“The problem is, nobody has defined what being conservative means.”

THE STATUS OF AMERICAN CONSERVATISM IN THE RHETORIC OF REPUBLICAN PRIMARY ELECTION DEBATES IN 2008 AND 2012

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APPENDICES
INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on the 2008 and 2012 Republican Party presidential nomination campaigns in the United States of America. The Republican Party, or the GOP (Grand Old Party), is one of the two major contemporary political parties in the United States. The U.S. presidential election campaigns under perusal in this thesis are interesting both historically and politically. In 2008, the United States witnessed the deepest financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Furthermore, the Republican President George W. Bush’s two full four-year terms had been traumatic for the unity of the American conservative movement.¹ The Republicans lost the 2008 presidential election, and the election of the Democratic candidate, Barack Obama, raised questions about the future of the Republican Party as well as the unity of the American conservative movement.² In the 2012 presidential election, the Republican Party rallied against Obama and his policies but the Republican nominee, Mitt Romney, lost the election with a clear margin.

The focus of the proposed research is on studying American conservatism as well as the relationship between the Republican Party and the American conservative movement as they are presented in the Republican candidates’ primary election debate rhetoric. The research has a multidisciplinary approach as it combines the study of rhetoric, persuasion and political communication with the study of history and political ideology. The objective of this paper is to study how conservatism is defined and referred to by six Republican candidates in fifteen primary election debates held in December 2007 and in January 2008 as well as in December 2011 and in January 2012.

Since the Republican primary elections are intraparty contests where the audience consists mainly on Republicans, the primary election debates are an important forum to define and refigure the party’s national agenda and political ideology. How the Republican Party defines its agenda and ideology is, of course, significant for the wider American political system. Moreover, if elected to the White House, the Republican Party’s agenda also concerns the wider world. After all, the United States is the world’s leading superpower and the values of its leadership have a notable effect on world politics in the international arena. Evidently, the status of conservatism in the Republican Party is an important issue that deserves scholarly attention.

¹ Aberbach & Peele 2011a, 9.
² Aberbach & Peele 2011a, 3.
In the American system, the president is elected every four years. The presidential candidates face a two-stage system consisting of primary and general election. The primary election season stretches from January until June of the election year. During the primary season, the candidates race to win delegates as it is the delegates who formally choose the presidential candidate for each party at a party’s national convention. States are free to decide how they select their presidential candidates. However, there are two principal ways of doing this, namely, the state primary elections, i.e. primaries, and caucuses. In primaries and caucuses, it is decided who the state party delegates support in the national convention. Basically, the delegates represent the will of the people in the national nominating convention.

After the primary election and the two party nomination conventions, it is time for the general election. From 1845 onwards, presidential elections have been held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. On Election Day, the whole nation votes for the next president. However, the president is not elected on the basis of how many votes they receive, but the amount of votes is converted into Electoral College Votes (EVC). In the general election, each state is allocated a certain number of Electors or Electoral College Votes based on its total Congressional representation. There are altogether 538 EVCs and to win the candidate must attain an absolute majority, i.e. at least 270 Electoral College Votes. The inaugural ceremonies take place on January 20th and then the President-Elect is officially sworn in.

During the American presidential election season, the candidates engage in several televised debates. The concept of political debating is an old one and the history of debate in American politics is extended. The Lincoln–Douglas debates of 1858 were the first significant political debates in the history of the United States. The first broadcast debate between two major presidential candidates was held in 1948 during Republican primary campaign, and in the 1960s, the “great debates” between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon set the stage for political debating in the media age. Since then, televised debates

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4 Ashbee 2004, 213.
have been an integral part of the democratic process in American politics.\(^7\) In fact, the large size of the television audience gives debates a huge potential for influence.\(^8\)

Indeed, debates are an important part of political campaign communication and have a pivotal role in the democratic process. Several writers have pointed out that debates offer an opportunity for the voters to compare and contrast the candidates side-by-side and unedited, and to learn about the candidates’ positions and characters.\(^9\) Moreover, the rise of the broadcast media has shifted the responsibility of electing a president from political parties to the press and public.\(^10\) Consequently, as Brubaker & Hanson state, debates have become a key element of presidential campaigns.\(^11\)

Interestingly, primary debates may actually have a bigger influence on voters than general election debates.\(^12\) This is mainly due to the fact that partisanship cannot decide the outcome of the campaign since all candidates belong to the same party. In consequence, the voters cannot base their decision on their political party affiliation. This gives the contestants an opportunity to use campaign messages to appeal to the voters.

It is relevant to notice that the audience in the GOP primary election debates consists mainly of Republicans. During the primary campaign, the Republican candidates have to appeal to primary voters, i.e. to the Republican base to win the Party’s nomination. It would be inaccurate to state that all Republicans are conservative. However, it can be argued that the majority of the GOP voters share some conservative values. In fact, most polls conducted in recent years have confirmed that approximately two-thirds to 70 percent of self-proclaimed Republicans call themselves conservative.\(^13\) Therefore, the Republican Party can be seen as a political vehicle for American conservatism.

**Statement of the Problem**

This thesis examines how the representatives of the Republican Party, namely the Republican primary election candidates, define and refer to conservatism in fifteen primary election debates during the 2008 and 2012 presidential primary elections. The focus will be on message content as well as on how it is communicated. The analysis will offer insights

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\(^7\) Trent & Friedenberg 2000, 249.
\(^8\) Brubaker & Hanson 2009, 341.
\(^10\) Jamieson & Birdsell 1990, 3.
\(^11\) Brubaker & Hanson 2009, 342.
\(^12\) Benoit et al. 2002, 7.
on the relationship between the Republican Party and the American conservative movement, as well as on the nature of American conservatism, in general. The references to conservatism will be discussed in relation to the political situation of the time as well as in historical perspective. Campaign tactics will also be taken into consideration, and the aim is to identify the intentions underlying the candidates’ debate rhetoric.

The debates will be studied in depth and the findings will be analysed from a multidisciplinary perspective. The proposed research discusses the following questions: 1.) How is conservatism defined in the rhetoric of the Republican primary election candidates? 2.) Why do the candidates refer to conservatism and to political ideology in the debates? The objective is to comprehensively explain why conservatism is discussed in the debates as well as to fully describe why conservatism is defined as it is in the debates.

As pointed out by Kendall, “the essence of the primary campaign process is communication: candidates try to persuade the voters to select them rather than their opponents”. Consequently, this thesis explores how the candidates try to appeal to the Republican voters with the help of rhetoric and persuasion in the debates. Moreover, the objective is to investigate the rhetorical strategies the candidates employ to underline their conservative credentials and to question those of their fellow candidates. Additionally, it will be studied how the candidates use language to differentiate themselves from their fellow candidates and to portray themselves as the most qualified alternative to represent the Republican party in the general election. The findings of the 2008 debates will be compared and contrasted with those of the 2012 debates.

This paper employs a thematic approach to the data and is organised as follows: Section 1 introduces “the soul of the Republican Party”, i.e. the core principles and values of the Republican Party, whereas section 2 discusses the internal ideological divisions within the Party. In section 1 and 2, extracts from both the 2008 and 2012 primaries are discussed side by side and, when relevant, they are compared and contrasted with each other. Section 3, on the other hand, is divided into two subsections based on the primary campaigns. Section 3.1. discusses the candidates’ strategies to find common ground in the 2008 primaries and section 3.2. addresses the same issue in the 2012 campaign. Finally, the findings from each section are tied together and presented in the conclusion.

14 Kendall 2000, 2.
Data and Method

The data of the present thesis consists of fifteen Republican primary election debates held in the 2008 (7) and 2012 (8) primaries. The research material, i.e. the Republican primary elections debate transcripts are retrieved from The American Presidency Project at UC Santa Barbara website under the title of Debates, and they are freely available. All the debates are televised and most of them can be found online on YouTube.

As pointed out by Benoit et al., “the primary election narrows the field of presidential hopefuls to two principal candidates, determining the choice America faces in the general elections.” In addition to allowing party members to decide their nominee, the primary phase also enables voters to learn about the candidates and their policy positions. Consequently, the primary stage is an important part of the presidential campaign and the American democratic process. Primaries are very different from general election campaigns. For instance, in primaries, there are several contestants who belong to the same party. Moreover, the number and identity of the candidates changes often rapidly as the primary season proceeds. Additionally, the primaries are not held simultaneously in every state and therefore, the site of the primary campaign changes over time from state to state. In consequence, this contributes to the fact that the early primary states, such as New Hampshire and Iowa, receive an inordinate amount of emphasis. After all, the candidates who are the most successful in the first primary states will also receive the most attention from the media, donors and voters as the primary season unfolds.

Due to the importance of the early primary season, the data for the 2008 primary elections includes seven debates held in December 2007 and in January 2008. The debates feature nine to four candidates. However, only the four most prominent candidates, i.e. the candidates still on the race in the debate in Simi Valley, California, will be studied. These candidates are Governor Mike Huckabee, Senator John McCain, Congressman Ron Paul and Governor Mitt Romney.

The data for the 2012 primaries consists of the debates held in the first four election states, i.e. in Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina and Florida. The debates in Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina feature seven to five candidates, whereas the last three debates include only four candidates. However, only the candidates that are still on the race

after the first four states have voted will be under perusal in this study. These candidates are Speaker Newt Gingrich, Congressman Ron Paul, Governor Mitt Romney and Senator Rick Santorum.

The debates under perusal in this study include one or more moderators, who ask questions and give turns. In the case of these fifteen debates, the moderators are representatives of the media outlets that sponsor the particular debate. On certain occasions, the members of the audience are also given an opportunity to ask a question from the candidates. In the debates, major American media outlets, such as ABC, NBC, CNN, MSNBC, Univision and Fox News, are represented. Appendices 1 and 2 show the date and location of each debate as well as indicate the broadcasters, sponsors, moderators and candidates in the debates.

Method
This thesis has a multidisciplinary approach as it combines the study of rhetoric, persuasion and political communication with the study of history and political ideology. The focus is on political debates and rhetoric as well as on studying the representations of American conservative ideology in the debate context. Therefore, the instances where the candidates refer to political ideology and conservatism are of interest in this study.

The method used in this thesis is qualitative and conservatism is discussed in relation to extracts chosen from the debates. The references to conservatism are first identified, then explained and discussed in relation to their context and in historical perspective. When relevant, some methods of discourse analysis are utilised in the analysis. In addition to focusing on the definitions of conservatism, the attention is also on rhetorical detail and persuasion. The primary campaigns are compared and contrasted with each other, and the possible differences and development is analysed in relation to the political context of the time.

Political debates are quintessential exemplars of persuasion, and they are filled with persuasive appeals, rhetorical strategies and verbal argumentation. Indeed, persuasive political communication is the result of the interplay of overlapping and diverse rhetorical strategies. Consequently, the key terms related to the methodology in the present thesis are rhetoric and persuasion. The study of rhetoric dates back to Antiquity and Aristotle.

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According to Cockcroft & Cockcroft, Aristotle defined rhetoric as “the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any given subject”. However, if looking for a modern definition of rhetoric, one can easily notice that rhetoric is a very complex term that can be understood and defined in several different ways. According to the Dictionary of Contemporary English, rhetoric can be seen as “the art of speaking or writing to persuade or influence people” as well as “language that is used to persuade or influence people, especially language that sounds impressive but is not actually sincere or useful”. On the other hand, the Oxford English Dictionary defines rhetoric as “the art of using language effectively so as to persuade or influence others, esp. the exploitation of figures of speech and other compositional techniques to this end”. Accordingly, it can be argued that the definitions for rhetoric are plenty. In this study, rhetoric is seen as the art of speaking well in public as well as a means of persuading and convincing people.

Charteris-Black maintains that every definition of rhetoric includes the idea of persuasion. Persuasion is an outcome of a complex interaction where intention, context and linguistic choice are combined. It is important to remember that persuasion does not happen by chance but because of the deliberate intentions of the speaker. Indeed, persuasion is an interactive communicative process in which the speaker aims to influence the beliefs, attitudes and behaviour of the audience. If the persuasion is to be successful, the message needs to comply with the needs and wants of the audience. As Cockcroft & Cockcroft underline, to be effective, language must be appropriate to the subject of the discourse, its context and its audience. Consequently, a positive response is unlikely if the persuader is not tuned in to the audience and their likely responses and attitudes. In this thesis, persuasion is seen more or less as a pivotal part of successful political rhetoric.

As the main aim of rhetoric is to persuade, it is appropriate to uncover and analyse the strategies of persuasion used by the primary election candidates. According to Halmari, there are several traditional persuasive strategies employed in persuasive political communication such as rhetorical questions, appeals to authority, appeals to logic,
superlatives, poetic devices (alliteration, personification, metaphor) as well as the use of vocatives and humour. In the present thesis, the candidates’ rhetorical strategies and theories related to them are discussed as they come up in the data and when they are relevant for the analysis.

The candidates’ debate rhetoric will be analysed according to the Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse by WILLIAM BENOIT. Benoit argues that campaign messages are functional and they are designed to persuade the voters. Campaign messages highlight the differences between the candidates and persuade voters that one candidate is preferable to opponents. In this study, the focus will be on acclaims (positive statements about the candidate, self-praise), attacks (critical statements about opponents) and defenses (refutations of attacks). Each of these message functions will be introduced and explained as they come up in the analysis. However, unlike Benoit’s research, the present thesis analyses the acclaims, attacks and defenses only from a qualitative perspective rather than from a quantitative perspective.

Related Studies

The relationship between the Republican Party and the American conservative movement after the two-term presidency of George W. Bush has been studied by scholars and analysed in the news media. In the case of the present thesis, of particular interest are the following works: Crisis of Conservatism? The Republican Party, the Conservative Movement & American Politics After Bush edited by JOEL D. ABERBACH and GILLIAN PEELE (2011), Taking ‘Big Government Conservatism’ Seriously? by DANIEL BÉLAND and ALEX WADDAN (2008), The GOP’s Identity Crisis by PAUL J. SAUNDERS (2014) and The Republican Battlefield by HENRY OLSEN (2014). All of the above publications offer valuable insights for the present thesis as they discuss the relationship between the GOP and the American conservative movement from various different perspectives. Especially the articles by Saunders and Olsen offer a timely review of the current state of the Republican Party and its ideology. However, the existing research does not focus on rhetoric in primary elections. Therefore, the present thesis offers a new and interesting perspective to previous studies on the relationship between American conservatism and the Republican Party.

Political campaign communication has been the topic of numerous previous studies. For instance, JUDITH S. TRENT and ROBERT V. FRIEDENBERG (2000) provide a broad overview of political campaign communication in their book *Political campaign communication: principles and practices*. The book offers valuable background information for the analysis. Moreover, rhetoric, persuasion and rhetorical strategies in political communication have been studied extensively by several scholars. Of particular interest are the following two works: JONATHAN CHARTERIS-BLACK’S (2005) *Politicians and Rhetoric, the Persuasive Power of Metaphor* that shows how political leaders use language to persuade their audience and HELENA HALMARI’S (2005) *In Search of “Successful” Political Persuasion. A Comparison of the styles of Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan* that explores the rhetorical strategies employed by two American presidents.

