

THE ANCHOR BABY:
DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS OF IMMIGRANT SUBJECTS

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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Political rhetoric delivered through sound bites on cable news networks can be easy to dismiss, because there is relatively little nuance in the coverage of political issues. The anchor baby debate from the midterm elections in 2010 is a perfect example. These discursive strands impact our conceptions of ourselves, our relation to society, and our voting behavior. Media-communicated narratives construct subjectivities. These subjects are then made manifest through policy decisions. To address the implications of the coverage of the anchor baby in the midterm elections in 2010 in the United States, I conducted a critical discourse analysis of news segments from Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC. A consistent picture of the undocumented immigrant parent of the anchor baby became clear. The discourse reinforces the demonized undocumented immigrant subject, and reaffirms the responsibility of the immigrant mother in passing social ills on to the next generation through birth. The discourse also normalizes the dehumanization of undocumented immigrants in the United States. In order to address the existing injustices experienced by undocumented communities, we must critically engage with the media's role in constructing and normalizing the criminal undocumented immigrant.

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Introduction

“Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence; does more than represent the limits of knowledge; it limits knowledge.” -Toni Morrison

Citizens across the globe struggle to maintain their grip on what makes their identity unique in a world made increasingly small through globalization. Territorial borders are shored up with concrete walls, barbed wire, “boots on the ground,” and advanced techniques of surveillance. At the same time that governments are reinforcing the integrity of their physical borders, borders in thought and culture are made ever more tenuous by an increasingly interconnected global citizenry. This makes the definitions of us and them, integral to our contemporary international system of nation-states, much harder to define.

This blurring of the lines between the citizen and the other adds a greater urgency to the purpose of immigration policies. These policies have figured into the national political conversation of the United States since the introduction of the first immigration regulations in the late nineteenth century. As political candidates and pundits define their positions, they are not only establishing their views on entry into the country but also on who deserves to be an American and how we define ourselves in relation to the rest of the world through exclusion from citizenship.

In the midterm elections of 2010, a particular term coined in 2006 gained traction in the media coverage of the issue of immigration: “anchor baby.” The anchor baby combined questions about undocumented immigration with an examination of birthright citizenship laws. These two topics united to deliver commentary that took a step beyond defining the differences between citizens and immigrants to constructing disparities

between citizen children. The anchor baby debate suggested that we ought to differentiate not only between citizens and immigrants, but also between specific populations of citizens when those citizens are born to undocumented immigrant parents.

For the purposes of this thesis, I made a conscious decision to use the term “undocumented immigrants” when describing the parents of anchor babies, but this does not reflect the choices of the media sources reviewed in this study. Every source, with very few exceptions, consistently refer to this population as “illegal immigrants” and, in some cases, simply as “illegals.” Naming a group of people “illegal” frames them in terms of an assumed criminal identity and demonizes them explicitly from the start. Calling a person “illegal” makes it easier to dehumanize them and the population of undocumented immigrants in general, and feeds prejudice and hate.

Politicians and pundits have more leeway in word choice as their platforms reflect positions which are assumed to be biased, but anchors and the editing teams of news networks are supposed to be neutral because of their role as journalists. This neutrality should come into question when such widespread use of the term, “illegal immigrants,” effectively normalizes this criminal identity in the minds of American viewers. Journalists and news editing teams must be taken to task for this, because they are not acting as a neutral party when they assign the value of illegality to identities.

Four descriptive terms are found in this thesis: “undocumented” and “unauthorized,” when I am describing the parents of the anchor baby and their method of entry into the country, and “illegal” or “illegals” when I am directly quoting a source. Not only is calling this population “illegal” damaging, it is also misleading. It does not reflect our policies governing entrance into to the country, because this is civil and not a

criminal infraction. Neither does it adequately express the fact that many undocumented people entered the country through legal means. I use the term “undocumented” because it is more widely used in reference to this population, but even this term is not fully representative of these immigrants’ experiences. Many of them have documents, but not the “right” ones. This is why I use the term “unauthorized” to describe the method of entry. These four terms also represent a difference of opinion between myself and those on the segments: I do not think of any population as “illegal,” and I refuse to take part in the systemic dehumanization of immigrants through the use of this term.

This thesis originated from a curiosity about whether the coverage of the anchor baby in 2010 represented a discourse. The challenge then seemed to be analyzing clips from the three main cable news networks to break down the perceived ideological differences in order to show how similar their coverage of the anchor baby truly was. Using methods from researchers in the discipline of communication and political science, and drawing on concepts of discourse from the school of Critical Discourse Analysis, it became clear that this question led to a very obvious conclusion and that the importance of discussing the anchor baby required a little more thought.

Anchor baby discourse exists, and its power is in its ability to influence social behavior around immigrants and immigration policy. It also reflects larger accepted knowledges regarding immigration, citizenship, and immigrant women’s bodies. This discourse was a part of the midterm elections of 2010, which resulted in a massive ideological shift in the American legislature. Many conservative politicians benefitted from the political coverage that led up to the midterm elections, and anchor baby discourse had a part in the voting behavior of the American public. By critically

examining discourses like that of the anchor baby to understand not only what the anchor baby is, but also what these ideas can do, we can come to a better understanding of the power of media in American society and its relation to social justice and equality for our contemporary times.

Anchor baby discourse relies on and reinforces pre-existing discourse on the undocumented immigrant subject. In his book, *Covering Immigration*, Leo Chavez defines discourse as “a way of constructing meanings which influences and organizes both our actions and our conception of ourselves” (I). Many different definitions of “discourse” are available, but this definition most resonates with the purpose of this project. These clips do not simply construct the undocumented immigrant subject; they give it connotation in contemporary American society. As politically motivated clips that aired during and immediately after the midterm elections, the discourse that arose was specifically focused on influencing the actions of the viewers through voting behavior. Further, as this discourse constructs both the interior and exterior other in the form of the anchor baby and her parents, these two subject positions are always juxtaposed to our conception of ourselves as American citizens.

The media plays an integral role in the creation of anchor baby discourse. It is the constant companion of discourse; it mediates the trusted narrative that reinforces and creates discourse. The purpose of this study is not simply to observe, from a neutral perspective, the use of the term “anchor baby” in each segment. This project seeks to understand what social and political work the discourse does in American society, and it uses the role of the media as the accepted source of information to ground this communication of discourse.

In *Covering Immigration*, Chavez turns to Michale Parenti to shed light on the role of the media:

The Press does many things and serves many functions, but its major role, its irreducible responsibility, is to continually recreate a view of reality supportive of existing social and economic class power (46). The media creates a “hegemonic worldview” through the use of narratives that are easily recognizable in society (47). Employing any form of content analysis assumes that media representations matter and have power. The importance lies in the effects of these narratives on reality, because “all knowledge applied in the real world has real effects, and in that sense, ‘becomes true’” (39). The media appears as a fair and unbiased news source in American society, which hides the influence of the powerful owners and those who dictate what each source communicates to the audience. This reality is at odds with the generally accepted “truth” about news media (215).

The media is incredibly important in the discursive construction of the undocumented immigrant (Santa Anna 49). Drawing on the work of Robert Entman, Otto Santa Ana points to the influence of media on public opinion through the provision of easily accessible information. This influence shapes the way that the public thinks about the issues presented. The media, specifically the twenty-four hour cable news cycle, is naturalized to hold the “right of narration” in our society (50). Thus, the appearance of anti-immigrant rhetoric, like the anchor baby, in such media has greater influence on the American public’s opinions of immigration.

Santa Ana uses critical discourse analysis in his textual review. This school of thought takes discourse analysis and centers it on a search for justice. Critical discourse analysis emphasizes research that impacts the everyday lived experiences of people. Critical discourse analysis also rejects objectivity (16-17). Santa Ana draws on the work

of Fairclough and Foucault to define critical discourse analysis and discourse within this framework of social change and justice. These definitions and methods inform my research methodology, because I see a search for social change at the center of all feminist research. As a feminist researcher, my hope is always to center my work on the possibility for social change with an awareness of the lived experiences of people in reference to the subject at hand. I analyze these news clips using Critical Discourse Analysis in an attempt to incorporate social justice into the discussion, and to keep the lived experiences of undocumented immigrants always in the back of my mind.

Anchor baby discourse needs to be framed in the context of social change and the impact a narrative has on the experiences of people. My research reflects my biases and my subject position as a white feminist researcher from the American Southwest. My whiteness is always in relation to the Mexican immigrant subject. Anchor baby discourse is not only important because of the broad theoretical implications and the ties to historical policies and practices. It is also important because it feeds the kind of subtle discrimination that colors everyday life in Texas, my home state. Discourses like this one have an impact you can feel.

The concepts embedded in anchor baby discourse reveal themselves in attitudes towards undocumented immigrants that allow them to be treated as less than human. A friend of mine worked with an organization that left food and water in the desert along the border for undocumented immigrants making the hazardous journey into the United States. In a recent conversation, he recalled seeing a border patrol officer walk up to a jug of water and smash it with his boot. To take water away from the immigrants crossing through the desert spaces is to impose a death sentence. I remember thinking, how does a

group become so demonized in the minds of Americans that they are no longer human? How do we get to a point where an officer of the law would rather a person die of thirst than successfully cross into the United States without authorization? Discourses like this one normalize this demonization of the undocumented immigrant. The media may be constructing a virtual representation of the undocumented immigrant in its narrative, but the consequences could not be more real.

