicos locales (AM, Correo).
5. Regularmente busco noticias en línea.
6. Regularmente busco noticias acerca de asuntos internacionales.