Even though political campaign communication, rhetoric and persuasion have received a great deal of scholarly attention, the same cannot be said of primary election debates. In fact, Republican primary debates offer a relatively unexplored data for research as very little analysis has been conducted on the rhetoric in presidential primary election debates. BENOIT ET AL. (2002) focus on studying the primary election candidates’ debate rhetoric from 1948 to 2000 in their book *Primary Decision: A Functional Analysis of Debates in Presidential Primaries*. In addition, William L. Benoit has analysed communication in U.S. primary elections in a number of published articles. KATHLEEN E. KENDALL (2000) has examined the overall communication in presidential primaries in her book *Communication in the Presidential Primaries: Candidates and the Media 1912–2000*. These works provide valuable insights for the proposed research on communication in primary campaigns. Besides the above-mentioned studies, the rhetoric in the U.S. presidential primary election debates is primarily analysed in the news media during the primary election seasons.

**Historical Background**

In the debates under perusal in this thesis, conservatism is often referred to, it is employed as a weapon against other candidates and as a tool to differentiate the candidate from the other immediate Republican opponents. However, despite the visibility of conservatism in the primary election debates, it is somewhat unclear what conservatism actually stands for in the GOP debate rhetoric.

Daniel Béland and Alex Waddan define the nature of American conservatism rather concisely:
The term ‘American conservatism’ refers to a complex set of ideas ranging from free market individualism (economic conservatism) to the defence of traditional and religious values (social conservatism, traditionalism). On the one hand, economic conservatism is grounded in a free market creed, a critique of ‘big government’, and a celebration of ‘capitalist values’ such as ‘rugged individualism’. In its most individualistic and anti-government form, economic conservatism is known as ‘libertarianism’. On the other hand, social conservatism, which is also known as ‘traditionalism’, is grounded on the defence of traditional social and religious values.²⁹

On the other hand, Aberbach & Peele maintain that “conservatism is dynamic, with several different, and sometimes competing, definitions and movements encompassed within it.”³⁰ Michael Tanner, for instance, argues that the contemporary American conservative movement is divided in three strands, i.e. to economic conservatives, social conservative and national security conservatives.³¹ On the contrary, George Nash, a leading scholar of American conservative thought, points out that the American conservative coalition constitutes of several diverse elements such as “libertarianism, traditionalism, anticommunism, neoconservatism and the interfaith Religious Right.”³² Accordingly, the definitions of American conservatism are manifold and the conservative movement consists of various different ideological strands. In fact, as Nash maintains, “since 1989, one of the hallmarks of conservative history has been the reappearance of factional strains in the grand alliance.”³³

Historically, the emergence of American conservatism as a political movement and a distinct ideology can be tracked to the 1930s when President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal policies stimulated opposition within Americans.³⁴ However, early post-war America was still dominated by liberal values.³⁵ The foundation of William Buckley’s publication National Review in 1955 offered a common platform for conservatives and strengthened the movement.³⁶ It should be noted that especially in its early days, the conservative movement’s relationship with the Republican Party was not at all evident. However, the Senator Barry Goldwater’s presidential campaign in 1964 broadened the element of

³⁰ Aberbach & Peele 2011b, 379.
³¹ Tanner 2011, 259.
³² Nash (as cited in Aberbach & Peele 2011b, 380.)
³³ Nash (as cited in Aberbach & Peele 2011b, 380.)
³⁴ Peele 2011, 17.
³⁵ Peele 2011, 19.
³⁶Peele 2011, 21.
conservatism in the Republican Party. Moreover, during the Cold War era, anti-communism served as a uniting force in the US conservative movement. And finally, most of the various strands of conservatism were united during the presidency of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. Since the Reagan era of the 1980s, conservative values have been in the core of American politics.

By the end of the Republican President George W. Bush’s two four-year terms in 2008, the American conservative movement seemed to be in disarray. From the beginning of his first term in 2001, Bush’s presidency ignited new divisions inside the American conservative movement. During his presidency, Bush increased federal spending as well as the role of the federal government. By passing the controversial No Child Left Behind Act, the Medicare Modernization Act, the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (McCain-Feingold) and the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (also known as The Public Company Accounting Reform and Investor Protection Act), Bush outraged traditional Republicans. Indeed, Bush’s second-term average approval rating was only 37%.

In the 2008 presidential elections, the Republicans were the incumbent party. However, the party was in a difficult situation due to George W. Bush’s low approval rate, the deep financial crisis and the ongoing and unpopular war in the Middle East. After the 2008 nomination campaign, Senator John McCain was elected the Republican presidential nominee. However, McCain lost the general election to the Democratic candidate, Barack Obama. The victory of Barack Obama in 2008 presidential election was widely seen as a turning point in American politics. The Democratic triumph raised questions about the future of the Republican Party as well as the unity of the American conservative movement. As the analysis in the present paper indicates, these internal disunities within the Republican Party and the conservative movement are also reflected in the GOP primary election debate rhetoric and they serve as a good starting point for the analysis.

1. THE SOUL OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

This section of the study will look at fifteen debates held during the 2008 and 2012 Republican primary election seasons. The objective of section 1 is to examine, on the basis of the extracts chosen from the debates, how the Republican primary election candidates refer to and define conservatism in their debate rhetoric.

The examples in the following section introduce the basic ideas, principles and phrases that are often emphasized in the Republican Party debate rhetoric. The extracts chosen from the debates indicate that the Republican primary election candidates define American conservatism by its underlying core values and principles. Many of these principles and values are undisputed within the American conservative movement as well as among people identifying themselves as conservatives and Republicans. The candidates define not only the nature of American conservatism but also how they have furthered the conservative cause in their lives and during their careers. In addition, the pivotal role of the number-one conservative hero, President Ronald Reagan, is visibly present in the Republican primary debate rhetoric both in 2008 and 2012.

In the following sections, the debate from which the extract is taken is marked at the end of each extract in parentheses. The letter combination stands for the official abbreviation of the state (e.g. IA for Iowa) and the number combination represents the date on which the debate was held.50

1.1. “What have you done to further the cause of conservatism as a Republican leader?”  – No to the government

Primary elections are intraparty contests and therefore, all the candidates are relatively similar to each other and they often share the same ideological views and values. Nevertheless, the candidates’ opinions and issue positions are by no means identical. Consequently, it is relevant to consider the similarities and differences between the candidates. In the 2008 primary election, the four most prominent candidates stand out of each other rather clearly.

The former Arkansas Governor, Mike Huckabee, centred his 2008 primary campaign on social conservative issues such as on opposition of abortion and gay marriage.51 He came

50 See appendices 1 & 2.
second in the race losing to the Arizona Senator John McCain. The two leading candidates differ greatly from each other. The 2008 Republican Party nominee and the Vietnam veteran, McCain, is known for his moderate and even liberal positions and for cooperation with the Democrats. In fact, in the 2000 GOP primaries McCain ran as a maverick and an independent thinker.52 After losing the nomination to George W. Bush in 2000, McCain changed his tactics and made peace with several of his former rivals in the Republican establishment.53 Consequently, McCain's views are more in alignment with his Party in the 2008 primaries. However, his standpoints, for instance, on the immigration issue differed from those of his fellow candidates as he supported a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants, whereas the others did not. In addition, McCain was a strong supporter of the war in Iraq and opposed any troop withdrawal measures.54

The third 2008 candidate under perusal in this thesis is the former Texas Congressman, Ron Paul. During the 2008 and 2012 primaries, Paul served in the U.S. House of Representatives. Paul is known for his strongly libertarian views and he ran for president as the Libertarian Party candidate already in 1988. According to the Council on Foreign relations Campaign 2008 website, Ron Paul’s 2008 campaign focused on libertarian issues such as “small government, lower taxes, free market policies, and non-interventionism abroad.”55 Paul was very critical of the Iraq war and he voted against authorisation of the war. The fourth candidate under perusal in the present thesis is the Massachusetts Governor, Mitt Romney. He is known for his business record in his private investment firm Bain Capital as well as for organising the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics.56 Governor Romney has been accused of taking liberal stands on issues such as abortion, gun control and gay rights before his 2008 presidential race. Nevertheless, in the 2008 campaign, Romney aimed to portray himself as the most conservative candidate in the field.57

Two of the 2008 GOP presidential candidates ran also in the 2012 race: the eventual nominee, Governor Mitt Romney, and Congressman Ron Paul. In addition to them, the present paper focuses on the former Speaker of the House of the Representatives, Newt Gingrich, and on Rick Santorum, the former Senator from Pennsylvania. Newt Gingrich based his 2012 campaign on his pro-growth strategy called The Gingrich Jobs and Growth Plan

52 Cook 2008, 197.
53 Ibid.
that would cut taxes and repeal regulatory policies.\footnote{Gingrich 2012: The Gingrich Jobs and Growth Plan. Electronic.} Despite his very conservative strategy, Gingrich came in fourth in the primary competition. Rick Santorum, on the other hand, based his campaign on social conservative values. His message got him to second place in the 2012 primaries.

As the examples in this section indicate, despite their differences, the candidates both in the 2008 and in the 2012 campaign agree on several issues. The underlying principles and values of American conservatism are outlined rather concisely in extract 1, when Governor Mitt Romney lists what he has done to further the cause of conservatism in his life. Interestingly, the question posed by the moderator in the 2012 debate in Tampa suggests that the soul of the Republican Party should be conservatism.

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textbf{Moderator:} This has been called, in addition to this unprecedented primary contest the GOP is in the midst of, a battle for the soul of the Republican Party. Governor Romney, the question is, about that soul, what have you done to further the cause of conservatism as a Republican leader?

\textbf{Romney:} Well, number one, I've raised a family.

Number two, I've worked in the private sector. The idea that somehow everything important for conservatism or for America happens in government is simply wrong. I've been in the private sector. I worked in one business that was in trouble and helped turn it around. Another I started. And as part of that, we were able to create thousands and thousands of jobs.

And then I took an opportunity to become governor of a state that was slightly Democrat. And I worked very hard to promote a conservative agenda. We cut taxes 19 times. We balanced the budget every year, put in place a rainy day fund of over $2 billion by the time I left.

That kind of conservative model in a state like Massachusetts was a model in many respects that other states could look at and say, "OK, conservative principles work." We were able to reach across the aisle to fight for conservative principles, and now I'm taking that to a presidential campaign, wrote a book about those principles that lay out why I believe they're right for America. (FL230112)

Romney’s answer can be characterised as an acclaim as well as ideological self-definition. The Governor outlines how he has furthered the cause of conservatism in his personal life, as a businessman in the private sector and as a Republican governor. Romney emphasises
that everything that is important for conservatism does not have to happen in government. Consequently, Romney underlines that even when he has not been involved in politics, he has furthered the conservative cause as a private sector businessman. Furthermore, Romney also crystallises the general qualities of American conservatism, i.e. the conservative principles in his answer. These include the core values of economic conservatism such as working and creating jobs in the private sector, cutting taxes and balancing the federal budget. In addition, Romney mentions the core value of social conservatism, i.e. the importance of family. It could be argued that Romney’s answer captures the key values and principles of American conservatism that are not contested within the conservative movement or in the Republican Party. These values are evidently present throughout the 2008 and 2012 primary debates in the candidates’ rhetoric.

Another interesting point in Romney’s acclaim is that he states how he fought for the conservative principles during his governorship in Massachusetts. Romney underlines that his conservative policies worked and were accepted even in Massachusetts which is known to be a very liberal state and usually dominated by the Democratic Party. According to Romney, that only proves that the conservative principles do work. Moreover, Romney’s statement also brings positive attention to his leadership abilities. Romney insinuates that he would be able to reach across aisles and fight for the conservative principles also if elected to the White House. Naturally, Romney’s aim is to appear as the most preferable candidate for the voters.

In addition to the list in extract 1, the role of the federal government is also an important issue for the Republicans. The role of government in economy is discussed in examples 2 and 3, when Governor Romney portrays the conservative view of the government.

(2) **Romney:** But fundamentally, what happens in America that creates jobs is not government. It has its role. But by and large, it gets in the way of creating jobs. It’s taxed too much. It regulates too much. It has energy policies that keep us from using our own energy. It has trade policies which too often favor people who are taking jobs away from us. And so we’re going to have government change its orientation to be encouraging the private sector. (NH070112)

(3) **Romney:** I’ve seen a lot of government trying to solve problems, and it didn’t work. (NH080112)

The above extracts show quite clearly that Governor Romney sees the government as an impediment to development rather than a positive force. In fact, Romney depicts the
government mostly in negative terms; the government regulates, taxes, gets in the way and keeps the Americans from using their own energy. Romney’s statement in extract 3 resembles President Ronald Reagan’s famous words in his inaugural speech in 1981, when he stated that: “Government is not the solution to the problem, government is the problem.” It could be argued that this view is shared rather unanimously by all the six Republican candidates under perusal in this thesis. Indeed, as pointed out by Safire, according to conservatives, the role of government in economy should be rather minimal. They prefer free trade and action on local and state level rather than on federal level. Therefore, conservatives and libertarians, in general, call for less government regulation of the economy, lower taxes and underline the importance of the private sector. These values are evidently visible in the data of the present thesis.

Some of the same qualities of economic conservatism mentioned by Governor Romney can also be seen in extract 4, when Governor Mike Huckabee justifies why he should be the Republican nominee in 2008.

(4) **Moderator:** I'd like each of you to tell me, tell the audience, why you are the best person to be the Republican nominee and to win, hold the White House for Republicans. Governor Huckabee?

**Huckabee:** ...I think another thing is consistency with the principles of our party, which is that we believe in lower taxes, less spending. We're a party that believes in the sanctity of human life. That's important to us; it's a critical issue.

Consistency on defending the Second Amendment and state’s rights, also believing that mothers and fathers raise better kids than governments do. Governments shouldn't interfere and let parents raise their own kids. (NH060108)

In addition to following the conservative principles in taxation and spending, Huckabee states that he has consistently defended the Second Amendment during his political career. It should be noted that the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution, i.e. the right to keep and bear arms, is a very debated and controversial issue in American politics. Typically, the Republican Party has upheld the right of individual Americans to own firearms. On the other hand, the Democratic Party believes that the individual’s right

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60 Safire 2008, 144.
to own firearms is subject to reasonable regulation. Indeed, according to the “On the Issues” website, all the Republican primary election candidates under perusal in the present thesis support the Second Amendment and oppose most of the gun control laws. By stating that he has been consistent in defending the Second Amendment, Huckabee probably insinuates that some of his fellow candidates may not have been as consistent as he in this particular matter.

In his acclaim, Governor Huckabee also brings out another issue that is significant in American conservatism as well as in American political discourse, namely the issue of the states’ rights. The term “states’ rights” refers to the powers that are stated in the Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. The amendment expresses the principle of federalism by stating that the powers that are not delegated to the federal government by the Constitution are reserved to states or the people. Consequently, the Tenth Amendment can be used for justifying arguments that support decreased regulation by the national government, and therefore, it suits well with the conservative principle of limited government. By stating that he has consistently defended the states’ rights, Huckabee emphasises his conservative credentials and refers to an underlying conservative value.

In addition, Huckabee also brings out one of the principal issues of social conservatism. In extract 4, the Governor mentions that the sanctity of human life is a critical issue for Republicans. By this statement, Huckabee refers to the highly debated and divisive issue of abortion rights. In 1973, in Roe v. Wade, the U.S. Supreme Court guaranteed women access to abortion and ruled that the constitutional right to privacy “is broad enough to encompass a woman’s decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy.” In comparison, the 2008 Republican Party Platform defines the Party’s official view on abortion as follows: “Faithful to the first guarantee of the Declaration of Independence, we assert the inherent dignity and sanctity of all human life and affirm that the unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life which cannot be infringed.” Consequently, there is a fundamental difference between the 1973 Supreme Court ruling and the Republican

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64 On the Issues website. See each candidate's page for "Gun Control". Electronic.
65 “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.” National Archives: The Bill of Rights Transcript, Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. Electronic.
Party’s view. All the candidates under perusal in this thesis agree with the view stated in the 2008 Republican Party Platform.