Sometimes the impact I see of this socially accepted knowledge about the criminal and undeserving nature of undocumented immigrants is less explicitly violent. It comes out in conversations about the DREAM Act over the dinner table. The DREAM Act is a bill that was recently introduced into Congress. It would provide avenues for citizenship to young undocumented people who were brought into the country by their parents. Bill O'Reilly, a Fox News anchor, might call this a "reward" for the parents' criminal entry into the country, and my stepfather might say this is unfair over dinner. The DREAM Act was introduced, but it did not pass. Very few people in my community felt that it should. Those same people have no way of knowing that a close high school friend of mine, who is brilliant and driven, is working part time at an insecure and ill-paid job as a caterer trying to support his parents and afford rent for their single room apartment on the Southside. He was brought over when he was three. He is not an anchor baby, but anchor baby discourse impacts him on a daily basis.

Texas Governor Rick Perry was running for nomination as the GOP candidate for the 2012 presidential elections. In the debates at the beginning of the election cycle, he was repeatedly singled out for supporting legislation that made it easier for undocumented young Texans to go to college. In 2009, the Texas state legislature made

state grants available to undocumented teens and guaranteed that they would pay in state tuition at public colleges. This was three years too late for my friend, but an important step forward in addressing inequality in a state that has traditionally had large numbers of immigrants among its population. Perry, certainly not an example of a progressive politician when it comes to immigration policy, defended the measures by pointing out the benefits to the economy of Texas when these young people have access to legal employment and can bring their college educations to work. Along with other things, Perry's history of supposed leniency towards undocumented youth embodied in those bills cost him the nomination. The demonization of undocumented populations is normalized in the United States, and anchor baby discourse is one more strand of a narrative that supports the persistence of this prejudice.

Background

The politicians and pundits discussing the anchor baby on the clips analyzed do not frame their conversation in terms of demonizing undocumented immigrants. Instead, they contend that access to birthright citizenship on the basis of original intent and constitutional language are at the center of the anchor baby debate. These discussions about citizenship rely on accepted truths about citizenship policy in the United States. Perhaps the most pervasive concept about citizenship, only rarely explicitly expressed, is that the current system of granting citizenship is fair and just. To address these images of citizenship so integral to the construction of the anchor baby, I draw on the work of Mae Ngai in *Impossible Subjects*, where Ngai interrogates these accepted truths about citizenship in reference to immigration policy through historicity.

Ngai challenges our commonly-held beliefs about citizenship through her thorough re-examination of the history of immigration and citizenship law, exposing the raced and classed biases this concept of just citizenship and the unsullied rule of law attempts to hide. Beginning at the end of the nineteenth century with the first exclusionary immigration policies, Ngai examines the raced motivations for immigration policies. By analyzing the history of immigration and naturalization policies through a raced and gendered lens, Ngai reveals the subjective nature of immigration policies normalized as objective issues of border security and population control. Leo Chavez also touches upon citizenship in his analysis of magazine covers and his study of *The Latino Threat* narrative, and it is within the work of these two authors that I situate concepts of citizenship central to the anchor baby discourse.

Anchor baby discourse makes other assumptions about citizenship beyond the objective nature of its assignment, and these are most evident in the construction of the anchor baby's parents. The child's citizenship is consistently described as a "reward" for the illegal actions of the parent. This suggests an understanding of citizenship and naturalization law where the child's citizenship translates into citizenship and security for the parent. The reality of these laws is significantly different. Undocumented parents are detained and deported despite the presence of their citizen children, and having a child in the United States also does not expedite the parents' process of residency and naturalization.

These beliefs about citizenship are integral to the discourse of the anchor baby. They create both the motivation for the movement across the border and the credibility for denying these children access to their own citizenship through birth in the United

States. According to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service, an arm of the Department of Homeland Security, the first assumption is based on a false understanding of United States citizenship and naturalization procedures.

United States citizens cannot apply for the citizenship of their parents. The first step for the parents of US-born children towards citizenship is permanent residency. Once the child is twenty-one years old, they can start an application to bring their parents into the country as permanent residents. This costs \$420 per person for the filing fee of the initial document, the I-130. After the child turns twenty-one and files all of the appropriate documents, the parents must wait until there is a visa opening to apply for an immigrant visa or to change their legal residency status. Once the parent is a permanent resident living in the United States, she must wait five years to qualify for citizenship through naturalization. The naturalization process is time consuming and can take longer than six months, and requires a fee totaling from \$595 to \$680 to complete.

The belief that the U.S. born child's citizenship somehow translates into citizenship and security for the parents is based on nothing more than myth. A parent must wait a minimum of twenty-six years from the day their child is born on American soil before they, too, can become citizens and gain full access to the benefits of that citizenship. When dealing with discourse and the worldviews and "common sense" derived from it, empirical facts such as the ones presented here do not matter as much as the accepted narratives.

Access to citizenship is incredibly important, because the "citizen" and "non-citizen" subjects allow us to create and define our imagined nation (*Latino* 4). This conceptualization of who counts as a citizen and who will gain the rights associated with

that citizenship has been highly contested throughout American history (10). Including immigrants as citizens and allowing them to become part of the community, that imagined nation, is a nuanced process that is greatly impacted by “virtual lives.” The media creation and relation of these virtual lives, such as the anchor baby, thus has great impact on citizenship (11).

This imagined nation has an identity and within the Latino Threat Narrative, Latinos threaten that identity (22). This is partly due to their construction as the unassimilable immigrants (21). The visual lives represented in anchor baby discourse reify the Mexican immigrant as unassimilable. The parents and the child are consistently differentiated from the rest of the population of parents and children, and the parents are defined by actions described as criminal. A disregard for the American rule of law displayed in anchor baby parent’s actions is further proof that they do not fit this American identity. The citizenship of the child, because it is conflated with that of the parent, is then used to police this boundary and maintain the borders of the imagined nation against this threat.

The anchor baby is situated within the preexisting conversations about the construction of the undocumented immigrant through the media and public discourse. Lilia Fernandez, writing for the *Journal of American Ethnic History*, compares two scholars’ work, Lina Newton and Chavez, on exploring this construction of the immigrant.

Newton focuses primarily on policy and policy makers’ discussions. She argues that policy makers construct immigrants in specific ways to persuade voters to support particular policy (107). The politicians regularly featured in the clips analyzed here used

support for their proposed policies addressing the issue of the anchor baby for political gain: they were up for reelection and needed voters to believe they were invested in an important political project.

Where politicians' construction of the anchor baby lays the groundwork for voter turnout, the news sources chose the anchor baby because it is a spectacle. A media spectacle is the representation of an idea or concept; in this case the spectacle is the representation of the anchor baby. The media spectacle takes a "worldview" and makes it into an objective truth (*Latino* 6). In the case of the anchor baby, the "worldview" is the epistemology that produces the anchor baby and all of the associated "taken for granted" ideas that must accompany its existence, for example, the criminal nature of undocumented immigrants and the importance of border security. Selecting the anchor baby as fodder for a news segment sets it as a media spectacle and so the anchor baby becomes objective truth. Here, the intentions of the news media and the politicians collide: the influence of the spectacle through the gaze of the viewer can then impact policy and spending decisions in society (143).

The spectacle is a representation and therefore does not communicate the real lived experience of the subject, but instead it portrays a representative version. This representation of the undocumented immigrant through anchor baby discourse is a "virtual life." The spectacle of the undocumented immigrant subject has little or nothing to do with the reality of the subject's lived experiences (5). This virtual representation of life results in "virtualism," where these virtual lives are accepted as "reality," and so the world is made compatible with this virtual life (42). Immigrants and Americans alike are imagined in relation to the United States based on these virtual lives (5). Virtualism

allows for the demonization of undocumented immigrants, because the spectacle of the undocumented immigrant when accepted as objective truth allows American citizens to dehumanize and devalue the undocumented immigrant experience.

The images edited into the news segments addressing the media spectacle of the anchor baby make up an important part of knowledge creation. They draw on preexisting understandings of language, codes, and signs that the audience already knows. The audience can “decode” the images without the help of an explanation or a caption because they already have the knowledge necessary to grasp the meaning embedded in the image (*Covering* 35).

Images produce identity (19). Chavez finds that there is a phenotypically consistent undocumented immigrant (230). The phenotype of the people shown in the images is known to mean that these people are Mexican. Based on this understanding, any water that they cross in the images becomes the Rio Grande and any fence a border fence (232). The media’s coverage of any media spectacle creates legitimate and illegitimate populations through representation. It communicates marginalization and designates the “other” (*Latino* 6). In these images of the recognized and accepted virtual lives of Mexican undocumented immigrants, the illegitimate population is clearly defined.