In the debate held in Simi Valley, in 2008, the abortion rights are again highlighted, when Mike Huckabee makes an acclaim that emphasises his record in supporting the two conservative hallmarks, i.e. the Human Life Amendment as well as the Marriage Amendment.

(5) Huckabee: The only person that's sitting here today [referring to himself] that has consistently supported a human life amendment, that's been part of our Republican platform since 1980, and also supports a marriage amendment to our Constitution - two conservative hallmarks. (CA300108)

It should be noted that the 2008 Republican Party Platform supports the Human Life Amendment to the United States Constitution that aims to overturn the Supreme Court 1973 decision Roe v. Wade.68 During the 2008 and 2012 primary campaigns, the Republican candidates consistently describe themselves as pro-life and state that they defend the rights of the unborn child. The term pro-choice, on the other hand, has very negative connotations as it refers to people who support a woman’s right to choose, i.e. to decide on her pregnancy. Pro-life and pro-choice are important terms in American political jargon and they are very visibly present on the candidates’ primary election debate rhetoric in 2008 and 2012.

In addition to the Human Life Amendment, Huckabee also refers to the Marriage Amendment to the United States Constitution in his statement. The Republican Party has a traditional understanding of marriage and it calls for a constitutional amendment that protects marriage as a union of a man and a woman, i.e. preserves traditional marriage. Therefore, “a Republican Congress enacted the Defense of Marriage Act, affirming the right of states not to recognize same-sex marriages licensed in other states.”69 The same-sex marriage issue is discussed in the 2008 and 2012 primary campaigns to a certain extent. However, the candidates’ viewpoints on the issue are rather similar and the topic does not come up in the debates very often. One of the differences between the candidates concerns the question whether there should be a constitutional ban for gay marriage. For instance, the 2008 nominee, John McCain, has voted against the constitutional ban for gay marriage and

would rather leave the issue to the states. On the other hand, Rick Santorum and Mitt Romney maintain that there needs to be one marriage law for all the fifty states. Santorum states on the first New Hampshire debate in 2012 that “I believe the issue of marriage itself is a federal issue, that we can’t have different laws with respect to marriage. We have to have one law.” Romney, in his turn, maintains that “We should have a federal amendment of the Constitution defining marriage as a relationship between a man and a woman.”

It is evident that by referring to the Human Life Amendment and the Marriage Amendment as well as by stating that he has supported them consistently during his political career, Governor Huckabee tries to canvass votes from the social conservatives as well as to appeal to the evangelical voters. Governor Huckabee is the social conservative candidate in the 2008 elections, whereas, in the 2012 elections, Rick Santorum carries the social conservative mantle. As the extracts and the 2008 Republican Party Platform indicate, social conservative values are in the core of American conservatism. However, it should be noted, as the analysis in section 2 of the present paper indicates, that social conservative issues are highly debated and controversial even among the Republican Party. On the whole, social issues are somewhat overshadowed by more pressing issues, such as economy, and their role in the debates is rather marginal.

1.2. “You know where I stand.” – Conviction conservatives

As the examples in section 1.1. reveal, the Republican primary election candidates are eager to list qualities and actions that highlight their conservative credentials. This is particularly true in the case of the 2012 campaign. The data indicates that it is not only important to follow the conservative principles but to do so consistently and better than the other candidates.

In extract 6, the moderator asks Senator Rick Santorum why his campaign has failed to catch fire with the voters. In is answer, Santorum underlines his experience and consistency as a conservative politician.

(6) Santorum: And we present a clear contrast that really nobody else in this race does. We present the contrast of someone who's been a strong conviction conservative. You know where I stand. You can trust me because I've been there and I've done it. And I did it as a leader. When I

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70 On the Issues: John McCain on Civil Rights "Leave Gay Marriage to States". Electronic.
Santorum states that he presents a contrast to the others with his strong conviction to conservatism and implies that the his fellow Republican candidates are not conservative enough to compete with Obama in the general election. Later on in his answer, Santorum even singles out Speaker Newt Gingrich and maintains that “the Speaker had a conservative revolution against him when he was the speaker of the House”. With his acclaim, Santorum emphasises that the voters can trust him to stand tall for conservative principles if he wins the Republican nomination.

The issue of consistency is also discussed in the debate held in Concord, New Hampshire in 2012. In extract 7, Speaker Gingrich questions Governor Romney’s record as a conservative politician and states that Republicans have to consider whether Romney’s timid economic plan is going to attract enough voters to beat the incumbent, President Barack Obama, in the general election.

Moderator: Governor Romney has won the Iowa caucuses, although narrowly. He’s up in the polls here in New Hampshire. He’s also up in the polls down in South Carolina. Speaker Gingrich, why shouldn’t Governor Romney be the nominee of this party? What about his record concerns you most or makes him disqualified to be the nominee?

Gingrich: Well, look, I think what Republicans have to ask is, who’s most likely in the long run to survive against the kind of billion-dollar campaign the Obama team is going to run? And I think that a bold Reagan conservative, with a very strong economic plan, is a lot more likely to succeed in that campaign than a relatively timid, Massachusetts moderate who even the Wall Street Journal said had an economic plan so timid it resembled Obama. So I think you’ve got to look at -- you know, Massachusetts was fourth from the bottom in job creation under Governor Romney. We created 11 million jobs while I was Speaker, and I worked with President Reagan in the entire recovery of the 1980s. So there’s a huge difference between a Reagan conservative and somebody who comes out of the Massachusetts culture with an essentially moderate record who I think will have a very hard time in a debate with President Obama. It’s that simple. (NH080112)

In extract 7, Speaker Gingrich employs comparison as a rhetorical device. It is interesting to notice that while Gingrich is not explicitly stating to whom he is referring to when he talks about a bold Reagan conservative, with a very strong economic plan; it is, of course, evident that
he is speaking of himself. At the same time, Gingrich insinuates that Governor Romney does not have these qualities. Furthermore, Gingrich criticises Governor Romney’s record as a conservative politician and refers to him as a relatively timid Massachusetts moderate. There is a clear contrast between the words timid and bold, and evidently, the word bold contains connotations that are more favourable than those related to the word timid. In addition, Gingrich states that Romney’s political record is moderate, whereas Gingrich himself is a Reagan conservative. It is evident that by using these contrasting terms, the Speaker wants to emphasise the differences between his and Romney’s methods and economic positions. It is also interesting to notice how Gingrich underlines that Romney has made his political career in one of the most liberal states of the country, i.e. in Massachusetts, and that he comes out of the Massachusetts culture. With these statements, Gingrich insinuates that Romney is not conservative enough to be the Republican nominee.

To support his argument, Gingrich appeals to authority and to expert opinion, i.e. to the Wall Street Journal. As pointed out by Halmari, referring to authority is a traditional persuasive strategy. According to Gingrich, The Wall Street Journal has stated that Romney’s economic plan is timid and it resembles that of President Obama’s. It could be argued that drawing a parallel to Obama’s economic policies has a very powerful effect as, during the 2012 campaign, the Republicans focused on underlining how Obama’s bad economic decisions have worsened the U.S. economic situation. The Republican candidates emphasised that the American people want to see a change in American economic policies and therefore, each candidate argued that they are the one who is able to change the course of the economy.

Furthermore, it should be noted that extract 7 is great example on how the primary election candidates attack against each other and question each other’s ideology and conservative credentials. Benoit et al. maintain that “the point of an attack is to achieve a net gain in favourability or preferability by reducing those of one’s opponent”. Thus, according to Walton, a successful personal attack can make a person look dishonest, untrustworthy and confused and this, in turn, may lead to a lack of credibility. When attacks are used wisely at the right moment, they can be extremely powerful in persuading an audience and in staining an opponent’s reputation. It should be noted that a reputation can be easily ruined by allegations even though there is little or no evidence supporting

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73 Benoit et al. 2002, 126.
them. A personal attack often leaves a powerful stigma on the target and makes the audience doubt the trustworthiness of the accused.\(^{74}\) After all, accuracy is not the point in the attacks but rather to decrease the credibility of one’s opponents. It is relevant to notice that attack can prove to be rather an efficient and influential strategy considering the fact that in the beginning of the primary season, the candidates are relatively unknown to the general public and therefore, voters have not necessarily yet formed impressions of the candidates. In modern political campaign, attacks are utilised especially in negative television advertisements but, as the data of the present study indicates, they are common in political debates as well.

Being the object of an attack gives a candidate a chance and motivation to defend themselves.\(^{75}\) In extract 8, Mitt Romney defends himself and his record against the attacks made by Gingrich.

(8) Romney: I’m very proud of the record that I have, and I think the one thing you can’t fool the people about New Hampshire about is the record of a governor next door. And people have watched me over my term as Governor and saw that I was a solid conservative and that I brought important change to Massachusetts. (NH080112)

In his answer, Romney maintains that he followed the conservative principles also when he was the Governor of Massachusetts. Romney argues that he brought an important change to the liberal state with his conservative policies. Furthermore, one might argue that by underlining that he is a solid conservative, Romney tries to dismiss the accusations of him being a “flip-flopper”\(^{76}\) i.e. as a politician who changes his opinions or switches positions often to suit the politics of the moment. In fact, Romney’s reputation as a flip-flopper has been an apparent part of both the 2008 and 2012 Republican primary campaign communication as his opponents as well as the media has advanced the story line on several occasions.

In the 2012 debate in Sioux City, Iowa, it is Speaker Newt Gingrich’s turn to defend himself against an attack made by Governor Romney earlier in the race. In his attack Romney questions Gingrich’s consistency as a conservative by stating that the Speaker is an unreliable conservative.

\(^{74}\) Walton 2007, xii - xiii.
\(^{75}\) Benoit 2007, 321.
\(^{76}\) Safire 2008, 253.
Moderator: Mr. Speaker, Governor Romney just yesterday said you're an unreliable conservative. Now, obviously, he's your opponent. But even Iowa Governor Terry Branstad said today he respects you greatly, but he openly questioned whether you had the discipline and focus to be president.

Gingrich: I have a 90 percent American Conservative Union voting record for 20 years. I balanced the budget for four straight years, paid off $405 billion in debt. Pretty conservative. ...Two out of three people went back to work or went to school. Pretty conservative. First tax cut in 16 years, largest capital gains tax cut in American history, unemployment came down to 4.2 percent. Pretty conservative.

To defend himself, Gingrich states that his voting record has been consistently conservative for 20 years. Again, Gingrich refers to authority when he mentions that his American Conservative Union (ACU) voting record is 90 percent. Moreover, to support his acclaim, Gingrich itemises specific actions he has taken during his political career as a conservative politician as well as underlines the positive outcomes of his actions. The Speaker defines all these actions as pretty conservative. On the whole, Gingrich's defense can be characterised as ideological self-definition, but it also defines what American conservatism is on a broader level.

1.3. “I would be with Ronald Reagan” – Adherence to Reaganism

President Ronald Reagan is an integral part of American conservatism and visibly present in the 2008 and 2012 GOP primary election rhetoric as the primary election candidates refer to Reagan on several occasions during the debates. The candidates make self-comparsions to Reagan, present themselves as Reagan's followers and underline their connections to the former president. As pointed out by Aberbach, Ronald Reagan's administration was the high point in the history of the American conservative movement. Indeed, Reagan is the number-one conservative hero, and references to Reagan resonate well in the Republican primary election audience.

It should be noted that, as Cook maintains, the Republican Party has been seeking a new Reagan ever since his presidency. And, without a dispute, each of the candidates would like to see themselves as the next Reagan. Especially Speaker Gingrich continuously refers to his connections to Ronald Reagan and to himself as a Reagan conservative during the 2012

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77 American Conservative Union is the oldest and largest grassroots conservative organisation in America. American Conservative Union (ACU), Who We Are. Electronic.
78 Aberbach 2011, 41.
79 Cook 2008, 197.
primary election debates. With these references, Gingrich tries to portray himself as the true successor to Reagan. On the other hand, in the 2008 primary campaign, it is, rather surprisingly, Senator John McCain, who continually refers to himself as a foot soldier in the Reagan army/revolution. Obviously, with this construction, McCain seeks the Reagan mantle and tries to maintain that he, too, has strong conservative principles. It should be noted that John McCain’s “foot soldier” construction is a bold strategy as McCain has disagreed with the Republican Party’s right wing on several issues and he has taken positions that have distanced him from the party’s conservative mainstream. One could argue that by emphasising his connections to Reagan, McCain tries to shake off his image as a moderate or a maverick and regain the trust of the Republican Party base. Indeed, as Béland & Waddan pinpoint, “adherence to Reaganism has become a key test of conservative credentials.

In extract 10, Reagan’s importance is emphasised when Speaker Gingrich answers to Governor Romney’s accusation of him being not conservative enough.

(10) Gingrich: I think on the conservative thing, it’s sort of laughable to suggest that somebody who campaigned with Ronald Reagan and with Jack Kemp and has had a 30-year record of conservatism, is somehow not a conservative. (IA151211)

Gingrich argues that it is ridiculous to blame him for not being conservative enough as he has campaigned with renowned conservative politicians Jack Kemp and Ronald Reagan. Gingrich’s statement shows that only the fact that he has connections to President Reagan should prove his conservative record. All in all, this extract portrays rather clearly the status and importance of Reagan in the Republican Party narrative.

President Ronald Reagan’s important role in the Republican Party can also be evidently seen in the question posed by the moderator in the debate held in the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley in 2008. In their answers, the candidates seek to justify why Ronald Reagan would endorse them and support their presidential campaign. In extract 11, Governor Romney argues that Reagan would endorse him. Furthermore, by listing out certain key words and core values of American conservatism, Romney tries to portray himself as Reagan’s true successor.


81 Béland & Waddan 2008, 110.
Romney: Absolutely. ...Ronald Reagan would say lower taxes. Ronald Reagan would say lower spending. Ronald Reagan is pro-life. He would also say I want to have an amendment to protect marriage.

Ronald Reagan would say, as I do, that Washington is broken. And like Ronald Reagan, I'd go to Washington as an outsider - not owing favors, not lobbyists on every elbow. I would be able to be the independent outsider that Ronald Reagan was, and he brought change to Washington.

Ronald Reagan would have said absolutely no way to McCain-Feingold.

I would be with Ronald Reagan. And this party, it has a choice, what the heart and soul of this party is going to be, and it's going to have to be in the house that Ronald Reagan built.

(CA300108)

Governor Romney’s acclaim captures many of the key values of American conservatism already discussed in the previous examples in the present section. Romney states that, just like Reagan, he stands for lower taxes and spending, is pro-life and wants to protect the traditional marriage between a man and a woman. The Governor focuses on underlining the similarities between Reagan and himself by implying that they both are Washington outsiders who are able to make independent decisions without owing any favours to lobbyists. It should be noted that the “outsider” theme is a very integral part of Romney’s primary election campaign both in 2008 and 2012. Romney underlines his career in the business world and emphasises that he is apart from the Washington culture and that his values are not corrupted. On the other hand, all of his opponents, except Governor Mike Huckabee, are “Washington insiders” who have made a political career in the United States Federal Government. It should be noted that, before elected to White House, Ronald Reagan served also as a governor and did not have experience from Washington. The comparison to Reagan makes Romney’s “outsider” image even more persuasive.

Governor Romney’s answer also includes an attack against Senator John McCain. By stating that Reagan would have voted against the McCain-Feingold Act that regulates the financing of political campaigns, Romney insinuates that Senator McCain acted against conservative principles when sponsoring the act. To counter Romney’s attack, McCain states that “Ronald Reagan would not approve of someone who changes their positions depending on what the year is”. In this case, McCain counters an attack with an attack. By this statement, McCain obviously refers to Mitt Romney and to his reputation as a flip-flopper. As these statements by McCain and Romney indicate, Reagan and his policies and
alleged ideological stances are used as a scale for measuring the candidates’ conservative credentials.

In extract 12, Speaker Gingrich defends himself against an attack made by Governor Romney before the debate in Tampa, Florida in 2012.

(12) Moderator: And so, speaker Gingrich, on electability to begin with, your rival, your opponent on this stage, Governor Romney, was out today calling you erratic, a failed leader, and warning that your nomination for this party could perhaps result in what he called an "October surprise a day." So given the fact that he went after you today on this topic of electability, your response tonight, Mr. Speaker?

Gingrich: Well, in 1980, when Ronald Reagan started the year about 30 points behind Jimmy Carter and when the Republican establishment described his economic ideas as "voodoo economics," Reagan just cheerfully went out and won the debate, won the nomination, and won the general election carrying more states than Roosevelt carried against Herbert Hoover. (FL230112)

In his defense, Gingrich attempts to emphasise the similarity between Reagan’s and his economic plans as well as their primary election campaigns. With his answer, Gingrich lures the audience to make a comparison between himself and Reagan. In fact, the extract includes an example of an implied comparison when Gingrich talks about Ronald Reagan’s economic ideas and how they were first received by fellow Republicans. During the Republican primary election campaign of 1980, the Republican candidate, George H. W. Bush, introduced the derogatory phrase voodoo economics that attacked against Reagan’s economic philosophy. However, later on, Reagan’s economic policies became highly popular and known as Reaganomics. Consequently, Gingrich insinuates that, just like Reagan’s, his economic ideas might sound unconventional at first but they will work the same way as Reagan’s economic ideas did. It could be argued that by comparing his economic policies to those of Reagan’s they become more relatable for the debate audience.

In extract 13, Senator Rick Santorum, in his turn, tries to take the Reagan mantle. Santorum makes a comparison between the 1980s election and the 2012 election as well as between himself and Ronald Reagan.

(13) Moderator: Make your case to the people of South Carolina in these final hours.

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82 Safire 2008, 781.
Santorum: South Carolina, you've been told in the past you've got to settle for a moderate because they can win. When the last time we had a situation like this in 1980, you said: No, we're going to take the strong conviction conservative, and you voted for Reagan before Reagan was the Reagan we knew. Vote for the one who can do the job that America needs. Vote for me. (SC190112)

In his appeal to the debate audience, Santorum argues that he is the strong conviction conservative candidate just like Ronald Reagan was in the 1980s primary election. In addition to comparing himself to Ronald Reagan, Santorum states that the GOP voters do not have to settle for a moderate. By this statement, Santorum portrays himself as the strong conservative alternative and implies that the other candidates are moderate and not conservative enough. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines the verb settle for as follows: “to accept something even though it is not best, or not what you really want”\(^83\). Evidently, the verb is very powerful and it has rather a negative undertone, and it portrays Santorum’s opinions of his fellow candidates quite clearly.

In extract 14, in an answer to a question concerning ideology during an Iowa debate in 2008, Romney emphasises that, if he got elected, he would follow President Reagan’s footsteps and ground his leadership on values associated to Reagan.

(14) Moderator: Thank you. Governor Romney, as you look at the most pressing problems facing our country and the best opportunities to affect change in the next four years, do you think it's more important for the next president to be a fiscal conservative or a social conservative?

Romney: I think it's incredibly important he be a conservative. I'm going to build on the same foundation Ronald Reagan built. We're not going to get the White House nor strengthen America unless we can pull together the coalition of conservatives and conservative thought that has made us successful as a party. That's social conservatives. It's also economic conservatives, and foreign policy and defense conservatives. Those three together form the three legs of the Republican stool that allowed Ronald Reagan to get elected and allowed our party to have strength over the last several decades. And I'm going to continue to draw, as many on this stage try and do, upon those strengths and to build America by virtue of those conservative principles whether in health care, education, defense, spending, entitlement reform, you name it. Conservative principles work. They've been tested time and again, and they'll keep working. (IA121208)

In addition to portraying the fundamental role of Reagan in the American conservative ideology, extract 14 is particularly interesting because Governor Romney explicitly states that there are three strands of conservatives in America, i.e. social conservatives, economic

\(^{83}\) Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. “Settle for”.
conservatives and national defense conservatives, and that during his presidency Ronald Reagan was able to unite all of them under one Republican banner. Romney maintains that he is going to follow Reagan’s footsteps and unite the different strands of conservatism under his leadership. Romney’s answer crystallises the divisions within the Republican Party’s conservative base and, at the same time, underlines that the different fractions should be brought together to enable the Republican Party to thrive. These different strands of conservatism mentioned by Governor Romney will be discussed in more detail in section 2 of the present thesis.

Summary

On the whole, as the analysis in section 1 indicate, the GOP candidates’ debate rhetoric shows that there are certain values and principles that form the core of American conservatism as well as the ideological base of the Republican Party. These values include the core values of economic conservatism, such as cutting taxes, balancing the federal budget and decreasing the unemployment rates by creating jobs in the private sector. The candidates underline that the role of the federal government should be limited and they emphasise the states’ rights stated in the 10th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Additionally, they support strongly the 2nd Amendment and oppose most regulations related to gun control. The candidates also highlight social conservative issues such as the importance of family. They also have a traditional understanding of marriage and see it as a union between a man and a woman. Furthermore, they oppose abortion and pro-choice tendencies and defend the rights of the unborn child.

The analysis in the present section also confirms that ideological consistency is an important issue in the Republican primary election debates. Particularly, the rhetoric in the 2012 debates indicates that the Republican primary campaigns have become contests to show who is the most consistent conservative and ideologically pure of the candidates. Thus, in addition to defining the basic qualities and principles of American conservatism that are almost undisputed within the Republican Party, the candidates also underline their conservative records and how they have furthered the cause of conservatism during their lives and careers. In order to gain advantage over each other, the candidates emphasise that they are stalwart conviction conservatives who represent the conservative values and principles the most consistently. At the same time, the candidates question whether their opponents are conservative enough to represent the Party in the general election and to
win the White House. Indeed, referring to consistency is a very common persuasive strategy among the six presidential hopefuls.

Section 1.3. indicates that the GOP candidates battle over the Reagan mantle in the debates. They compare themselves to President Ronald Reagan, underline their similarities with him and aim to portray themselves as Reagan’s true heirs. The 2008 and 2012 primary debates confirm that the Republican Party as well the candidates are, as Cook\textsuperscript{84} points out, still seeking a new Reagan. Evidently, they want to bring back the times when the conservative coalition was united under the Reagan presidency.

It could be argued that the candidates’ need to underline their conservative credentials, consistency as well as their resemblance with and connections to the conservative hero, President Ronald Reagan, confirms that both the 2008 and 2012 primary elections are about defining what conservatism actually is and what it is to be a conservative politician. Of course, some of the candidates feel the need to underline their credentials or consistency more often than the others. For instance, Mitt Romney has an unfortunate flip-flopper image that persisted from the 2008 primaries till the 2012 primaries. On certain occasions, the other candidates underline their conservative credentials in order to gain advantage over the flip-flopping Romney. This is especially true in the case of the 2012 primaries when Romney is the front-runner. On the other hand, by underlining his conservative credentials, Romney tries to shake off his bad reputation and bring positive attention to himself.

It is interesting to notice that, as pointed out by Luntz, conservatism has been more popular than the Republican Party since the 1980s, and more people identify themselves as conservatives than Republicans.\textsuperscript{85} For instance, in December 2012, 27 \% of Americans identified themselves as Republicans\textsuperscript{86}, whereas 40 \% identified themselves as conservative\textsuperscript{87}. Consequently, it is wise for the Republican primary election candidates to underline their conservative ideology. Furthermore, as pointed out by Simons & Jones, the primary election voters tend to be party loyalist and ideologically committed.\textsuperscript{88} In other words, the voting population in primaries is more conservative than the typical Republican.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{84} Cook 2008, 197.  \\
\textsuperscript{85} Luntz 2007, 161  \\
\textsuperscript{86} Gallup: “Party Affiliation”. Electronic.  \\
\textsuperscript{87} Saad 2012. Electronic.  \\
\textsuperscript{88} Simons & Jones 2011, 367.
\end{footnotesize}
Therefore, again, the references to conservatism have a particular resonance among the primary election voters.
2. DIVISIONS WITHIN THE PARTY

Section 1 of the present paper introduces the underlying core values and principles of the Republican Party conservatism that are hardly ever contested within the American conservative movement. However, as the examples in the following section indicate, it is inaccurate to describe contemporary American conservatism as a fully unified political ideology. Furthermore, as pointed out by Olsen, the Republican Party contains discrete factions that are based primarily on ideology. Consequently, the present section will look at the ideological divisions within the Republican Party as they are represented in the GOP candidates’ 2008 and 2012 primary election rhetoric.

As Benoit et al. pinpoint, the primary election candidates are relatively similar to each other as they all come from the same party and share many of the same philosophies, ideas and approaches. Obviously, in the case of this study, all the candidates come from the Republican Party and their positions on the majority of issues are rather alike. This comparability makes it difficult for the candidates to stand out from each other. Accordingly, the similarity between the candidates makes it even more important for them to emphasise their differences in the debates. As Benoit et al. maintain, the candidates must concentrate on defeating one another to secure their place in the general election. Obviously, a primary election candidate cannot become president without first defeating the other candidates of his own political party.

2.1. “You’re a big-government conservative.” – The role of government

President Ronald Reagan famously stated in his Farewell Address in 1989: "Man is not free unless government is limited." This famous catchphrase captures the typically Republican view on the role of the government. Indeed, the role of government is a very debated and controversial issue in American politics. As pointed out in section 1 of this thesis, the Republicans are, in general, in favour of less government interference both in economy and in issues such as gun control. Nevertheless, it is important to notice that even though the opinions concerning government interference are mostly negative, the Republican candidates’ views on the role of government differ quite significantly. Consequently, the discussion over the role of the government is an evident part of the Republican primary election debates as well.

90 Benoit et al. 2002, 57.
91 Ibid.
Extract 15 shows an interesting dialogue between Congressman Ron Paul and Senator Rick Santorum concerning the role of the government in economy in Goffstown, New Hampshire in 2012. The moderator mentions Paul’s attack advertisement against Santorum and gives Paul an opportunity to explain his charges.

Moderator: Congressman Paul, let’s stay on the issue of records. You’ve got a new ad up in South Carolina taking direct aim at Senator Santorum. You call him a corporate lobbyist, a Washington insider with a record of betrayal. You also call him corrupt in that ad. Senator Santorum is standing right here. Are you willing to stand by those charges and explain them?

Paul: ...what really counts is his record. I mean, he’s a big government, big spending individual. Because, you know, he preached to the fact he wanted a balanced budget amendment but voted to raise the debt to five times. So he is a big government person.

Santorum: ...Ron, I’m a conservative. I’m not a libertarian. I believe in some government. I do believe that government has -- that as a senator from Pennsylvania that I had a responsibility to go out there and represent the interests of my state.

Paul: I believe Congress should designate how the money should be spent. I agree with that. But the big difference between the way I voted and the Senator voted is I always voted against the spending. I voted against all the spending. It’s only been a couple appropriations bills I voted for in the past, what, 24, 26 years I’ve been in Washington. So you’re a big spender; that’s all there is to it. You’re a big-government conservative. And you don’t vote for, you know, right to work and these very important things. And that’s what weakens the economy. So to say you’re a conservative, I think, is a stretch. But you’ve convinced a lot of people of it, so somebody has to point out your record.

Santorum: ...I go back to the point. I am not a libertarian, Ron. I agree with -- you vote against everything. I don’t vote against everything. I do vote for some spending. I do think government has a role to play... (NH070112)

In his attack ad, published on the 6th of January, 2012, Paul questions Santorum’s integrity as a conservative politician and calls him a Washington insider and a corrupt corporate lobbyist as well as “another serial hypocrite who cannot be trusted”. It should be noted that the advertisement was published a few days after the Iowa caucus and just before the New Hampshire primary. After the Iowa caucus, Mitt Romney, Rick Santorum and Ron Paul were the three candidates clearly leading the polls. Consequently, they had a strategic reason to attack each other.

92 Betrayal. Electronic.
Paul continues the same line of attacks in the Goffstown debate. Fundamentally, the candidates’ dialogue is about the government’s role in the economy. Congressman Paul attacks against Senator Santorum and claims that he is a big government, big spending individual. It should be noted that big government is a very common derogatory term in the American conservative rhetoric which attacks “centralised federal authority and massive taxation and expenditure”. As Béland & Waddan point out, big government is inherently bad for economic conservatives. In fact, the small-government conservatives’ main objective in reducing federal spending is to decrease government activity and not just to balance the budget. Consequently, by accusing Santorum on big-government policies, Paul questions Santorum’s attitude towards the role of government in economy as well as his credentials as a conservative politician.

In the extract, Paul supports and strengthens his argument by mentioning specific examples of Santorum voting for more government spending. Paul also mentions that Santorum has not voted for the Right-to-work law which states that a labour union membership cannot be a requirement for employment. Paul’s accusation probably resonates well among the audience as Republicans have traditionally opposed trade unions. It could be argued that by itemising examples of Santorum’s record, Paul wants to point out that Santorum is inconsistent in his policies and that he does not practise what he preaches. Evidently, Paul’s attack questions Santorum’s image as a “conviction conservative”. As Benoit & Dorries maintain, people expect consistency between words and deeds and therefore, questioning one’s consistency is a powerful way of accentuating the offensiveness of the act. Consequently, Paul refers to inconsistency in Santorum’s voting record in order to persuade the voters.

Santorum, in his turn, defends himself by attacking Paul on his political ideology. It should be noted that Ron Paul and Rick Santorum present very different factions of the Republican Party. Paul is an experienced politician and a self-proclaimed libertarian, whereas Santorum is a young and relatively inexperienced social conservative. It could be argued that Santorum aims to utilise Paul’s political ideology as a weapon against him by stating that, unlike Paul, he is a conservative, not a libertarian and that he doesn’t vote against everything. In other words, Santorum aims to portray Paul as too far out of the mainstream.
of the Republican Party and not as a serious conservative alternative to the 2012 front-runner Romney. Indeed, the extract shows the important role of political ideology in the GOP primary election context.

The government’s role in job creation is discussed in extract 16 which shows a dialogue between Speaker Gingrich and Governor Romney in Charleston in 2012. The extract is taken from a context where the candidates discuss how, on the one hand, “the wrong laws, the wrong regulations and the wrong leadership” can be an impediment for job creation, whereas, on the other hand, the government can also create an environment where entrepreneurs can create jobs. Gingrich attacks against Romney and insinuates that a part of the reason why Romney has been successful in business is because the government has created the right environment for job growth. Essentially, Gingrich tries to harm Romney’s reputation as a successful businessman.