The spectacle of the undocumented Mexican immigrant subject has its roots in the 1920’s (*Latino* 26). After the immigration reform in 1924, “Mexicans emerged as iconic illegal aliens” (Ngai 58). This predates the criminalization of illegal entry, which occurred in 1929 (60). In anchor baby discourse, the undocumented immigrant is something that exists in spite of the law, not because of it. The parent of the anchor baby

is not seen as a result of laws; rather the existence of the undocumented immigrant parent reinforces the importance of the rule of law. Ngai's interrogation of the history of immigration policies reframes this conversation and points to Chinese exclusion laws in the nineteenth century as the first creation of the illegal subject, both citizen and alien (202). Previous to these restrictions on immigration, the illegal subject did not exist (4). In this way, laws create undocumented immigrants (265).

At the same time that the Mexican undocumented immigrant rose as a specter in immigration discourse, the laws passed did not put official quotas on immigration from the Western Hemisphere (254). The image of the Mexican immigrant threat encouraged Congress to employ administrative restrictions instead, such as denying visas based on profession, but these administrative restrictions served only to quell the entrance of legal immigrants (254). The restrictive nature of the Johnson-Reed Act and the quotas based on ethnicity and race served to "remap" America on ethnic and racial lines, and it produced the illegal immigrant subject and set it at the center of problems for immigration law (17).

In the data comprising anchor baby discourse in this study, immigration law is seen as fair. The historical biases, evident in Ngai's account of the 1924 Act, do not exist in this discourse. After WWII, basing immigration policy on the preferences of the United States became a naturalized part of immigration politics.

In the discussions leading up to the McCarran-Walter Act in 1952, immigration from Canada and Mexico was discussed, but undocumented immigration was only specifically referenced when it happened crossing the southern border with Mexico. In this way, "the Mexican migrant appeared symbolically in the discourse of immigration reform, as the racialized specter of the illegal alien" (247). Though no official restrictions

on Mexico came out of the Act, reformers put forth the image of the criminal Mexican illegal border crossing alien in discussions about immigration from the Western hemisphere (248). The law-breaking Mexican undocumented immigrant which figures so prominently in anchor baby discourse has been a rhetorical image in immigration discourse since the 1950's.

The Western hemisphere received an immigration ceiling in 1965, and in 1976 country-based quotas followed. Before 1965, immigrants from Mexico numbered approximately 235,000 annually. The quota reduced legally admissible immigration to 20,000. INS deportations rose to 151,000 in 1968 before the national quotas were in place, and in 1976 that number jumped to 781,000 Mexican immigrants deported. This is far higher than the deportations for immigrants from other countries combined, which stayed under 100,000 per year. These actions of the INS combined with the national quota system for countries in the Western Hemisphere worked to produce the Mexican illegal immigrant subject (261).

These restrictions on the Western hemisphere in the 1965 Act accompanied an opening up to the rest of the world through the removal of pre-existing quotas. As other immigrant populations found greater access to legal entrance into the United States, the Mexican illegal immigrant produced in large numbers due to restrictive quotas became the image of illegal immigration; the central problem in immigration policy (265).

The parent in anchor baby discourse uses the child as access to American benefits. This, too, is not a new concept. It came into vogue in immigrant policy rhetoric in the 1970's (*Latino* 28). In his study on the Latino Threat Narrative, Chavez points to the 1970's for the advent of the Mexican immigrant as threatening to American society

(*Covering* 18). Anchor baby discourse carries the Latino Threat Narrative when it refers to the child as an “anchor.” Why would the security of the immigrant family through the child matter if these immigrants did not represent a threat? Part of this threat comes from the children themselves. In the late 1970’s, the American-born children of illegal immigrants posed a destabilizing threat for the future: they were seen as the harbingers of the next generation’s civil rights issues (*Latino* 29). In this case, the anchor baby itself is a threat to American cultural security.

In the data from this study, statistics are a meaning making tool. The numbers have no meaning beyond their capacity to communicate the birth of anchor babies as a problem. They are a part of an “alchemy of numbers” that creates “fear” in immigration discourse (135). Numbers played the same part in the 1980’s, when the public perceptions of the number of illegal immigrants residing in America had more power to influence policy than the reality (*Covering* 108). In a discussion about amnesty in the same decade, in 1984, the concept of amnesty as a “reward for lawbreakers” surfaced, using the same rhetoric as the clips in the data for this study that frame the citizenship of the anchor baby as a “reward” for the parents of the child (118).

The 1990’s continued to draw upon and repeated these established narratives, which are again reiterated in anchor baby discourse. These narratives coincided with a 35 percent increase in quotas influenced by economic growth in the United States (Ngai 265). In 1994, California passed Proposition 187, denying immigrants access to social services. This law, which was found unconstitutional and overturned, drew on and reinforced the image of social services as a magnet for immigration (*Covering* 192). In that same year, Bette Hammond of Save Our State implicated the American-born

children as the vehicle for said access (247). The 1996 presidential campaigns for candidates from both parties reflect the trend of image setting through use of literal images similar to those discovered in the data for this study. The candidates ran ads that featured “brown skinned illegal immigrants” in the visual representation of issues facing the United States (196).

Anchor baby discourse assumes that the undocumented immigrant subject constructs herself when she decides to enter the United States unauthorized, but through this historical review it becomes clear that this subject is created by restrictive laws. Further, the image of the undocumented Mexican immigrant has been a part of immigration discourse for decades and predates the legal existence of undocumented immigration from Mexico. This subject identity is so firmly situated in American consciousness as the image of the undocumented immigrant that it has become naturalized as such in our immigration discourse and is reflected in our policy.

Methodological Framing

All critical discourse analysis projects have the capacity to be interdisciplinary and to engage mixed methods (Wodak 5). As a feminist researcher in the field of Women’s and Gender Studies, pulling on methods from researchers who self-identify as historians, communications researchers, and linguists, I argue that this work does represent an interdisciplinary attempt at understanding a specific discursive strand. It is also theoretically interdisciplinary. An interdisciplinary approach allows the researcher to follow where the questions and the data lead, and to create a research design and theoretical basis that best suit every research project.

The methods for this project draw on multiple case studies and a critical discourse analysis reader. After collecting the data, each segment was initially “read” for neutral content. The first reading involved both watching and transcribing video clips and recording a simple description of the subject of each piece of data (Wester et al. 502). A “neutral summary of content” followed. The neutrality of this summary lies in the absence of critical analysis within the summary. The data was then reread and all examples of meaning-making and the “images” and “portrayals” that are a part of the “discursive construction” Davis and French explore were recorded (503).

After recording all of these readings, the discourse around the anchor baby was mapped out in an attempt to understand the different kinds of meaning-making and image setting involved. As the actors involved in communicating the anchor baby narrative construct the identities of the child and her parents, images of the anchor baby and her parents and connotations around these identities are created and/or reinforced. Setting an image refers both to literal images such as the pictures and videos used in the clips and the accepted subject identity resulting from the discourse. The anchor baby is not a neutral subject, and neither are her parents. Through the use of neutral sounding framing, meaning is made around issues of immigration, belonging, citizenship, and gender. It is these images of the subjects constructed through the discourse and the meanings they are implicitly given that inform social and political actions. These images and connotations are the accepted knowledges that result from discourse and are the most powerful aspects of discursive construction.

Feminist scholarship must inherently focus on social change in order to be classified as feminist (Alcoff 4). There are multiple forms of content analysis, and many

of these have been utilized by feminists researching aspects of popular culture (Hesse-Biber 225). Critical discourse analysis is a school of thought within the broad spectrum of content analysis (Wodak 3). It draws heavily from Foucault's concepts of discourse and is embedded in a drive toward social justice and unearthing oppressions (6). This emphasis on social justice makes critical discourse analysis a fitting choice for a feminist project such as this one.

It is important to draw from multiple sources when doing critical discourse analysis, because discourse is the result of the presence of certain knowledge, truths, and understandings across multiple sources (Wodak 146). Critical discourse analysis is not a methodology, and does not have a specific set of methods that all case studies should use. This is why Wodak suggests that it is more of a "school of thought" (3). *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* provides the epistemological and methodological framework for this design, which is supplemented by case studies and scholarly work that addressed the methods used in critical discourse analysis to determine the best methods for this project.

Wester, Pleijter, and Renckstorf caution against the tendency to use an "intuitive form of close reading that can't be explained any further" in projects that use critical discourse analysis (496). They use an example of their previous work to show how critical discourse analysis can be methodical, and I found their detailed explanation of the purpose of "re-reading" texts to be incredibly helpful in designing this project (506). Feminist research exchanges reflexivity for objectivity in approaching data and analysis. I came to this thesis with many preconceived ideas, especially about how each news source would present the anchor baby narrative. By adhering to a strict process of reading first

for a neutral summary of the clip and secondly with an eye for the construction of meaning around the anchor baby debate, I was able to incorporate more self-reflexivity in my analysis.

Their work comes from the discipline of Communications, and they are particularly focused on the ability of the process of “image setting,” which pays “special regard to the way persons, actions, and events are presented” within the text in question (501). Re-reading with an eye for image-setting proved helpful in looking at the different ways each news source presents the anchor baby and the surrounding ideas. As my work with the data progressed, I became increasingly interested not only in what was being repeated but how these reiterated ideas created meaning within the discourse.

Understanding my analysis in terms of the process of presenting the anchor baby helped me to see that it is not the what of anchor baby discourse that matters the most, but the how and the why. Framing the media sources’ communication of the narrative in terms of a process exposed the work done through this discourse. It changed the central questions in my analysis from, “Is there an anchor baby discourse, and if so, what is it?” to “What does creating the anchor baby in this way accomplish?”

Two specific methods utilized in creating a complex and inclusive map of the different uses of “anchor baby” throughout the data are replication and triangulation. These two concepts have multiple different interpretations, and variations on the two were included in many of the chapters of Wodak’s critical discourse analysis reader. I take the definitions given by Wester, Pleijter, and Renckstorf. All of the data are read first to identify common “cases” between all of the different sources, and then each case is taken individually and all image-setting found in the re-reading for that specific case is

compiled. This allows for replication, where each report of image setting within a case is compared to find similarities that show the existence of a discourse across sources (511). Triangulation, in this usage, is then finding similarities in image-setting across the case studies, to show the larger arc of the discursive strand (512). One important question in this research concerns the power of this discourse around the anchor baby within the existing immigrant strand, and using these authors' variation on replication and triangulation allows a better understanding of how far-reaching the image-setting around the anchor baby is within the data set.

Davis and French present a specific case study on the discursive construction of the victims and survivors of hurricane Katrina. All of the work on critical discourse analysis emphasized the mediated nature of the discourse in question. This case study clarified the process of applying a slightly abstract concept of mediation to this study of news media. Davis and French point out that, in the case of reporting of events, we do not actually experience them ourselves. The events are "mediated to us" by the news media and through these representations we take it upon ourselves as consumers to "sort out" the "truth." Our understanding of the people involved in the event comes from the narratives delivered to us through the media, and in this process we find the "discursive construction of individuals" (243).

The anchor baby and her parents as they are constructed in the discourse do not represent the real lived experiences of undocumented immigrants and their citizen children. Instead, they serve the purposes of a twenty-four hour news cycle as a media spectacle that draws viewers and advertising and they produce urgency in the voting population for politicians during election cycles. Those viewers and voters targeted by

the narrative of the anchor baby generally do not have firsthand experience with undocumented immigrants, at least not that they are aware of. They rely on these cable news networks to communicate the truth about undocumented immigration, because they do not and cannot have primary knowledge of this experience. In this way, the anchor baby and her parents are discursively constructed for viewers by the media and the politicians, pundits, and anchors featured on the news segments.

This paper does not examine the discourse surrounding an event, as is the case of Davis and French, but it does look at discourse that sorts out political arguments that most of the viewers are not actively involved in and do not experience themselves. The debate is “mediated” by these sources of news, and we find our truth about this “anchor baby” debate from that narrative.

Interdisciplinary was key to the evolution of this thesis. The methodology is framed by the work of linguists and researchers in the field of comparative literature who contributed to the school of thought that makes up Critical Discourse Analysis. The work of another linguist, Otto Santa Anna, helped me to ground this research in social change. His efforts to keep the idea of oppressive language at the center of content analysis resonated with my understanding of the goals of feminist research. It was never my intention to create knowledge devoid of a connection to social change, and his work helped me to keep that in focus. The third chapter, which explores gender in anchor baby discourse, draws heavily on the work of Michel-Rolph Trouillot who views historicity as an exercise in interrogating the presence and production of silences within a historical narrative. His efforts to incorporate the importance of silence helped me to address the silence around gender in this narrative surrounding the anchor baby. The specific

methods of reading, replication, and triangulation, are drawn directly from work in the discipline of Communications. Without the flexibility to take what resonated most strongly with this thesis as it evolved devoid of disciplinary restrictions, my project would not have been as fluid and I believe this would have limited my ability to get to what became the most important aspects of my research. The researcher can begin with the best and most clearly defined intentions for a project, but without flexibility in design and without openness to inevitable change, our attempts at increasing complexity in our work will always be stifled.

In obtaining the data set, a variety of internet searches were used to find all available video segments addressing the “anchor baby” from the three chosen sources and within the defined timeframe. First, the websites of CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC were searched for the videos available to the public. Youtube hosts many video clips that are not available directly from the source, so this search engine was an indispensable tool in collecting data. Finally, the Vanderbilt Television News Archive provided access to a few more video clips that are not available through a public search.

The power of discursive strands is in their omnipresence, so my data set had to incorporate sources linked with different ideological points of view. In the working definition of discourse for this thesis, discourse results in social and political action because it defines the way we understand ourselves and the way we interact with others in society. If I were only to examine the coverage on one cable news network, for example Fox News, I would not be able to say that their coverage represented a discourse in American society. Though the viewers of Fox News trust the communicated narrative, according to the Pew Research Center, audiences with different ideological identifiers are

far less likely to accept the ideas presented on Fox as truth. When the data set expands to include CNN and MSNBC as well as Fox News, the ideas communicated are broadcast to the majority of Americans. If, as the analysis in this project shows, similar concepts are delivered from all three sources then the narrative is accepted as truth by a wide variety of citizens identifying across the spectrum of political ideology. This is the discourse: it permeates both sides of the aisle politically. It is more powerful than a partisan idea, because informs the actions and votes of Americans despite their political affiliation. In order to prove that the anchor baby is a discourse and has this kind of power, I had to analyze clips from all three sources.

This research concerns a specific piece of a discourse strand that is far more powerful and further reaching than the small sample of clips collected for this study. The allusions within the instances of image-setting in each case to larger concepts and constructions of the immigrant subject have grave implications for this population. The immigrant strand of discourse on the political and media planes in the United States is incredibly powerful, and has been shaped by powerful people whose ideologies manifest in public policy that has a direct impact on these populations. The immigrant discourse strand deals with important concepts, such as citizenship, immigration, and naturalization. These are not just theoretical constructs, but realities in the lived experiences of all people living within the borders of the United States. My research project addresses one incredibly narrow aspect of this, but I hope that the presence of broader themes within the “anchor baby” discourse can serve to prove the power of the immigrant discourse strand.

Chapter Outline

Applying the methods mentioned above revealed a consistent set of images and meanings that make up anchor baby discourse. These ideas fall into three general categories of mediation: creating images and meanings around the anchor baby as a child, constructing the criminal subject identity of the parent in relation to the anchor baby, and the meaning making tools of constitutional history and language to construct the undeserving anchor baby. The first chapter of this paper is concerned with laying these ideas out organized in these three categories, and exploring what is communicated through the anchor baby narrative.

This chapter presents the results of analysis through a general overview of the entirety of anchor baby discourse in order to ground the following two chapters that interrogate the deeper implications for our ideas about undocumented immigrants, immigrant women, and reproduction. Clips from Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC covering the anchor baby make up the main sources, and the analysis references the works reviewed in the background section above. The chapter is organized into three parts, where quotes from the text are analyzed to interrogate how the image of the anchor baby and her parents is constructed. First, I present instances of constructing the anchor baby herself as a child. Second, clips showing the construction of the anchor baby in reference to her parents are examined. The chapter closes with an exploration of the tools used to construct this concept of the anchor baby: history and language of the Constitution. A general understanding of the discourse in its entirety is necessary to engage in deeper critical analysis of the data.

Anchor baby discourse is heavily focused on constructing the parents of the anchor baby. In so doing, the narrative draws on and reaffirms the existing immigration

discourse. The second chapter attempts to situate anchor baby discourse within the larger discourse on immigration. Five traits of the anchor baby parent subject were the focus of most image setting and meaning making in the discourse. The third chapter examines these five traits and interrogates how the parent is constructed as criminal, immoral, undeserving, and the meaning making and image setting that go into creating a specifically raced and classed image of the parent. Through these five categories of identification, anchor baby discourse is connected with the larger discourse on immigration specifically that concerned with undocumented immigrants.

The second chapter moves from a general discussion of the discourse to focus on specific instances in the clips where the undocumented immigrant parent subject is constructed. The clips themselves again serve as the main source for the chapter. The work of Chavez and Ngai helped frame my critical analysis in this section. Following the same structure as the previous chapter, I used the five main aspects of the undocumented immigrant subject to organize quotes and analysis. These five traits help to normalize the demonization of undocumented immigrants in American society, and the subject identity of the undocumented parent sets the anchor baby apart in the narrative.

Finally, the fourth chapter attempts to answer the question, where is the gender in anchor baby discourse? This chapter identifies the silence around gender as an important area of meaning making, and seeks to fill in these gaps by drawing on the history of policing immigrant women's bodies in the United States. The conflation of the anchor baby's identity with that of the undocumented immigrant mother is placed in conversation with America's history of using eugenicist concepts and the culture of poverty as the foundations of immigration policy to ask how responsibility for social

problems gets places on immigrant women's bodies as they enter the country. In this chapter, I contend that anchor baby communicates many gendered concepts, both through what is said and what is kept silent.