(16)  

Gingrich: Now, I do think government can kill jobs, and I do think government can create the environment where entrepreneurs create jobs. And the truth is, you did very well under the rules that we created to make it easier for entrepreneurs to go out and do things. You'd [Romney] have been much poorer if Jimmy Carter had remained president.

Romney: Let me just tell you, Mr. Speaker, you were speaker four years. I was in business 25 years. (Applause.) Number two, I don't recall a single day saying, "Oh, thank Heavens, Washington is there for me" (laughter) "thank heavens." I said, "Please get out of my way. Let me start a business and put Americans to work." (Cheers, applause.) (SC190112)

This extract shows that there are evident differences between Gingrich’s and Romney’s view on government’s role in job creation. Gingrich believes that government can help in job creation, whereas Romney feels that the government should not interfere in business. In fact, just a minute earlier in the debate, Romney stated that he finds it amusing how much credit is taken in Washington, i.e. in the federal government, for what goes on on Main Street, i.e. in small businesses. As Luntz maintains, the term “Main Street” evokes associations on a subconscious level. Main Street is about small-town America, people and family.98 “Washington”, on the other hand, is the governmental problem that spends, taxes

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98 Luntz 2007, 216.
and regulates. By using these contrasting terms, Romney underlines his views on the government’s role in business.

It is evident that, in extract 16, Gingrich’s attack backfires when Romney defends himself and ridicules Gingrich’s statement by claiming that he does not recall any occasion when he has been thankful for Washington being there for him. In this example, Romney uses political ideology as well as his personal views on the government’s role in the economy as a basis for the joke. Romney’s joke expresses disapproval for Gingrich’s statements and opinions on the government’s role in job creation. By emphasising that he has never favoured government interference on business, Romney underlines his conservative values and insinuates that Gingrich does not follow the conservative principle of less government involvement in economy. Romney also reminds that his career in business is far longer than Gingrich’s career as a Speaker, and therefore, Gingrich has no right to take credit for his 25 years in business.

At this point, it is relevant to notice that, as pointed out by Benoit & Dorries, in order to be persuasive, the accused must believe that the audience perceives the alleged act negatively. In other words, an attack has to make the accused believe that the accusation will harm his reputation. It could be argued that Romney’s response to Gingrich’s attack indicates that he does not see it as something that would actually harm his reputation. On the contrary, Romney takes advantage of the attack by ridiculing Gingrich and his opinions. In the case of extract 16, Gingrich’s decision to attack Romney on his business record probably did not work as it was intended.

In his rebuttal, Romney succeeds in making the audience laugh and in ridiculing Gingrich’s statement. Halmari points out that “the ability to make the audience laugh is an obvious sign of at least temporary persuasive success”. An audience that is laughing together with the speaker is also likely to bond and sympathise with them. Therefore, humour can be an effective audience-involvement strategy and a spontaneous laughter from the audience could be interpreted as an indicator of audience engagement. Consequently, humour can be a powerful persuasive tool in political communication as a politician may be able to connect with his audience if he manages to make them laugh. After all, laughter is a sign

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100 Benoit & Dorries 1996, 464.  
101 Halmari 2008, 262.
that indicates that the audience is approving the speaker’s message. Indeed, humour is a recurring persuasive strategy in the candidates’ debate rhetoric.

Moreover, it should be noted that the dialogue between Speaker Newt Gingrich and Governor Mitt Romney in extract 16 is a great example of real spontaneous interaction in a political debate. As Benoit et al. maintain, although the candidates do prepare for the debates, they cannot anticipate every statement from their fellow candidates, moderators and audience members. Indeed, the debate is the most spontaneous form of campaign message and it might offer qualitatively better information for voters than, for instance, campaign advertisements or speeches. Consequently, this type of spontaneous interaction can prove to be very valuable for the voters as the differences between the candidates, including their policies, debating skills and perhaps even their personalities are underlined in situations like these. In addition, as Benoit points out, at the moments of clash, the voters get the possibility to hear the pros and cons of the debated issue.

In the 2012 debate held in Tampa, Congressman Ron Paul brings out the issue of government’s role in economy and in people’s personal lives. Paul states that when Republicans get in charge, they “expand the government.” Additionally, Paul pinpoints that the Republicans keep blaming the Democrats for passing regulative policies that increase the government involvement in economy. However, according to Paul, the Republicans tend to forget that they have also participated in passing regulative policies. As an example, Paul mentions the bipartisan Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, which regulates companies’ accounting practices. Consequently, Paul underlines that the problem with the GOP politics is that once the politicians get in charge, they do not follow the conservative principles or the values they have preached before they got in power. In other words, they expand the government. Because of this inconsistency between words and deeds, as Aberbach and Peele maintain, conservative activists are often bound for disappointment when the conservative candidates get in power.

The problem highlighted by Paul is also discussed in extract 17. Santorum claims that when Republicans get in power they forget their conservative convictions and approve policies that are against their ideological values.

102 Halmari 2005, 125.
104 Benoit 2007, 324.
106 Aberbach & Peele 2011b, 382 & 387.
Santorum: ...You go down and you look at the Wall Street bailouts, I said before, here's one where you had folks who preach conservatism, private sector, and when push came to shove, they got pushed. They didn't stand tall for the conservative principles that they argued that they were for. And as a result, we ended up with this bailout that has injected government into business like it had never been done before. (FL230112)

Santorum maintains that the Wall Street bailouts injected government into business like it had never been done before. It should be noted that a bailout is essentially an issue related to government spending. According to the Oxford English Dictionary a “bailout” is “an act of giving financial assistance to a failing business, etc.” In the case of this extract, “bailout” refers to the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 that was enacted in October, 2008, in order to prevent the collapse of the U.S. financial system during the subprime mortgage crisis. Santorum employs the verb inject in his statement which clearly has negative undertones in this particular context. Basically, Santorum’s message is that the people who have been supporting conservative economic principles forgot their convictions when the financial situation got overwhelmingly bad. They accepted help from the government in a form of a bailout and at the same time, approved a policy that is against their conservative ideology.

It is evident that Santorum includes Governor Romney and Speaker Gingrich in to the group of politicians that did not stand tall for their conservative principles and did not oppose the Wall Street bailouts. In fact, earlier in the Tampa debate, Santorum accuses his fellow candidates for supporting the bailouts and for not allowing capitalism to work.

Santorum: My question to Governor Romney and to Speaker Gingrich, if you believe in capitalism that much, then why did you support the bailout of Wall Street, where you had an opportunity to allow destructive capitalism to work, to allow a failure of a system that needed to fail because people did things that in capitalism you pay a price? (FL230112)

Capitalism is based on the fact that markets decide where the money goes, not the government. The aim of Santorum’s attack is to question Romney’s and Gingrich’s credibility as conservatives and whether they actually believe in capitalistic values. In addition, Santorum wants to remind the audience of his fellow candidates’ voting record as well as to underline that he did not approve the bailouts. By criticising his opponents,

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Santorum portrays himself as the principled conservative candidate who stands tall for his values.

The debate on the role of the government is by no means always related to economic issues. The GOP presidential hopefuls discuss also the role of the government in people’s personal lives. As pointed out in section 1 of the present thesis, social conservative values are in the core of the American conservative movement and serve a visible role in the Republican Party ideology. Nevertheless, it is important to notice that social issues are highly controversial among Republicans and that the primary election candidates have rather differing views on them. This controversy can be clearly seen in extract 19, when Congressman Paul highlights the issue of personal liberty.

(19) **Paul:** So, I say, if you’re conservative, you want small government across the board, especially in personal liberty. What’s wrong with having the government out of our personal lives? So, this is what we have to decide what conservative means, what limited government means. (FL230112)

Ron Paul’s libertarian aspiration to “the combination of less government with social permissiveness”\(^\text{109}\) is evidently present in his statement. According to Paul, it would be better if the government kept out of people’s personal lives. It should be noted that this is a serious dispute within the Republican Party as the religious wing of the conservatives want government to regulate private behaviour, whereas libertarians argue strongly against it.\(^\text{110}\)

2.2. “His views are out of the mainstream of conservative Republican thought.” – Unreliable conservatives

In addition to debating what the role of government should be in economy and in people’s personal lives, the Republican presidential hopefuls question each other’s records on other issues, as well.

The debate held in Simi Valley, California, on the 30\(^\text{th}\) of January 2008 is characterised by sharp attacks, insults and heated debate between the two leading GOP candidates John McCain and Mitt Romney. The Simi Valley debate is the last GOP debate before the Super Tuesday when altogether 21 states vote in Republican primaries. John McCain won the Florida winner-takes-all primary on the 29\(^\text{th}\) of January, and Mitt Romney came in second in the polls. Consequently, McCain and Romney have a strategic reason to attack each

\(^{109}\) Saunders 2014, 17.

\(^{110}\) Aberbach & Peale 2011b, 380.
other and to present each other in a negative light. Indeed, Romney aims to gain advantage over McCain by questioning McCain’s record and claiming that he would take a liberal Democratic course if elected president. In extract 20, Romney maintains that McCain’s views on many important issues are out of the mainstream of conservative Republican thought.

(20) Moderator: Governor Romney, you've spent the last several days warning voters that John McCain as president would follow, quote, "a liberal Democratic" course. But by most measures, doesn't he have a pretty mainstream conservative record?

Romney: I'm sure, on many issues, he does, and he's a good Republican. I wouldn't question those credentials at all, but there are a number of pieces of legislation where his views are out of the mainstream, at least in my view, of conservative Republican thought. (CA300108)

Romney argues that McCain has taken several positions that are not conservative. Later on in his attack, Romney mentions that McCain has voted twice against the Bush tax cuts and underlines that there were only two Republicans who did that. In addition, Romney maintains that McCain has co-authored and supported a number of bipartisan Acts that do not follow the conservative principles. Basically, the gist of Romney’s message is that McCain’s record shows that he is an unreliable conservative who cannot be trusted to follow the conservative principles if elected to the White House.

It is understandable that McCain does not want Romney’s attacks to go unanswered. As they say, sometimes, the best defence is a good offence. In extract 21, Senator McCain defends himself with an attack of his own.

(21) McCain: Let me just say I'm proud of my conservative record. It's one of reaching across the aisle to get things done for Americans... And I'm proud of that record.

And I heard Governor Romney describe his record. As I understand it, his record was that he raised taxes by $730 million. He called them fees; I'm sure the people that had to pay it — whether they called them bananas, they still had to pay $730 million extra. (CA300108)

In his comeback, McCain argues that perhaps Romney has not followed the conservative principles always so faithfully either. By stating that Romney has raised taxes significantly during his governorship, McCain makes a powerful attack against Romney’s conservative record in economy. McCain also questions Romney’s integrity as a politician and an
economic conservative by claiming that Romney has actually raised taxes during his governorship despite claiming otherwise.

In extract 22, John McCain and Mitt Romney discuss what the United States should do with the people who have come illegally in the country. The dialogue shows an actual disagreement on policy between Romney and McCain.

(22) **McCain:** Now, I want to say again, this is a national security issue. We have to secure our borders. But I want to say again, these are God's children. We have to address it in as humane and compassionate an issue as possible. But we have to respect our nation's security requirements.

So I think that it's time Republican and Democrat sat down together and resolved this issue. Because if you've got broken borders, and if you have 12 million people here illegally, then, obviously, you have de facto amnesty. It is a federal responsibility. The federal government must act. I will act as president.

**Romney:** I disagree fundamentally with the idea that the 12 million people who've come here illegally should all be allowed to remain in the United States permanently, potentially some of them applying for citizenship and becoming citizens, others just staying permanently. I think that is a form of amnesty, and that it's not appropriate. We're a nation of laws. (NH050108)

As pointed out by Herbert, in 2007, 11.3 million illegal immigrants were living across the United States. The immigration issue gained new significance after the 9/11 terrorist attacks but people's views on the issue differ greatly.\(^{111}\) The differences in opinion are also evident within the Republican Party. As extract 22 shows, Romney and McCain have fundamentally different approaches to the immigration issue. It should be noted that John McCain was a leading backer and a co-sponsor of the bipartisan immigration reform plan McCain-Kennedy in 2005. One of the key features of the bill was to offer a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants already in the country.\(^{112}\) Romney, on the other hand, maintains that he does not support a pathway to citizenship for illegal immigrants. In fact, according to Romney, granting a citizenship for an illegal immigrant would be a form of amnesty, and he would rather deport all illegal immigrants. It should be noted that the word "amnesty" is a powerful attack word often employed in situations when people suggest compromise in the immigration issue.\(^{113}\) This disagreement between McCain and Romney

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\(^{111}\) Herbert 2011, 162.

\(^{112}\) “Authorizes H-5B nonimmigrant status for undocumented aliens present in the United States on the date of this Act's introduction who meet specified requirements and pay a fine. Provides a mechanism for subsequent adjustment of status.” Congress.gov: "Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act".

\(^{113}\) Safire 2008, 19.
is a recurring theme in the 2008 campaign communication. Evidently, by attacking McCain’s stances on illegal immigration, Romney aims to portray himself as the true conservative and as a strong and principled leader.

The disagreement between McCain and Romney on immigration shows clearly the crucial role of campaign tactics in politics. Understandably, due to his stances on illegal immigration, John McCain gained the majority of Hispanic/Latino\textsuperscript{114} vote for instance in the California and Florida primaries. Romney, on the other hand, gained the majority of votes from the people who thought illegal immigration is the most important issue in the election.\textsuperscript{115} It should be noted that, according to a national exit poll, 9% of the electorate was Latino in the 2008 general election. Despite McCain’s success in the primary elections, the Hispanics voted for Barack Obama over McCain in the general election with a clear margin of 67% to 31%.\textsuperscript{116} The importance of Latino voters is constantly increasing as the Latino population is the fastest growing minority in the United States.\textsuperscript{117} In the 2012 general election, the Latinos made up 10% of the electorate and helped Obama win important battleground states such as Nevada and Colorado.\textsuperscript{118} In fact, the Latino vote is viewed so important that a Republican strategist, Ana Navarro, pointed out that “If we don’t do better with Hispanics, we'll be out of the White House forever”.\textsuperscript{119} Consequently, the growing Latino population will play an important role in American politics and present an interesting challenge for the Republican Party in the future presidential elections.

The controversial social issues are portrayed in the debate held in Concord, New Hampshire, in 2012. Senator Rick Santorum accuses Governor Romney of discarding conservative principles by taking liberal positions on gay rights and abortion. Santorum even states that Romney’s views have been more liberal than the renowned liberal politician, Edward M. (Ted) Kennedy’s.

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Santorum:} Because at the end of that campaign, he [Romney] wouldn’t stand for conservative principles. He ran from Ronald Reagan. And he said he was going to be to the left of Ted Kennedy on gay rights, on abortion, a whole host of other issues. We want someone, when the time gets tough -- and it will in this election -- we want someone who’s going to stand up and fight for the conservative principles, not bail out and not run, and not run to the left of Ted Kennedy. (NH080112)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{114} The terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” are used interchangeably in this thesis.
\textsuperscript{115} The New York Times website. Election 2008: California Primary Results and Florida Primary Results.
\textsuperscript{116} Lopez, 2008.
\textsuperscript{117} Rodriguez, 2012.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} Rodriguez, 2012.
In his attack, Santorum refers to Mitt Romney’s statement in the 1994 Senate race when he maintained that "I am more convinced than ever before that, as we seek full equality for America's gay and lesbian citizens, I will provide more effective leadership than my opponent (Ted Kennedy)". With his allegation, Santorum wants to underline that Romney has changed his opinion on gay rights during his political career. In consequence, Santorum maintains that Romney is a flip-flopper and an unreliable conservative who will not stick to his principles.