Both the discourse and the silences within the narrative are gendered, though the anchor baby is presented as a gender neutral issue within the clips themselves. In this chapter, I move away from using the clips as my main source. Drawing heavily on Michel Trouillot's concepts of the production of silence in historical narratives, I apply this idea to the media and the silence surrounding gender in the anchor baby debate. I also situate the anchor baby within a larger trajectory of public policy concerned with the bodies, morality, and potential of immigrant women. The work of Martha Gardner, Deirdre Molony, Randall Hansen and Desmond King on the history of regulating immigrant women helped me to see the anchor baby as a continuation of American immigration policy, which historically regulated women more stringently than their male counterparts. To understand the fears of futurity and fertility involved in these concerns about immigrant women, I draw on Elena Gutierrez, Kathryn Stockton, and Judith Levine. When these ideas are put in conversation with the silences in anchor baby discourse, the gendered work of the narrative becomes much clearer. The anchor baby debate communicates ideas about gender, fertility, futurity, and the responsibility of immigrant women's bodies in the reproduction of social ills, and this is nothing new in the politics of American immigration policy.

Anchor Babies and Immigrant Subjectivities

“I think there's a very real issue with magnets in this country. And I think the issue that you're referring to is the issue of anchor babies. And that's an issue that -- I was just in Arizona this last weekend, and the state is very concerned, because when someone comes illegally across the border, specifically for the purpose of utilizing American resources for having a baby here, then all of the welfare benefits then attach to that baby.”

- Michelle Bachmann

In order to move forward in an analysis of the anchor baby and its coverage in the media, the question must first be answered: What is “anchor baby?” The anchor baby is the perfect example of a media-created virtual life. She is the result of the commentary of the politicians, pundits, and anchors that appear on the news segments reviewed. The anchor baby does not represent the lived experiences of children born in the United States to undocumented parents. Instead, the anchor baby is an idea which reflects opinions about immigration and immigration policy in the United States. For this reason, it is a hot button issue.

The concept is not new, nor is it limited to American politics. Footage of Harry Reid discussing what would eventually be known as the anchor baby is available from 1993, and the anchor baby has reappeared in political discourse multiple times between the early nineties and the midterm elections of 2010. These reappearances are connected to election cycles, because immigration rhetoric pulls on emotional triggers that result in

voter turnout. This voter turnout points to the power of anchor baby discourse in discussions of U.S. immigration policies.

In its most superficial definition, the anchor baby is tied to immigration networks and the security of undocumented immigrants in the United States. United States citizenship gives the child stability, so she can act as an “anchor” for her immediate family through her security as a citizen. She also acts as an anchor for future immigration flows, and access to birthright citizenship itself is the magnet pulling those groups of future immigrants to the United States.

Her physically situated birth in the United States is what gives her access to citizenship. As a newborn child, she already has the capacity to anchor her parents to the security of residency in the United States. These are the aspects of the anchor baby that are immediately observable in a cursory viewing of a segment covering the anchor baby. The purpose of analyzing these clips through the methods outlined in the introduction is to get beyond this superficial definition.

Fox News, MSNBC, and CNN are all complicit in constructing the anchor baby subject. Defining the discourse means going beyond the given definition of the anchor baby to find a definition that is based on what ideas are consistently put forward and reaffirmed through the coverage of this topic in the analyzed media segments.

Only the elements communicated by all three sources and appearing in multiple places once the analysis was sorted by topic group were included in the final definition of the anchor baby as a discourse. This method, triangulation, allowed me to determine which aspects of the anchor baby subject permeated all of the coverage. Part of the power of these pieces of the narrative lies in their omnipresence: no matter which channel a

viewer turns into, particular parts of the anchor baby coverage will be the same. No one can escape the communication of those pieces of the anchor baby narrative, and those are the ideas that become accepted knowledge in society.

As a child subject, she holds specific significance as a threat to the United States. The anchor baby already represents a threat to America before it is framed by any of these anchors or politicians. The mere presence of the anchor baby is a threat in and of itself. She represents a demographic shift that creates fear about futurity. Anchor babies transgress borders, both physical and philosophical, by claiming legitimate space in American society. The anchor baby threatens to destabilize the way we construct ourselves as American subjects: in reference to the foreign “them” that live across the Mexican border. The anchor baby is unthinkable as a legitimate citizen subject.

It is because of this unthinkability that the anchor baby represents the interior other; she is a citizen that threatens citizenship. Birthright citizenship simultaneously constructs the anchor baby as a constant threat to the United States as well as to individual American subjects as they understand themselves.

This othering would not be possible without another defining characteristic of the anchor baby: her parentage. The coverage of the anchor baby debate delivers more information about her parents than the anchor baby herself. Though there are instances where foreign tourists are offered up as the most threatening and horrifying aspect of the anchor baby, the image of the parent that develops through consistent reiteration is one that is specifically raced and classed. He is undocumented, he is Mexican, and he is poor. He came to be undocumented specifically through an unauthorized border crossing. This definition of the parent as a criminal is integral to the demonization of the anchor baby.

This poverty also threatens American society, because this places the parent in the role of the burdensome and welfare-reliant subject. Multiple references to a reliance on “American benefits” and the “welfare state” affirm this relation.

Constitutional history and the history of the fourteenth amendment are invoked in the given definition of the anchor baby on all three networks. The original intent of the amendment as focused on the citizenship rights of freed slaves in the 1860’s creates an opening for questioning new applications of birthright citizenship that allow anchor babies and their criminal parents into our country. The history of how this birthright citizenship was applied, specifically to Native Americans, introduces the binary of the deserving/undeserving population in regards to citizenship access. This history argument also incorporates a linguistic approach, where the exact meaning of the word “jurisdiction” allows us the age-old issue of “us” versus “them” to enter into the discussion as an issue of defining constitutional language.

What is anchor baby? If asked outright, those involved in communicating anchor baby discourse would most likely offer a definition that included the child’s birth in the United States to undocumented immigrant parents. This definition would connect the citizenship of the child to the continued presence of undocumented immigrants in the United States, and the discussion would center on defining citizenship and questions about interpreting the fourteenth amendment. Perhaps a better explanation of what this paper is asking is not, “What is anchor baby,” but instead, “What does the discourse say about the anchor baby, and what work does this discourse do in American society as a result?”

Critically analyzing anchor baby discourse allows us to interrogate the given definition of the anchor baby presented in these news segments. Sorting through the coverage allows us to see what ideas about the anchor baby are communicated through this mediated narrative, and the resulting definition of the anchor baby sets the stage for contemplating what work this does on the topics of undocumented immigration, gender, responsibility, and futurity.

The Anchor Baby and Undocumented Immigration

By focusing so much attention on the history of the fourteenth amendment in framing the anchor baby, her citizenship appears to be the impetus for this discussion. Instead, once the clips are broken down and categorized into arguments and topics that repeat across themes and news sources, another focal point becomes apparent beyond contention: undocumented immigration from Mexico into the United States. The child is a citizen by right of birth. There is nothing to distinguish this child from other children born in the United States and awarded citizenship based on no further qualifying criteria than their location when they are born, except her parentage.

The anchor baby debate, though explicitly focused on issues of birth and citizenship in the United States, does a great deal of discursive work in constructing and reaffirming the subject identity of the undocumented immigrant. The subject position of the parent cannot be ignored or stressed too greatly in an analysis of the anchor baby, because the undocumented immigrant parent is an integral piece in the very creation of the anchor baby herself. Through anchor baby discourse, issues of class, race, morality, access, and deserving status play out implicitly and draw upon existing ideas about immigrants. This chapter is an exploration of the five themes that play the most

prominent role in these clips and the work the images and text within the clips do to reconstruct the undocumented immigrant subject in American society.

Though certain aspects of the anchor baby do appear across cases and news sources, there are certainly some instances of disagreement. These moments occurred on CNN and MSNBC, and included statements about the racist nature of the anchor baby concept and historical interpretations that see the fourteenth amendment as protecting birthright citizenship from racist laws following emancipation instead of as creating birthright citizenship specifically for a particular marginalized group. These moments, as encouraging as they are from a feminist political perspective, do not represent the majority of the coverage and do not occur often enough to change the results once the methods of this project were applied to the data. What is constant throughout the clips, including the ones that break the mold, is an underlying accepted assumption about undocumented immigration in the United States in general: that it is problematic and a threat.

In some instances, the threat is one of territorial security. This is most evident when arguments for limiting birthright citizenship are defended with statements about “border security.” In a clip from Fox News, Representative Steve King refers to undocumented immigration as “bleeding at the border.” When comparing American immigration policy with the immigration policies of other countries, Steven Camarota explicitly links birthright citizenship policies to border security. If we allow the children of undocumented immigrants access to birthright citizenship, Camarota argues, we will essentially “lose control of our borders.” In a segment from January 2011, Bill O’Reilly suggests that birthright citizenship is a threat to border security because it acts as a

motivator for undocumented immigration: It “encourage[es] foreigners to sneak across our borders to give birth.” On CNN, Representative Debbie Riddle links anchor babies to terrorism when she includes them as a threat to our sovereignty. Riddle specifically cites the Southern border of the United States as the parents’ entrance point.

In all of these examples, the anchor baby’s connection to undocumented immigration through her parents links her citizenship to issues of border security. If we allow these undocumented immigrants’ children access to American citizenship, we are putting our national sovereignty at risk.

This is due to the child’s position as the anchor. Border security in a broad sense is a popular political topic. During the current 2012 election cycle, border security is a key topic in the debates between possible GOP candidates leading up to the primary. Though border security has a range of implications depending upon the context, here it helps connect the anchor baby to the threat of undocumented immigration. The child, as a citizen, is secure in her position in the United States. Her citizenship-based security then anchors the undocumented immigrant parents to America as well. As long as we allow children to act as an anchor for their undocumented parents, we cannot expect our borders to be secure. In this way, the anchor baby operates as a specific threat to border security.

In order for the presence of undocumented immigrants to be understood as a threat to border security, certain assumptions about undocumented immigrants must already exist. In every clip studied for the purposes of this project, the general nature of undocumented immigration as threatening goes unquestioned. Steve King calls the anchor baby a “magnet” for undocumented immigration, and without making any follow-

up statements as to the meaning of this magnet effectively communicates the threatening nature of birthright citizenship for the anchor baby.

Statistics are cited throughout the clips that suggest a large population of undocumented immigrants and anchor babies in turn. When Representative Lindsay Graham appeared on Greta Van Susteren's show on Fox News, he framed his support for changing birthright citizenship policies within his identity as a "reasonable guy." Graham does not want to deport the "twelve million" that are already living in the United States. He does not have to explain who makes up that "twelve million," because he can rely on pre-existing immigration discourse informing the viewer that this number refers to undocumented immigrants. Though he states that allowing these people to remain in the United States is "reasonable," he is adamant about the need for reform: "...if we don't [change our birthright citizenship laws], we're going to have 20 million more in 20 years." Without having to explain why 20 million should be a disturbing number, Graham can rely on the viewer interpreting this statement as a threat to American society while still appearing "reasonable" in his views. This is because it is reasonable to view undocumented immigration as a threat to America. Whatever the viewer may think about birthright citizenship and its role in undocumented immigration, Graham's statement alluding to growth in the numbers of undocumented immigrants in the future draws on the widely accepted understanding of this threat.

In a segment on CNN that focuses more on the perspective of a mother and the positive maternal motivations that can inform the decision to give birth in the United States, the threat of undocumented immigration is still present. Though the woman in question is not an undocumented immigrant and, in fact, came to the United States legally

using a visa and then returned to Mexico, the anchor still relates her story to undocumented Mexican immigrant mothers. When discussing how many undocumented women give birth to anchor babies at a specific hospital in Texas, the anchor says, “...seventy percent of births are to undocumented mothers. Seventy percent!” This statistic is meant to be surprising and unsettling, as indicated by the anchor’s repetition of “seventy percent.” The inclusion of statistics referring to undocumented women when the segment is focused on a Mexican resident who only came to the United States for the duration of her visa is a perfect example of how the anchor baby is permanently in relation to undocumented immigration, despite statements by representatives and pundits linking the anchor baby to wealthy foreign tourists.

The importance of the anchor baby is reliant upon this relation to the accepted threat of undocumented immigration. Foreign tourists’ children may bring up questions of the meaning of citizenship, and in some cases this topic is explored in the clips in question. However, like the clips that oppose accepted aspects of the anchor baby, these instances are few and far between and did not occur often enough to factor into the definition of the anchor baby after analysis. The anchor baby is relevant because of the threat of undocumented immigration. Without the pre-existing narrative that establishes this threat, the anchor baby would not be politically salient.

Though the threat of undocumented immigration is the most influential motivator for understanding the anchor baby as an issue that needs to be addressed, the child also poses a threat to American society in the form of immorality. Citizens of the United States commit crimes. However, the criminal nature of the method of entry that the undocumented immigrant parent is assumed to have taken is an integral piece of

distancing the parents from other groups who have access to birthright citizenship for their children. The transgression of territorial boundaries through illegal border crossings translates into the potential for immorality in American society.

As the anchor baby is imbued with the identity of her parents, the most active aspect of that subject position is that of the criminal. The importance of the rule of law is repeated across the clips. The legitimacy of the American legal code and adherence to said laws appears as an important part of citizenship in the United States. Breaking this social contract by refusing to follow the set rules of entrance into the United States marks undocumented immigrant parents as immoral from the beginning of their residence in the country. The undocumented immigrant becomes a subject when she undertakes an unauthorized border crossing. She is constructed in immorality and in opposition to the rule of law.

The relation of the child's subject position to that of the parents is reminiscent of the eugenics concepts which were so influential at the turn of the twentieth century and are examined in greater detail in the next chapter. Here, the important piece is the ability of the parent to transfer certain social ills onto the child through birth: in this case, the immoral nature of the parents' first criminal act of crossing the border.

"It wasn't like Americans were upset that deadbeats couldn't slip into the country, have babies, and start collecting welfare."

–Anne Coulter, *The O'Reilly Factor*, August 18, 2010

In a segment on Fox News that aired on August 4, 2011, Lindsay Graham emphasized the criminality of the parents when he said "...thousands of people are coming across the Arizona [and] Texas border... and they broke the law to get there." In

the quote that begins this section, Anne Coulter described the parents of anchor babies as “dead beats” who “slip into the country.”

On a segment of the CNN nightly news program Anderson Cooper 360 that aired on August 4, 2010, Arizona state senator Russell Pearce defined the issue of birthright citizenship, central to the topic of the anchor baby, in terms of the parents’ criminal status:

It is a crime to enter this country illegally. It is a crime to remain in this country illegally. Yet, you provide for the greatest inducement available: an unconstitutional declaration of citizenship to those born to non-citizens.

And Rand Paul, appearing on a segment that aired in May of 2010 on The Ed Show on MSNBC, had this to say: “We’re the only country I know of that allows people to come into the country illegally, have a baby, and then that baby becomes a citizen.”

Each segment includes an introduction to the anchor baby as an issue. During this introduction, the undocumented status of the parents is explicitly mentioned. Most of the segments include repeated emphasis on the parents’ undocumented status as the anchor baby issue is explained further or debated on the shows.

The language used to describe the undocumented status of the parents is always in terms of illegality. The other guest on the August 3rd episode of Anderson Cooper 360 who appeared opposite Russell Pearce points out that entering the country illegally is a civil infraction, but this is the only instance when the criminal aspect of the supposedly illicit border crossing is challenged.

As the anchors, politicians, and guest experts discuss the anchor baby, their use of the terms “illegal immigrants” and “illegals” firmly establish the criminality of the parent

in the mind of the viewer. The parent as a subject is defined in terms of her illegality. She is not just illegitimate, she herself is “illegal.”

On a segment of America’s Newsroom on Fox News from October 20, 2010, the parents of the anchor baby are described as “travelling to the United States... for the sole purpose of having a baby on American soil.” On a Talking Points segment with Bill O’Reilly on that same network that aired on January 6, 2011, O’Reilly says, “now it [the fourteenth amendment] is used to encourage foreigners to sneak across our borders to give birth.” When Lindsey Graham went “on the record” with Greta Van Susteren on August 4 on Fox news, he had this to say:

...and you’ve got the other problem, where thousands of people are coming across the Arizona [and] Texas border for the express purpose of having a child in an American hospital so that child will become an American citizen...

On another segment of his show that aired on August 3, 2010, Bill O’Reilly expresses his belief that the American public shares this understanding of birthright citizenship as a motivation for undocumented immigration: “...I think public opinion knows it’s a ruse, knows that this is a ruse for people to sneak in here, [and] get their kid to be an American citizen so that they can stay.” When Steve King appeared on a June 24th episode of America’s Newsroom, he referred to an “industry” of “pregnant women [who are] coming into this country illegally” for the purpose of giving birth.

On a segment on CNN airing on August 3rd, Lindsay Graham is quoted speaking about the “thousands of people coming across the border to have children in American hospitals illegally.” That same day, an episode of John King USA aired on the same network, and the anchor baby issue is defined in reference to birthright citizenship as a magnet for undocumented immigration: “It’s all the notion that illegal immigrants are

crossing into the U.S. just to have babies here.” In the segment where Russell Pearce appeared on Anderson 360 mentioned above, Pearce said, “It [birthright citizenship] needs to be fixed. It is the greatest inducement [for undocumented immigration.” On an August 5th episode of Hardball with Chris Matthews on MSNBC, Phil Gingrey presents it in the simplest language possible: “People come here to have babies.”

Other citizens in the United States break laws. This is why the justice system exists, and why we have a system of punishment, which immigration policy is a part of. The criminality of the parent is an important piece of the argument that she does not deserve access to citizenship not only for herself but also for her American-born children. Thus, her criminality is different. The crime she commits by crossing the border “illegally” is so heinous that it becomes her identifier: she is an “illegal immigrant.”

The anchor baby, child of “illegal immigrants,” thus receives this integral and constructive criminality by birthright as it does citizenship: something so deeply ingrained cannot be removed by the distance of one generation. By consistently describing the anchor baby’s parents as “illegal,” pundits, anchors, and representatives featured in these clips place the criminal nature of the anchor baby’s parents at the center of her subject position.

When images are used in these clips, they are generally presented to complement the description of the anchor baby’s parents. With the exception of one clip in which the feet of newborns are shown, all other images show adults who the viewers are supposed to assume are immigrants. Their phenotypic similarities are discussed below, but here the focus is on their actions and how those actions relate to their criminal subject identity.