In addition to underling Romney’s flip-flopper image, Santorum aims to persuade the social conservative voters by attacking Romney’s record on social conservative issues. However, it is questionable whether Santorum’s attack has the intended effect. As pointed out by Saunders, social issues are rather polarising campaign issues and may push libertarians and many independents away. Additionally, the socially conservative positions seem to alienate younger voters. In fact, on the whole, the group of Republican voters who place high priority on moral and religious issues is relatively small. Therefore, one might argue that it is not wise to emphasise social issues as campaign issues in the American political context. Yet, on the other hand, the social conservative candidates, Huckabee in 2008 and Santorum in 2012, came second in the primary races. Consequently, social issues do matter in the GOP primary election context.

Apart from the flip-flopper issue, Mitt Romney’s business record has also been rather a debated topic during the 2012 Republican primary campaign. This is most likely due to the fact that Romney has based his 2012 candidacy on his experience in business life. The debates contain quite a few examples of persuasive attacks where the other GOP candidates attack Romney’s record in business. It should be noted that especially Romney’s tenure as the CEO of Bain Capital, an alternative asset management and financial services company, has created heated debate. In extract 24, Gingrich basically charges Romney of making profits at his workers’ expense.

(24) **Moderator:** Mr. Speaker, a group supporting you run by one of your closest long-time advisers just put out a very scathing attack, just today, on Governor Romney, on his tenure as the CEO of that investment firm, Bain Capital.

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121 Saunders 2014, 17.

122 Olsen 2014, 22.
It calls that tenure “a story of greed,” that’s a quote, saying that Bain made spectacular profits by, again, quote, “stripping American businesses of assets, selling everything to the highest bidder and often killing jobs for big financial rewards.” Do you agree with that characterization?

Gingrich: ...I’m very much for free enterprise. I’m very much for exactly what the Governor just described, create a business, grow jobs, provide leadership. I’m not nearly as enamoured of a Wall Street model where you can flip companies, you can go in and have leveraged buyouts, you can basically take out all the money, leaving behind the workers.

Moderator: Is that the Bain model?

Gingrich: ...I think it’s a legitimate part of the debate to say, OK, on balance, were people better off or were people worse off by this particular style of investment? (NH070112)

In his attack Gingrich implies that as the CEO of Bain Capital, Romney benefited financially from flipping companies and having leveraged buyouts. Moreover, it is insinuated that Romney planned the act and knew its consequences. Gingrich aims to increase Romney’s perceived responsibility for the consequences of practising the Bain Capital’s model by questioning whether people were better off or worse off by Romney’s style of investment.

It is relevant to notice that, on the following night in Concord, New Hampshire, Gingrich referred to Bain Capital’s model by stating that Bain, at times, engaged in behavior where they looted a company, leaving behind 1,700 unemployed people and in Charleston, Gingrich described the Bain Capital’s model as one that takes over a company and dramatically leverages it, leaves it with a great deal of debt. Consequently, it could be argued that the main point in Gingrich’s accusations is to question Romney’s values as a businessman and to draw attention to how these values would show if Romney was elected president. In other words, the attacks raise the question of whether it is more important to create jobs for the American people or to gain financial rewards for the investors. However, it is debatable whether Gingrich’s accusations were actually successful in persuading the voters. On the one hand, the critique may have given voters doubts about Romney and his integrity, whereas, on the other hand, the attacks may have also backfired since conservatism and capitalism were also targeted in the attacks. Indeed, Gingrich’s rhetoric has received a great deal of negative feedback and criticism in the media and from political commentators. According to Thiessen, Gingrich’s attacks on Bain Capital have undermined his chief campaign message: “that he is the
principled conservative in the race, while Romney is a flip-flopper who will say anything to get elected”.

In the Charleston debate, Romney responds to Gingrich’s attacks by stating, for instance, that:

ROMNEY: ... I know we're going to get attacked from the left, from Barack Obama, on capitalism. My view is, capitalism works. Free enterprise works. I find it kind of strange, on a stage like this, with Republicans, having to describe how private equity and venture capital work and how they're successful and how they create jobs. (SC190112)

Romney’s response to Gingrich’s attacks indicates that he does not see them as something that would actually harm his reputation. On the contrary, Romney takes advantage of the attacks by stating that he would have expected that kind of attacks on capitalism from the left, from Barack Obama, not from the fellow Republicans. Evidently, Romney aims to turn the situation around and question whether Gingrich himself believes in capitalism and free enterprise or not.

As example 24 indicates, tactics play a crucial role in political campaigning. In the case of extract 24, Gingrich’s decision to attack Romney on his business record probably did not work as it was intended. It is interesting to notice that Rick Santorum did not support Gingrich in his attacks, but, on the contrary, he stated in the debate held in Tampa, Florida that “I have not fired at Governor Romney on his work at Bain Capital. In fact, I've been maybe unique in that regard that I haven't. I believe in capitalism. I believe in free markets. I believe Governor Romney can go out and earn whatever he can. And hopefully he creates jobs by earning that money and investing in companies.” Thiessen maintains that Gingrich’s assault against capitalism became an opportunity for Santorum to portray himself as the conservative option to Romney. Indeed, it seems that Santorum used this opportunity to speak for capitalism and to emphasise that, in addition to being a social conservative, he is also a solid economic conservative who supports free markets.

Summary

As argued by Saunders, there are evident ideological divisions inside the Republican Party. These divisions are also visibly present in the 2008 and 2012 Republican primary election debate rhetoric as well as in the analysis presented in this thesis. The examples in this section show that certain political principles and values often associated with

123 Thiessen 2012.
124 Thiessen 2012.
125 Saunders 2014, 10.
conservatism are being contested in the debate rhetoric of the six Republican presidential hopefuls. This is especially true in the case of the role of government in economy. The candidates are eager to employ their differences as a weapon against each other, which not only makes the candidates stand out from each other but also accentuates the divisions within the Party.

The primary election candidates attack against each other and underline their ideological differences on several occasion during each primary debate. However, the attacks do not always focus on the nature of American conservatism but rather on the candidates’ political records or even on their personal qualities. Nevertheless, it is evident that quite a number of the disputes and disagreements between the candidates are fundamentally about the nature of American conservatism. The abundance of these differences shows that the Republican Party is not ideologically coherent and that there are major disagreements on fundamental issues. Each candidate has their own way of understanding what conservatism means and how Republican politicians should govern when elected. On the basis of the extracts present in this section, it could be even argued that the party is going through a process of soul searching.

The examples in the present section portray that the GOP candidates often define conservatism in negative terms by stating that the political positions and actions of their fellow candidates do not follow the principles of American conservatism. As pointed out, in some questions, the candidates have very differing views of what conservatism actually is. Yet, it is important to keep in mind that often the differences are emphasised as a primary election campaign tactic, and actually, the differences between the candidates may not be as striking as their rhetoric seems to indicate.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that primary election is an intraparty contest and therefore, as Kendall maintains, the risks for causing irreparable damage is always present when politicians of the same party direct attacks against one another.126 Naturally, the attacks threaten the party unity but they can also be utilised by the opposing party in the general election campaign. In addition, as pointed out by Saunders, intraparty divisions force the candidates to make statements and adopt positions that alienate potential supporters and muddle the party’s national message.127 However, on the basis of the

126 Kendall 2000, 10.
analysis in the present paper, it is not possible to say whether the presented intraparty divisions have actually had these alleged effects.
3. FINDING COMMON GROUND

As previous research and the extracts presented in section 2 of the present thesis indicate, there are evident internal disunities in the Republican Party’s ideological base. The objective of section 3 is to introduce some of the strategies and rhetorical constructions the primary election candidates employ to find common ground despite their ideological differences. At this point, it is important to remember that, in many respects, the 2008 and 2012 Republican Party primary election campaigns differ greatly from each other. In 2008, the Republicans were the incumbent party and their aim was to remain in power after the eight years of George W. Bush’s presidency. On the other hand, in 2012, the Democratic Party had the advantage of incumbency, and the eventual Republican nominee challenged President Barack Obama in the general election.

The political context of each campaign has a significant effect on the candidates’ campaign strategies and rhetorical constructions. Consequently, section 3 is divided into two subsections: Section 3.1. discusses the 2008 primaries, whereas section 3.2. analyses the 2012 primaries. It should be noted that section 3.2. is based, to a certain extent, on the analysis presented in my Pro Gradu Thesis in English Philology that discusses the persuasion strategies employed in the 2012 Republican primary election debates.128

3.1. “We have lost our way.” – Taking responsibility

The 2008 Republican primaries were the first primaries after George W. Bush’s two-term presidency. Bush’s presidency had been widely seen as traumatic for the unity of the American conservative movement. Bush’s compassionate conservatism that expanded the role of federal government as well as his big-government policies angered conservative activists and Republican supporters. Indeed, according to a Gallup poll, Bush’s second-term average approval rating was only 37%, whereas his disapproval rating was 61%. During the last year of his presidency, Bush’s approval rating among Republicans varied between 55 to 75 percent.129 Even tough Bush’s approval rating among his own party was quite close to the average rating for a President during their second term, the Bush presidency was widely criticised even in his own party. Moreover, the question of whether the GOP and conservatives had lost their way was a very discussed topic in the 2008 primary campaign.

128 Seppänen 2012.
According to Benoit et al., the Republican candidates faced the following challenge in their 2008 primary election campaign: “How can they distinguish themselves from an unpopular president without appearing disloyal to their political party?”\(^{130}\) This challenge is evidently present in the 2008 debate rhetoric. As the examples in the present section indicate, the candidates took different approaches to President Bush’s two-term legacy.

Congressman Ron Paul is the candidate who criticises President Bush the most heavily in his primary election debate rhetoric. In the debate held in Myrtle Beach, Paul addresses the question concerning the status of the Republican coalition after the Bush terms.

(25) **Paul:** No, I would like to address the subject about whether or not we've lost our way and whether there's a coalition building or whether it's gone. I think it's gone. I don't think we're fiscal conservatives anymore. Look at what we've done over these 10 years. We finally got control of the government and we became big-government people. Our deficit's out of control and we no longer are opposed to new entitlements. We are entitlement people.

...So no wonder our coalition is breaking up. We actually have lost our way. (SC100108)

According to Paul, the Republican coalition is gone and the Party has lost its way. Paul maintains that after getting control of the government, the Republicans have become big-government and entitlement people. By this statement, Paul most likely refers to George W. Bush’s policies that have expanded the role of the federal government during his presidency. An entitlement is a government assistance granted to individuals as mandated by law or by need.\(^{131}\) As pointed out by Mackenzie, “the guiding principle of economic conservatism is that government should only supply those public goods that are necessary for the proper functioning of the market, the preservation of law and order, and protection from foreign aggressors.”\(^{132}\) In other words, conservatives accept some form of government assistance, but, according to Paul, President Bush has taken the entitlements so far that Republicans have become entitlement people.

According to Peele, there had already been signs in 2000 that Bush’s politics were going to collide with the wider conservative coalition.\(^{133}\) One of the major disagreements concerned the role of the government. In fact, Bush rejected anti-government rhetoric and stated

\(^{130}\) Benoit et al. 2011, 108.
\(^{131}\) Encyclopaedia Britannica: “Entitlement”.
\(^{132}\) Mackenzie 2011, 281.
\(^{133}\) Peele 2011, 33.
already during his 2000 campaign that "too often, my party has confused the need for limited government with a disdain for government itself." This attitude towards government can be clearly seen in Bush’s economic policies.

In extract 26, Ron Paul blames the Republicans for excessive spending and refers to President Bush’s No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation.

(26) Paul: But no, I just think that the Republican Party has a problem because we don’t act like Republicans. ...we’re spending money that we don’t have, we’ve run up these deficits. You know, in the old days we used to be against the Department of Education; now we’ve doubled the size of it. No child Left behind. Even the Democrats are running against some of the things that we do. ...So that’s why we’ve lost our way. (FL240108)

It should be noted that the No Child Left Behind legislation is one of the most criticised items of President Bush’s domestic policy. NCLB “aimed at improving public primary and secondary schools, and thus student performance, via increased accountability for schools, school districts, and states.” The legislation nationalised control over some aspects of primary and secondary education, and thus, made a significant change in the federal education policy. Indeed, nationalising education is a radical shift from the traditional Republican position towards education. As pointed out by Teles, conservative Republicans have traditionally called for the abolition of the Department of Education and maintained that education should not be controlled by the federal government.

Additionally, Paul criticises Republicans and President Bush for increasing federal spending. In fact, according to the Cato Institute analysis, total government spending increased by 33 percent during Bush’s first term. The No Child Left Behind programme contributed to this as it costs around 10 billion dollars per year. As Benoit et al. pinpoint, it is rather uncommon that primary election candidates attack a president from their own party. However, one could argue that in the case of the 2008 primary election, Paul’s criticism and attacks are justifiable due to President Bush’s low approval rating. Paul’s criticism indicates that he wants to stand out from Bush and make clear that he does not approve Bush’s policies and his big-spending ways.

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135 *Encyclopædia Britannica: “No Child Left Behind”.
136 Demuth 2011, 316.
137 *Teles 2011, 198.
138 Slivinski 2005, 1.
139 Demuth 2011, 316.
140 Benoit et al. 2011, 108.
Paul is by no means the only one criticising President Bush. For instance, President Reagan’s former speech writer Peggy Noonan states in a Wall Street Journal article that “George W. Bush destroyed the Republican Party, by which I mean he sundered it, broke its constituent pieces apart and set them against each other.”\textsuperscript{141} A libertarian political columnist, Ryan Sager, on the other hand, criticises Bush’s policies that have expanded the role of federal government and states that “if limited government is no longer at the centre of conservatism, then conservatism… has ceased to exist.”\textsuperscript{142} These statements are great examples of the bitter controversies related to George W. Bush’s presidency. Some of the same attitudes are present in the 2008 Republican primary election candidates’ rhetoric. However, as the extracts in the present section indicate, the candidates are more subtle in their criticism.

Unlike Congressman Paul, Governor Mitt Romney does not focus on criticising President Bush for the decline of the Republican Party. In the debate held in in Simi Valley, Romney underlines that Washington, not Bush, is the root of the problem.

\textbf{(27) Moderator:} Is the Republican Party better off than it was eight years ago?

\textbf{Romney:} I don't think we'd say it's better off than it was eight years ago, to be truthful. I think the eight years that you've seen, and I don't blame that on President Bush. I blame that on Washington.

...There are places, however, that I think you look and say we've weakened ourselves. One is with regards spending. We have overspent in Washington.(CA300108)

In his statement, Romney blames Washington, i.e. the federal government and politicians, for the current state of the Republican Party. In his criticism, Romney does not single out either party or focus on blaming President Bush, he rather focuses his accusations on politicians from both parties and therefore, attacks the status quo. Although, he does recognise that the Republicans have weakened themselves with regards to spending. Attacking the status quo is very convenient strategy for Romney, as he is a former governor and not a Washington insider. Therefore, he does not belong in the group of Washington politicians who are to blame.