In a clip from Fox News that aired on October 20, 2010, a clip of unidentified men in deserts and near fences accompanies statistics of anchor baby births from 2003 to 2008. There is no caption to explain who these men are or what they are doing, or what they have to add to the conversation about birthright citizenship. Martha MacCallum, the anchor for this particular segment, does not allude to the presence of these clips during her voiceover.

In an August 2010 clip from Fox News, Congressman Brian Billbray is discussing constitutional linguistics and the definition of the word, “jurisdiction” in the fourteenth amendment when similar clips play on the screen. In this segment, Billbray talks about birthright citizenship and what one has to do to be considered under the jurisdiction of the United States. The entire time he is making this argument, a montage of video clips featuring people in deserts and near fences plays on the right side of the screen. There is no explanation of whom or where these people are, and no attempt is made to explain the use of this footage. This, paired with Bilbray's denial of birthright citizenship to the children of “illegal immigrants” under the existing wording of the fourteenth amendment, creates a very specific image of the immigrants in question. Later in the segment Bilbray asserts that there is no need for a change to the fourteenth amendment if we define “jurisdiction.” A montage of clips of deserts and fences, without people, accompanies this discussion on the right side of the screen. In another clip from that same month on Fox News, Bill O’Reilly anchors a segment discussing the “Anchor Baby Debate.” During the introduction to this segment, the words “anchor baby debate” appear alongside a picture of a young man climbing a fence.

When Congressman Steve King appeared on Fox News almost a year later in June of 2011, his commentary on the importance of changing the fourteenth amendment to the new congress plays as a voiceover while a montage of video clips takes up the entire screen. First, a group of people walk together in a single-file line through the desert. When the anchor asks a question, the image shifts to a smaller group of young men jumping over a fence, which is also in the middle of an unidentified desert. Finally, the set of clips ends with a shot of a single young man climbing a rope in an attempt to get over a large concrete wall. At no point while these clips are shown is any effort made to identify who these people are, where they are, or what they are doing.

In August of 2010, CNN used similar images in their coverage of the anchor baby issue on Anderson Cooper's news show. Former Representative Russell Pearce appears on the show to discuss anchor babies, birthright citizenship, and the jurisdiction clause. While he explains who does not fall under the jurisdiction of the United States, unidentified video clips of people in a desert on either side of a fence appear. When Pearce states, "it is a crime to enter this country illegally," a few different shots of people jumping over fences play in quick succession before they give way to border patrol officers searching a group of people who fit a stereotypical image of the undocumented immigrant.

In a segment from the same month that aired on MSNBC, immigration policy and specifically the anchor baby are immediately framed as political tools by the anchor, who puts them in the category of "hot button issues." When she moves on from discussing immigration to making general statements about the issues most important to the 2010 midterm elections, half of the screen is filled with video footage of unidentified people

going in and out of a hole cut through a fence in a desert area. Even though she has moved on from undocumented immigration to discuss other issues that may come up during the midterm election campaigns, the images continue to refer back to immigration.

Though the images appear at different times and on different news sources, and accompany text that refers to different aspects of the six cases identified during analysis, they work together to reinforce the criminal act of transgressing the Southern border. The people always appear in a desert area, an attribute that reflects visual expectations of the Southwest borderland environment. The desert figures in even when people are absent, as happened in some of the clips mentioned above. This physically situates the footage for the viewer as the text of the clip continues to discuss the anchor baby debate.

Fences are also prevalent in the visual representations of the anchor baby debate. The fence is a much more direct reference to the physical border of the United States, and the legal and physical barriers to unauthorized entry. The footage used in the clips that cover the anchor baby show people transgressing this barrier, by cutting through the fence, finding ways over the fence, or the appearance of people on either side to reinforce the presence of this population on both sides of the border.

The environmental cues for geographic location and the action shots that resonate with expectations of unauthorized border crossings never receive any acknowledgment, either through voiceovers or captions within the news segment. This stock footage plays without explanation, because none is needed. These images are, perhaps, the perfect example of how the anchor baby does work to reinforce existing concepts within the broader discourse of immigration in American society. Viewers do not need any additional information to draw the connections that editors expect them to make in

showing this footage: the audience already knows that deserts and fences mean the border, and that these people in the clips are undocumented immigrants because of their physical and phenotypic traits. The narrative about undocumented immigration is so embedded in American social understanding that the editors do not need to do any work to ensure that these images will be understood as representing the undocumented immigrant parents of the anchor baby.

Further, the prevalence of images portraying the standard undocumented immigrant in relation to images of children, babies, or other things related to the anchor baby itself brings us back to the question of what the anchor baby discussion is really about: if these pundits, representatives, and anchors were truly discussing citizenship, children, and geographically situated birth, it would be safe to assume that the majority of image-setting stock footage would be used to establish the identity of these children. Instead, almost every instance of visual image-setting included in the clips reviewed here references the criminal immigrant identity of the parent through environmental cues, such as the desert, and actions that are associated with unauthorized border crossings. What's more, the foreign tourists that supposedly make up the other population of anchor baby parentage do not appear at all beyond a CNN interview with a specific Mexican citizen who gave birth to her son in the United States while on a visa.

The undocumented immigrant parent of the anchor baby is consistently singled out, both in the text of the segments and through such visual representations as these stock images that place them in an easily recognizable role of "other." According to the actors appearing in these segments, not all immigrants and marginalized populations should be barred access to birthright citizenship. As a matter of fact, defending the access

of certain populations of people to citizenship is a key aspect of the construction of the undocumented immigrant parent as the undeserving other. Citizenship as something one should deserve, and the identity of undocumented immigrants as undeserving within this context, is integral to anchor baby discourse.

The criminal nature of the undocumented immigrant parent is the first and most obvious aspect of her undeserving status. The initial act of entry into the United States is one that both transgresses the American rule of law and threatens the country's security. This criminal act places the parent in opposition to America. A person in opposition to the well-being of the country should not have access to the benefits of being a citizen, and so the initial criminal act through which the undocumented immigrant subject comes into being sets her apart as undeserving of American citizenship. This undeserving status, like her criminality and immorality, is transferred to her anchor baby child through birth.

In order for the anchor baby and her parents to occupy one side of the deserving/undeserving binary, the image of the deserving population must also be set so that both parent and child can exist in relation to them. Here, these populations are stated explicitly and come from historical observations of the fourteenth amendment.

Without the jurisdiction clause, the anchor baby has no constitutional leg to stand on. The jurisdiction clause makes this a linguistic question, when in fact the question is, who deserves to be American? If the answer lies in the interpretation of the word "jurisdiction," then none of these actors hold the responsibility for determining who has access to citizenship and who does not. In fact, they are responsible for protecting American citizenship.

The jurisdiction clause and the historical narrative of original intent insulate the proponents of anti-anchor baby legislation from comparison to those who sought to exclude Native Americans and freed slaves from incorporation into the American population. The jurisdiction clause means they are protecting what it means to be American from those who wish to defile it, instead of creating another layer of exclusion in the attempt to maintain an America that fits our understanding of ourselves in the face of fears about the future. The jurisdiction clause frames the question in terms of history and constitutional language, instead of a site of meaning making and image setting around immigration in the United States.

When Steve King appeared on Greta Van Susteren's show on the Fox News network on January 7th, 2011, he talked in terms of this intent: "The purpose of [the fourteenth amendment] was to ensure that babies born to newly freed slaves would be American citizens." Bill O'Reilly on The O'Reilly Factor episode that aired the previous day put the original intent in direct conversation with anchor babies, when he said,

Do you think the country wanted that [birthright citizenship for anchor babies] when it ratified the fourteenth amendment in 1868? Of course not! That amendment was designed to make sure freed slaves got citizenship.

When Anne Coulter appeared on O'Reilly's show in August of 2010, she placed a great deal of emphasis on the historic connection to slavery:

No, it was totally different. It was African Americans being liberated from slavery... it was all about Reconstruction; it was about freed slaves... It was all a part of Reconstruction to get an amendment added to the Constitution... They can argue about what to do about it all night long, but the fourteenth amendment was not [meant] to give illegal aliens the right to be citizens. It was specifically to give adult, full grown freed slaves the rights of citizens... We do owe blacks; we do not owe the entire world.

Clips analyzed from CNN and MSNBC weave the same narrative. On a CNN segment from August 3rd, the anchor discusses the history of the amendment when introducing Senator Coburn's opinions on holding a congressional hearing about anchor babies: "Coburn points to the citizenship clause of the fourteenth amendment was adopted: so that Southern states following the Civil War couldn't deny citizenship to freed slaves." On a segment of John King USA that aired on the same day, a clip of Mitch McConnell shows him saying, "The founding fathers said, we don't want to disenfranchise freed slaves." On a segment from the day before that aired on MSNBC, an expert who disagrees with the proposed legislation still lends credibility to the historical narrative when he says, "It was put there mainly to ensure that freed slaves would become citizens of the United States and wouldn't be denied citizenship." On another segment on MSNBC from August 2nd, Senator Kyl from Arizona reiterates this original intent: "It was enacted in 1868 to ensure states would not deny citizenship to former slaves."