Furthermore, it should be noted that Romney advances the “Washington is broken” message on several occasions during the primary campaign. For instance, in the debate held

\textsuperscript{141} Noonan 2008.
\textsuperscript{142} Sager (as cited in Aberbach 2011, 43.)
in Boca Raton, Romney states that “I’ll run away from the record of Washington. Washington is fundamentally broken. Washington has made promises to us over the last decade that they just haven’t been able to fulfil.” Indeed, this construction works well for a self-proclaimed “Washington outsider”.

In extract 28, Romney continues to blame Washington for changing Republicans.

(28) **Moderator:** The next question is for Governor Romney. The same thing: Why has the Hispanic support for Republicans declined?

**Romney:** You know, I think Republicans went to Washington with the expectations of the whole world that we would change Washington. And in many respects, as has been said by many people, Washington changed Republicans. And when Republicans act like Democrats, America loses. Republicans spent too much money, and we let down our ethical standards. And so, Hispanics, along with other people in this country, want to see change.

(FL091207)

In this example, Governor Romney blames the Republican politicians in Washington for acting like Democrats and forgetting their conservative principles when they got in power. Moreover, Romney also criticises the Democratic Party in his statement. This is a relatively rare example of bashing the Democrats in the 2008 GOP primary debate context. However, as the analysis in section 3.2. shows, attacking the opposing party is a very common rhetorical strategy in the 2012 Republican primaries.

### 3.2. “I believe in an America that’s based upon opportunity and freedom, not President Obama’s social welfare state.” – Placing blame

Section 2 of the present paper depicts how conservatism is often defined by stating what it is not or what it should not be, i.e. through negative rhetoric. It should be noted that the negative rhetoric in the debates is by no means always related to the immediate Republican opponents, but, on the contrary, it is often directed at the opposing party and its political values and ideology. Consequently, section 3.2. of the present paper portrays how the 2012 Republican presidential hopefuls define conservatism in terms of common enemies: liberalism, the policies of the Democratic Party and the incumbent President Barack Obama.

It could be argued that the 2012 GOP primary debates and the extracts in section 3.2. portray the partisan divisions and polarisation of American politics. Evidently, there are two distinct political and ideological camps, i.e. the conservative and the liberal, in the American political arena. These partisan divisions are apparent in extract 29 in which
Speaker Gingrich underlines that there is a wide gap between conservatism and Barack Obama’s values and practices.

(29) **Gingrich:** ...I think only a genuine conservative who's in a position to debate Obama and to show how wide the gap is between Obama’s policies and conservatism can, in fact, win, because he's going to spend a billion dollars trying to smear whoever the nominee is. And we'd better be prepared to beat him in the debate and prove exactly how wrong his values are and how wrong his practices are.

In extract 29, Newt Gingrich employs very powerful and divisive partisan rhetoric. Gingrich does not simply state that Obama’s policies and values are different but they are actually wrong. In other words, Gingrich condemns Obama’s policies and ideology. Additionally, Gingrich underlines that the Republican Party needs a strong conservative to beat Obama in the general election. Naturally, Gingrich insinuates that he is the candidate who is strong enough to win Obama.

It should be noted that economy is seen as a decisive issue in the 2012 Presidential elections. According to a USA Today/Gallup poll conducted in February 2012, 92% of registered voters say that economy is extremely important/very important issue in defining who they will vote in the elections. 143 Moreover, the Democratic incumbent, President Barack Obama, has been criticised for his economic policies, and according to a Gallup poll conducted in February 2012, Obama’s approval rating on his handling of the economy is only 38 percent.144 Naturally, it is strategically important for the GOP candidates to present solutions to the economic crisis as well as to portray themselves as the most qualified candidate to lead the American economy to recovery. As the audience of the GOP primary debates consists mainly of Republican base voters, the candidates do not have to worry about displeasing the Democrat base voters. Consequently, they can employ attacks against the Democratic Party as well as President Barack Obama.

The candidates, especially the front-runner, Mitt Romney, focus on demonstrating how fragile America’s economy is and on how the economy should be restored. On the basis of the 2012 data, it could be argued that the candidates’ message is that Obama’s economic policies have been counterproductive and that they have even made the US economic situation worse. In the debate held in Goffstown, New Hampshire, Governor Romney declares that the positive developments in the economy are not thanks to President Obama and

143 Jones 2012. Electronic.
144 Saad 2012. Electronic.
that the President has made things *harder for America to get going again*. Romney underlines that Obama should not get credit for things he did not bring about. In fact, Romney even states that Obama taking responsibility for the economy getting better can be compared to *the rooster taking responsibility for the sunrise*. Romney justifies his statement by itemising concrete actions and policies by Obama that have made the economic recovery more tepid and the recession deeper. For instance, Romney blames the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act or *Obamacare*, Obama’s economic stimulus plan, and the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and the Consumer Protection Act for making the recession deeper. In fact, according to Benoit & Dorries, pointing out the persistence of the negative effects of the act is a way of increasing their perceived offensiveness. In this case, of course, the act is President Obama’s economic policies.

President Obama’s understanding of the American economic system is criticised also in the debate held in Charleston, South Carolina, when Romney accuses President Obama of “practising crony capitalism”. Romney strengthens his argument by itemising certain businesses Obama has decided to support financially as well as business initiatives Obama has turned down. As pointed out already earlier, capitalism is based on the fact that markets decide where the money goes, not the government. Therefore, one could argue that the stimulus packages Obama has been giving to certain businesses are against the basic principles of capitalism as well as economic conservatism. Romney even states that Obama is the biggest impediment to job growth in America and he has to be replaced to get the American economy working again. This statement from Romney captures the essence of Republican 2012 campaign message.

Again, in the debate held in Goffstown, New Hampshire, Romney attacks against Obama by arguing that the President does not understand how the American economy works. Partisan prejudices are also evidently present in extract 30.

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145 “Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), also called Obamacare, U.S. health care reform legislation, signed into law by Pres. Barack Obama in March 2010, which included provisions that required most individuals to secure health insurance or pay fines, made coverage easier and less costly to obtain, cracked down on abusive insurance practices, and attempted to rein in rising costs of health care.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*: “Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA)”. Electronic.


Romney: ... We have a president that does not understand, in his heart, in his bones, the nature of American entrepreneurialism, innovation and work. And that is something which we’re fighting for in this election. I hope the people on the stage share that vision. But we must return America to the principles about upon which it was founded if we’re ever going to have a strong balance sheet, a strong income statement, create jobs, but have a bright future for our kids.

Moderator: Speaker Gingrich, you just heard Governor Romney make his case. You’ve made the case on several occasions that he’s [Romney] not the man to carry that message for the Republican Party. Why not?

Gingrich: Well, look, I think that’s a good message and I agree with him. A little bit harsh on President Obama, who, I’m sure in his desperate efforts to create a radical European socialist model, is sincere. (LAUGHTER) (NH070112)

After Governor Romney’s criticism on Barack Obama’s economic policies, Speaker Gingrich brings the conversation to political ideology. In his answer, Gingrich attacks against Obama’s economic policies as well as his political ideology. In fact, Obama’s political ideology is being used as the foundation for Gingrich’s sarcastic joke. The Speaker claims that President Obama tries desperately to make the United States a socialist country. According to a survey “A Political Rhetoric Test” conducted by Pew Research Center for the People and the Press in December 2011, 60 per cent of Americans have a negative reaction to the word “socialism”.

In fact, it should be noted that according to the survey, socialism is a polarising term in American political rhetoric as the reaction to it is generally negative among conservatives and positive among liberals. Therefore, it could be argued that even mentioning socialism in connection with one’s opponents can be seen as an attempt to use the word as a rhetorical weapon. This is, of course, especially true in this case as the audience of the 2012 GOP primary election debates consists mainly of conservatives.

Gingrich’s joke indicates that humour can be used as an offensive and powerful weapon for disparaging one’s enemies and opponents. Furthermore, by joking about Obama’s political ideology, Gingrich aims to unite people with a conservative political ideology and to exclude people with other ideological views. As Lorenz maintains, laughter brings about a feeling of solidarity as well as creates joint hostility towards strangers. With the help of his joke, Gingrich succeeds in uniting the audience against a common enemy. In addition

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150 Lorenz 2002, 284.
to using political ideology as a source for political humour, extract 31 also contains European-bashing, and the phrase *a radical European socialist model* perhaps even reveals how some Americans see Europe.

At this point, it should be noted that Europe has very negative connotations in Republican political rhetoric. In fact, in one of his 2012 campaign attack advertisements against Romney called “The French Connection”\(^{151}\), Speaker Gingrich attacked Romney for knowing how to speak French. The 2012 Republican primary debates indicate that European-bashing has become a visible part of the Republican rhetoric and that the candidates resort to using Europe as a cautionary example on several occasions in the debates. It seems, as Kristof maintains, that these attacks work because “so many Americans have in mind a caricature of Europe as an effete, failed socialist system”\(^{152}\). Therefore, arguments stating that Obama’s liberal policies are making America more like Europe may resonate powerfully within the audience of the Republican primary election debates.

Europe and the government’s role in economy is also discussed in extract 31 as Governor Romney underlines the importance of the 2012 presidential election.

(31) **Moderator:** Governor Romney, why are you the one person on this stage most likely to beat President Obama?

**Romney:** The people of America recognize that this is a critical time. This is not just an average election. This is a time where we're going to decide whether America will remain the great hope of the 21st century, whether this will be an American century, or, instead, whether we'll continue to go down a path to become more and more like Europe, a social welfare state. That's where we're headed. Our economy is becoming weaker. The foundation of our future economy is being eroded. Government has become too large. We're headed in a very dangerous direction.

I believe to get America back on track, we're going to have to have dramatic, fundamental, extraordinary change in Washington to be able to allow our private sector to once again reemerge competitively, to scale back the size of government and to maintain our strength abroad in our military capacities. (FL260112)

In extract 31, Romney argues that the 2012 election is a critical time for the USA and that the voters have a chance to stop America going to a dangerous direction under President Obama’s guidance. It should be noted that Romney’s argument is very rich in metaphor. Indeed, metaphor is an important tool in political argumentation. According to Charteris-

\(^{151}\) *The French Connection*. Electronic.

Black, metaphor is a stylistic characteristic of the persuasive language of political leadership and the role of metaphor is important in developing political arguments.\footnote{Charteris-Black 2005, 3.} Lakoff and Johnson maintain that the essence of metaphors is understanding a kind of thing in terms of another.\footnote{Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 5.} Our conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature and we therefore understand complex issues by comparing them with relatively straightforward and familiar ones. That is, most concepts are partly understood in terms of other concepts. In other words, as Lakoff and Johnson point out, “conceptual metaphors are mappings across conceptual domains that structure our reasoning, our experience and our everyday language”.\footnote{Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 47.} It could be argued that conceptual metaphors, such as “time is money” and “life is a journey”, facilitate our thinking.

Romney employs a variety of conceptual metaphors in his argument. First of all, the Governor uses the source domain of a person to describe the target domain of economy by stating that \textit{our economy is becoming weaker}. The term \textit{weak} is defined in the Dictionary of Contemporary English as “not physically strong”.\footnote{Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. “Weak”.} Consequently, the word \textit{weak} is usually employed when talking about a person. The concept of the economic crisis becomes easier to understand when it is considered in human terms. However, it should be noted that “economy is a person” is not the only conceptual metaphor Romney applies in his turn. The Governor also states that \textit{the foundation of our future economy is being eroded}. This is an example of a conceptual metaphor “economy is a building”.

According to Kövecses, the domain of a building is an important source domain used for the conceptualisation of abstract complex systems.\footnote{Kövecses 2002, 117.} In the case of this study, the abstract system is naturally the economy. Furthermore, the building metaphor has always been popular in Western political discourse and in fact, as stated by Musolff, building metaphors are often employed with positive undertones.\footnote{Musolff (2004, as cited in Koteyko & Ryazanova-Clarke 2009, 120)} However, in this particular example, Governor Romney states that \textit{the foundation of American future economy is being eroded}. According to the Dictionary of Contemporary English \textit{to erode} means “if the weather erodes a rock or soil, or if rock or soil erodes, its surface is gradually destroyed”.\footnote{Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. “Erode”.} It could be argued that the choice of grammatical tense, i.e. present-progressive in the passive voice, indicates that the erosion is still going on. The metaphor indicates that the foundation of
the economy has been strong but now it is becoming weaker due to the bad economic decisions made by President Obama.

In addition to the conceptual metaphors “economy is a person” and “economy is a building”, Romney also utilises journey metaphors in his argument. It could be argued that Governor portrays Obama as a “guide” that is taking the American economy to a very dangerous direction and that due to Obama’s guidance, America is going down a path to become more and more like Europe, a social welfare state. As Kuusisto pinpoints, a journey always includes the idea of a destination and in this case the destination is a European social welfare state. Obviously, Romney’s choice of metaphors portrays his personal ideological views rather clearly. It is relevant to notice that according to Darsey, the journey metaphor has a special resonance in American culture as the very idea of the United States is conjoined with purpose and direction. Therefore, it is possible that Romney’s journey schema resonates particularly well among the debate audience. Furthermore, as pointed out by Read et al. (1990: 145), skilled use of metaphor can improve the effectiveness of communication, as the use of an appropriate metaphor in speech can make the speaker’s arguments more memorable.

As extract 31 clearly indicated, the Republican candidates like to warn their voters that President Obama’s liberal policies will turn the USA into a social welfare state. A term that is closely connected to the concept of the welfare state is dependency. In fact, it is important to notice that dependency is a major issue in American politics and it has been a visible part of the 2012 Republican primary elections. The 2012 debates under perusal in the present paper have proven that the GOP candidates blame the Democratic Party and President Obama for increasing the American people’s dependency on government resources. This can be clearly seen in examples 32 and 33. For instance, in the debate held in Charleston, South Carolina, Senator Santorum states that the Democratic Party and Barack Obama’s policies are making people more dependent on government programmes.

(32) Santorum: Because you have the Democratic Party and Barack Obama, and all he wants to do is make them more dependent, give them more food stamps, give them more Medicaid.

I was talking to a state official the other day that in Iowa that told me that the state of Iowa is being fined because they're not signing up enough people onto the

160 Kuusisto 2009, 283.
161 Darsey 2009, 91.
162 Read et al. 1990, 145.
Medicaid program. This is what the answer is for the economic squalor that Barack Obama has visited on working men and women in this country, and it’s creating more government programs and getting them more dependent on those programs. (SC190112)

The same can be seen in example 33, where Speaker Newt Gingrich attacks President Obama by stating that he is the best food stamp president in American history and that his policies maximise people’s dependency on government.

(33)      Gingrich: ... I hope my four colleagues would agree here. It tells you everything you need to know about the difference between Barack Obama and the five of us, that we actually think work is good. (APPLAUSE) We actually think saying to somebody, “I’ll help you if you’re willing to help yourself,” is good. (APPLAUSE) And we think unconditional efforts by the best food stamp president in American history to maximize dependency is terrible for the future of this country. (SC160112)

In the American system, the food-stamp programme, i.e. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), is a federal aid programme that provides financial help for low-income Americans.¹⁶³ In his persuasive attack, Gingrich states that Obama tries to maximize people’s dependency on the federal government. Evidently, Gingrich links the food-stamp programme to dependency. It could be argued that by linking the federal aid programme to dependency, Gingrich emphasises that the food stamps programme is against the conservative political ideology which calls for a limited government and advocates people’s personal responsibility for their own well-being. However, as pinpointed by Wilde in an expert statement, in the past, both Democrats and Republicans have usually agreed on the basic structure of the food-stamp system.¹⁶⁴ By equating the food stamps, i.e. a social welfare programme with dependency, Gingrich insinuates that the people receiving social welfare are dependent on the government and therefore, not independent. It should be noted that charging Obama for making the American people more dependent on government programmes is a very loaded accusation. Indeed, according to Nathan, political experts agree that welfare dependency undermines people’s motivation for supporting themselves, stigmatises welfare recipients and in general, is bad for the people.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Electronic.
¹⁶⁴ Wilde (quoted by Bjerga & Oldham in Businessweek.com, 2012)
¹⁶⁵ Nathan (1986, as cited in Fraser and Gordon 1994, 309)
At this point, it is relevant to notice that the reason why dependency is so negatively viewed in American politics might be that individualism is one of the most important concepts that define American political culture. According to Wray, individualism is the abiding conviction that people are personally responsible for their faiths and that people, in general, get what they deserve.\textsuperscript{166} It could be argued that the idea of individualism serves even as a constitutive myth for American society. Wray further points out that the American Dream is based on individual struggle toward personal ease, control, security and comfort in the “Land of the Free”. Consequently, individualism and “making it alone” is an integral part of the American Dream. As pointed out by Wray, the political and social consequences of individualism are significant.\textsuperscript{167} In fact, individualism is often described as freedom to do one’s own thing without constraint. Consequently, the themes of personal choice, personal responsibility and autonomy are emphasised in American political culture. Evidently, dependency on government resources conflicts drastically with the concept of individualism. Underlining that Obama’s economic policies make the American people more dependent on government resources probably works as a very powerfully persuasive strategy especially in the Republican primary election context.

\textit{Summary}

As the analysis in section 3.1. indicates, the 2008 Republican presidential hopefuls were in a difficult situation and they had to consider their rhetoric very carefully. The candidates, especially Ron Paul, criticised President Bush every now and then during the 2008 primary debates. The other candidates were more careful in their criticism. The extracts analysed in section 3.1. show that the candidates wanted to stand out and distance themselves from the Bush administration and to underline that they will not repeat the same mistakes. However, they had to do this discreetly as bashing Republican policies would bring negative light to the Party. In addition, the candidates probably did not want to appear disloyal to their own Party. In other words, the candidates had to balance between careful criticism of the Bush administration and underling that if elected, they could correct the mistakes made by the earlier administration.

The examples in section 3.2. indicate that attacking the incumbent President, Barack Obama, and his policies is rather a visible challenger strategy in 2012 Republican primary debates. This happens particularly often when the candidates discuss topics related to the U.S. economy, unemployment, government spending and taxation. Barack Obama is

\textsuperscript{166} Wray 2001, 41.
\textsuperscript{167} Wray 2001, 55.
charged for not understanding how the economy works, making the American people more dependent on government handouts as well as making America more like a European welfare-state and, thus undermining the traditional American values of freedom and individualism.

According to the data, it is mainly Governor Mitt Romney, the presumptive Republican nominee, who attacks the incumbent, President Barack Obama, in the debates. According to Benoit et al., the front-runner in primary elections is more likely to attack the opposing party than the other candidates of his own party.\(^{168}\) This is mainly due to the fact that attacks on the opposing party candidate may give a head start to the candidate’s general election campaign if he manages to win his party’s nomination. Therefore, strategically, the front-runner has more reason to attack the other party’s candidate than his immediate opponents. This phenomenon is clearly present in the extracts analysed in section 3.2. In fact, it is evident that Mitt Romney attacks the incumbent, President Barack Obama, the most in the debates. There may be several reasons for this, but one of them could be that Romney sees himself as the most likely challenger of Obama and therefore, he campaigns against Obama already in the primary election cycle. Moreover, focusing his attacks against Obama may also be a means of elevating himself above his own party’s nominating process. The other Republican candidates, on the other hand, do not focus on attacking Obama since they may feel that they have to concentrate on winning the party’s nomination first. Consequently, the underdogs focus on challenging Romney and on presenting him in a negative light. Evidently, the analysis presented in section 3.2. of this thesis confirms that the candidates’ standing in the polls affects their decisions to attack.

Moreover, the analysis shows that liberal policies are considered highly negative among the four 2012 Republican presidential hopefuls. Furthermore, it is evident that conservatism is defined in negative terms by stating what it is not. The GOP candidates underline that the Democratic Party’s and President Barack Obama’s values and practices are wrong, and that they are not good for America. Evidently, there are two distinct political and ideological camps, i.e. the conservative and the liberal. As the audience of the Republican primary debates consists mainly of base Republicans, it is rather safe for the candidates to underline the differences within the political parties as well as to portray the Democratic Party in a negative light. This definitely accentuates the polarisation of the American political atmosphere but, on the other hand, unites the Republican Party. After all, despite the

\(^{168}\) Benoit et al. 2002, 127.
internal divisions, the audience members’ and voters’ views on certain liberal policies are mostly in alignment with those of the candidates'.
CONCLUSION

The objective of this paper was to examine how the Republican primary election candidates define and refer to conservatism in their debate rhetoric in fifteen primary election debates held during the 2008 and 2012 primary election seasons. Furthermore, the aim was to examine American conservatism and its relation to the Republican Party on the basis of the extracts chosen from the Republican primary election debates. The 2008 and 2012 data show that there are various and visibly different strands in the American conservative movement and therefore, it is, still today, hard to find a comprehensive definition for the GOP conservatism. However, despite the fact that the concept of conservatism is rather vague, it does not prevent the candidates to use it in their debate rhetoric as a tool to emphasise their own political positions and values as well as a weapon against the other Republican candidates and the Democratic opponents.

As the analysis in this thesis shows, the Republican candidates referred to conservatism on several occasions during the course of the primary election debates. Section 1 of the present paper indicates that there are certain qualities in American conservatism that are hardly ever contested and that are, at least for the most part, accepted by all the six presidential hopefuls. These include the core values of social and economic conservatism. The prominent role of the conservative hero, Ronald Reagan, is evident in both the primaries, and the candidates fight to gain the Reagan mantle. The candidates like to underline how they have furthered the conservative principles in their lives and in their political careers as well as to emphasise that they are the ones who have been following these principles the most consistently. Accordingly, it is safe to say that conservatism is the heart and soul of the Republican Party, and that the GOP can be seen as the political vehicle for American conservatism.

The core values and principles presented in section 1 are embraced by most Republicans and conservatives, but as the extracts in section 2 display, some of the GOP presidential candidates represent very different strands of American conservatism and their definitions of conservatism vary in several important ways. As previous research on American conservatism as well as the analysis in this thesis indicates, it is difficult to find an all-encompassing definition for the Republican Party conservatism. The internal disputes within the party are evident and they are often related to political ideology. These divisions are also present in the rhetoric of the 2008 and 2012 primary election debates. The internal disputes often concern the role of government in economy as well as in people’s private...
lives. Furthermore, it seems that there are also disputes over what conservatives should do when they get elected. Overall, the examples in section 2 show that certain political principles often associated with conservatism are still being contested in the debate rhetoric of the six Republican presidential hopefuls. It could be argued that the Party is going through a process of soul searching. This is especially evident in the case of the 2008 primaries as the Republican candidates cannot focus on criticising the Democratic incumbent but have to concentrate on defining their own agenda after President Bush’s two-term presidency.

It is also interesting to notice that, although the rhetoric in the 2008 and 2012 debates is to a great extent very similar, there are also some notable differences. As the analysis in section 3 shows, the political situation of each campaign has a significant effect on the tactics and rhetorical strategies employed in the debates. In the 2008 primaries, the candidates agreed that the Republican Party has lost its way after George W. Bush’s two presidential terms. Due to President Bush’s low approval rates, the candidates had no choice but to concede that Republican politicians have made mistakes and sold out some of their principles. Even though they blamed either President Bush or the Washington establishment for leading the Party astray, they still admitted their mistakes and took responsibility for them. On the other hand, in 2012, the political situation of the primary campaign was completely different, and the GOP candidates focused on slandering the Democratic Party and especially the economic policies of the incumbent President Barack Obama. Blaming Obama for America’s economic squalor served as a strong uniting force among the Republican Party. However, it did not solve the internal ideological disagreements within the Party.

It was pointed out in the introduction of the present thesis that the American conservative movement was born as a reaction to Franklin D. Roosevelt’s liberal policies in the 1930s. The aim of the conservative movement in its early days as well as today, is to offer an alternative to liberal policies of the Democratic Party. This is especially evident in the case of the 2012 presidential primaries. In the extracts analysed in section 3.2., the Republican candidates criticise the values and policies of the Democratic Party and President Barack Obama rather heavy-handedly. Moreover, socialism is often ridiculed and used as a rhetorical weapon against Obama and the Democrats. The candidates also refer to Europe as a cautionary example of a failed social welfare state system and insinuate that President Obama’s policies are making America more like Europe. Consequently, it seems that still
today, the Republican Party’s conservatism is, at least to some extent, defined on the basis of liberalism. Perhaps, due to its own internal divisions and ideological inconsistencies, the Republican Party defines itself and its ideology on the basis of the common enemy: liberalism.

The analysis also suggests that the six Republican primary election candidates employ all the three message functions, namely acclaim, attack and defense, introduced in WILLIAM BENOIT’S Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse. In addition, the candidates utilise a variety of rhetorical strategies in order to get their point across and to establish contact with the audience. They use comparisons, metaphorical constructions and humour as well as underline their own achievements and consistency, refer to expert opinion and authority and advert to common values and dreams to persuade the voters. As Charteris-Black maintains, the total effect of persuasion is greater when different rhetorical strategies occur together.169 Evidently, the candidates under perusal in this thesis understand this and they employ a variety of different strategies side by side in their debate rhetoric.

On the whole, it is impossible to say how much debates and especially the persuasive strategies employed in the debates actually affected the outcome of the Republican primary elections. As pointed out by Halmari, rhetorical skills help a politician but do not necessarily guarantee positive outcomes.170 It should not be forgotten that in modern billion-dollar political campaigns in the United States money and campaign finance play a crucial role, and often the candidate with the most money gains the most media attention and, in consequence, is the most likely winner. Nevertheless, political debate as a relatively spontaneous form of campaign communication tests the rhetorical skills of the candidates as well as offers the voters valuable information and an opportunity to participate in the democratic process.

The debate extracts analysed in this paper indicate that negative rhetoric has become rather a pervasive feature of the GOP campaign communication. The negative rhetoric is aimed against the opposing party but also against the fellow Republican candidates and their political positions and values. Consequently, conservatism is often defined in negative terms by stating what it is not. It could be argued that the analysis in the present paper confirms that during the 2008 and 2012 primaries, U.S. political atmosphere was polarised and negatively charged. In fact, the polarisation can be seen both within the Republican

170 Halmari 2008, 249.
Party and between the GOP and the Democratic Party. It is debatable whether the negative rhetoric and underlining of differences between the Republican candidates and between the parties actually strengthened the GOP nominees, McCain and Romney, or took them further from the political center making it more difficult for them to appeal to a larger population in the general-election campaign.

On the whole, it could be argued that conservatism plays a pivotal role in the Republican political rhetoric as well as in the American political arena. The Republican primary debates under perusal in the present study seem to have become contests to see who is the most ideologically pure of the candidates. The majority of the extracts presented in this thesis underline political ideology, and the candidates’ rhetorical strategies are often based on ideology. However, despite the visibility of ideology both in the 2008 and in the 2012 Republican primary election debate rhetoric, the relatively moderate candidates, John McCain and Mitt Romney were nominated to represent the Republican Party in the general election. Consequently, the nomination of both McCain and Romney suggests that the average Republican voter in 2008 and 2012 was not as conservative as the primary election debate rhetoric and other campaign communication might have indicated. Due to the intraparty nature of the primary campaign, the candidates are sometimes forced to make bold statements to stand out from their opponents, which, in turn, may contribute to the fact that the role of ideology is somewhat over-emphasised in primary election debates. Nevertheless, the presidential primaries are an important forum to define a party’s national agenda and political ideology. Without a doubt, the United States presidential primary election debates deserve further scholarly attention.
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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. The GOP primary election debates in December 2007 and in January 2008.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and duration</th>
<th>State and location</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Sponsors</th>
<th>Broadcasted by</th>
<th>Moderators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.12.2007 1 hour 30 minutes</td>
<td>Florida, Miami (FL091207)</td>
<td>Giuliani, Huckabee, Hunter, McCain, Paul, Romney, Thompson</td>
<td>Univision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12.12.2007 1 hour 30 minutes</td>
<td>Iowa, Johnston (IA121207)</td>
<td>Giuliani, Huckabee, Hunter, Keyes, McCain, Paul, Romney, Tancredo, Thompson</td>
<td>Des Moines Register and Iowa Public Television</td>
<td></td>
<td>Carolyn Washburn, editor of the Des Moines Register</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1.2008</td>
<td>New Hampshire, Manchester (NH050108)</td>
<td>Giuliani, Huckabee, McCain, Paul, Romney, Thompson</td>
<td>ABC, WMUR-TV, Facebook</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2. *The GOP primary election debates in December 2011 and in January 2012.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and duration</th>
<th>State and location</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Sponsors</th>
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<th>Moderators</th>
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<tr>
<td>10.12.2011 1 hour 30 minutes</td>
<td>Iowa, Des Moines (IA101211)</td>
<td>Bachmann, Gingrich, Paul, Perry, Romney, Santorum</td>
<td>ABC News, ABC5/WHO-DT, the Iowa Republican Party</td>
<td>ABC News</td>
<td>ABC's Diane Sawyer and George Stephanopoulos</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.12.2011 1 hour 45 minutes</td>
<td>Iowa, Sioux City (IA151211)</td>
<td>Bachmann, Gingrich, Huntsman, Paul, Perry, Romney, Santorum</td>
<td>Fox News, the Iowa Republican Party</td>
<td>FOX News</td>
<td>Fox News' Bret Baier</td>
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<td>7.1.2012 1 hour 22 minutes</td>
<td>New Hampshire, Goffstown (NH070112)</td>
<td>Gingrich, Huntsman, Paul, Perry, Romney, Santorum</td>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>ABC's Diane Sawyer and George Stephanopoulos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.2012 1 hour 20 minutes</td>
<td>New Hampshire, Concord (NH080112)</td>
<td>Gingrich, Huntsman, Paul, Perry, Romney, Santorum</td>
<td>Meet the Press, Facebook</td>
<td>NBC News</td>
<td>Meet the Press’ David Gregory</td>
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<td>16.1.2012 1 hour 40 minutes</td>
<td>South Carolina, Myrtle Beach (SC160112)</td>
<td>Gingrich, Paul, Perry, Romney, Santorum</td>
<td>Fox News, the Wall Street Journal, the South Carolina Republican Party</td>
<td>Fox News</td>
<td>Fox News' Bret Baier</td>
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<td>19.1.2012 1 hour 50 minutes</td>
<td>South Carolina, Charleston (SC190112)</td>
<td>Gingrich, Paul, Romney, Santorum</td>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>CNN's John King</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Location</td>
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<td>23.1.2012</td>
<td>1 hour 37 minutes</td>
<td>Florida, Tampa (FL230112)</td>
<td>Gingrich, Paul, Romney, Santorum</td>
<td>NBC News, the National Journal, the Tampa Bay Times</td>
<td>NBC's Brian Williams</td>
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<td>26.1.2012</td>
<td>1 hour 50 minutes</td>
<td>Florida, Jacksonville (FL260112)</td>
<td>Gingrich, Paul, Romney, Santorum</td>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>CNN</td>
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