In the historical narrative presented by the actors communicating images and meanings surrounding the anchor baby, the fourteenth amendment was necessary to protect the rights of freed slaves from the attempts of Southern states to deny them access to citizenship following emancipation. At one point, Russell Pearce even calls this "noble," and brings attention to the fact that it was the Republican Party that was responsible for the fourteenth amendment. In the historical narrative of original intent that informs the anchor baby, this championing of the rights of the marginalized does not lend support to protecting the citizenship rights of the similarly raced and marginalized

group of anchor babies. Instead, the freed slaves are the deserving group that the subject of the anchor baby relates to in its construction.

Appearing on Fox News in January 2011, Congressman Steve King revisited the history of the fourteenth amendment in an effort to communicate its original intentions in granting birthright citizenship to children born in the United States. According to King, the fourteenth amendment operated specifically in reference to the children of newly freed slaves during the Reconstruction. King places freed slaves and their descendants on the deserving side of the binary explicitly when he makes sure to point out that granting citizenship to the children of freed slaves was a “noble” cause. When taken in the context of arguing that the children of undocumented immigrants should not have access to birthright citizenship, this statement has a dual purpose: it both establishes that there are marginalized groups who should have access to birthright citizenship and denies undocumented immigrants and their children this access.

Congressman Brian Billbray also appeared on Fox News on August 13, 2010 to discuss the anchor baby and birthright citizenship. In this instance, Billbray brings up the plight of the Native Americans and their access to citizenship. It is not fair, Billbray says, that Native American children were not guaranteed citizenship while other populations gain access through the fourteenth amendment. Native Americans, in this context, are the wronged and deserving party. Not only do they deserve citizenship, but they were historically denied access to it. This marginalizing policy, in reference to the access granted to the children of undocumented immigrants, makes the anchor baby even more offensive because of the historical treatment of Native Americans.

When she appeared on Fox News in August of 2010, Ann Coulter references both Native Americans and freed slaves in her discussion of who deserves access to birthright citizenship and who does not. Coulter specifically points out that Native Americans did not receive citizenship from the fourteenth amendment, because it was “all about the Reconstruction, and all about freed slaves.” Further, “the fourteenth amendment was not about giving illegal aliens the right to be citizens,” but “to give adult, full-grown, freed slaves” citizenship. Coulter makes an explicit comparison between the undocumented immigrant population, using the term “illegal aliens” to make the distinction and the criminal aspects of their undeserving status clear, and “freed slaves,” a population historically understood in American society as horribly wronged and whose access to citizenship no one would deny. When placed in the context of two historically marginalized populations, Native Americans and freed slaves, undocumented immigrants are the undeserving “other.”

Congressman Brian Billbray focused on Native Americans again when he appeared on CNN in August of 2010. Billbray pointed out that there had to be a new law to grant citizenship to Native Americans, and asked how the fourteenth amendment could be applied to others when it could not be applied to this population. If it took an entirely new law to grant citizenship rights to Native Americans, Billbray’s argument goes, then how can we grant citizenship to undocumented immigrants using simply the fourteenth amendment? The highly deserving nature of the Native American population sets the undocumented immigrant parents of the anchor baby decidedly on the undeserving side of the binary.

Appearing on CNN the same day as Billbray, though on a different news show, Former Representative Russell Pearce also revisited American history when discussing anchor babies and their access to birthright citizenship. Pearce says that the fourteenth amendment gave African Americans their “rightful place at the table,” and says that it had “nothing to do with foreigners at all, legal or illegal.” Pearce also points out that Native Americans did not benefit from the fourteenth amendment. It took three court cases to grant citizenship to Native Americans, Pearce says, and “there was no doubt where they were born.” In another segment five months later on CNN, Pearce relates the jurisdiction clause to Native Americans’ access to citizenship, emphasizing that this population did not come under the legal jurisdiction of the United States. For Pearce, as for many of the other people appearing on these segments, Native Americans and African Americans hold the deserving status. They were wrongly treated when they had no access to citizenship, and now that they do have access to citizenship their subject identity ought to have influence on which populations are deemed equally deserving. “Foreigners,” or immigrants, do not have any claim to this amendment both for historical and moral political reasons. Pearce consistently points out that immigration was not an issue at the time that the fourteenth amendment was debated, and so it should not apply to immigrants. More importantly, however, giving citizenship to undeserving undocumented immigrants and their children demeans these other populations’ hard won fight for citizenship.

In a segment on Fox News that aired on August 13, 2010, Bilbray points out that “even American Indians were not given automatic citizenship by the fourteenth amendment, because they were not totally subject [to the jurisdiction of the United

States.” Anne Coulter, on the same segment mentioned above, exclaimed, “It was not Native Americans! Native Americans were excluded from the fourteenth amendment!” when Bill O’Reilly attempted to say that the fourteenth amendment addressed their access to citizenship.

On the segment of John King USA that aired on CNN featuring Bilbray described previously, he said:

That [jurisdiction clause] is why, in 1872, the Supreme Court ruled that even American Indians born on American soil did not fall under the definition of ‘subject to the jurisdiction,’ because they could not be tried for treason... They were not given [birthright citizenship under the fourteenth amendment], so how can we apply it to others?

Russell Pearce made a similar statement in the episode of Anderson Cooper 360 where he appeared as a guest:

The Supreme Court said it absolutely didn’t apply to them [undocumented immigrants]. In fact, it didn’t even apply to American Indians. They said, because they belong to a tribe, they had alienage allegiance to a tribe, born to a tribe and born to a sovereign nation, there’s no doubt where they were born. Congress had to pass three acts, one in the 1800’s, the other in 1901 and the other in 1924 giving citizenship to the Indians.

When he appeared on Hardball with Chris Matthews, Steve King explained the fourteenth amendment’s relation to Native Americans in terms of the threat it may have posed to their rights within their tribal community: “That exemption is there for certain Native American tribes that might have lost some of their access to their tribal rights if they had been granted automatic citizenship.” Pearce, appearing again on CNN, also pointed to tribal membership to help explain this exclusion: “Do you know that when the fourteenth amendment was passed... in 1868, it did not recognize the American Indian[s] as citizens? And the reason was, [be]cause they were born on a reservation and members

of a tribe. And they were concerned about that jurisdiction language that's in the fourteenth amendment.”

For those communicating the narrative, citizenship should not be something that comes without effort or cost. Birthright citizenship for the children of undocumented immigrants is an issue because it does not fit with the struggles of African American and Native American populations. Citizenship is not something that is simply handed to you, it is something you must earn and something you must deserve.

Earning citizenship does not have to be the end result of a political and legal struggle. If a person is under the jurisdiction of the country, then they earn citizenship through this status. What “jurisdiction” means is consistently challenged throughout these segments, but despite the shifting definition it remains an important factor in earning one's right to citizenship.

On August 4, 2010, Representative Lindsay Graham appeared on Fox News and related citizenship access to military service. In his opinion, undocumented immigrants can alleviate their undeserving status if they take certain measures to become deserving of citizenship. Military citizenship should reduce the amount of time it takes to become a naturalized citizen for those wishing to enter the country, because it proves loyalty to the nation and places a person under its jurisdiction. There are already policies like this in effect, and Graham references one such policy in action in Iraq. Here, Iraqi citizens can expedite their naturalization process if they serve in the military. Graham describes a naturalization service where two people who would have been up for naturalization were killed in combat. These people are deserving as well, and their ultimate sacrifice for the

United States makes it all the more unconscionable that undocumented immigrants' children would have access to citizenship.

That same month, Representative Billbray characterizes citizenship as something you earn through the ability to be tried for treason. When undocumented immigrants serve in the military, they can be tried for treason and are thus subject to the jurisdiction of the United States. In another clip from August of 2010, the anchor quotes a Rasmussen poll that shows 58% of Americans believe that anchor babies should not have access to birthright citizenship, suggesting that this concept of earned citizenship is something that is shared by the majority of Americans.

On August 11, 2010, Rick Sanchez suggests that undocumented immigrants who are "good citizens" should be distinguished from the other, undesirable sections of the population. Why, Sanchez asks, should we punish these good immigrants by keeping their children from having citizenship? Sanchez proposes a system that allows those people, "the really good ones, not the scum, not the gang members, not the drug dealers, but those people to be a part of what we are in this country." He sets the image of the "good" and "deserving" illegal immigrant by enumerating all of the things that make someone a good citizen in this country, and places these in relation to what makes someone a "bad" addition to society. Sanchez allows for the possibility of good and deserving undocumented immigrants, and contends that those particular parents should be able to give birth to American citizen children. His argument does not erase the deserving/undeserving binary, it merely allows for certain immigrants who meet the hegemonic ideal of a "good citizen" to reinforce the image of the unwanted undocumented immigrant by moving them to the deserving end of the spectrum.

Though neither of the two groups that feature the most prominently in the creation and reification of the deserving/undeserving binary are represented through images in the clips, the raced nature of these two marginalized populations cannot escape the viewer's notice. The perception of the raced other was integral to the historical and present marginalization of both Native Americans and the freed slave population at the time of the fourteenth amendment's passing. This association with race resonates with another aspect of the imagery used in anchor baby discourse: the video clips do not only draw on accepted characteristics of entry points.

The anchor baby and her parents occupy a subject position that is both raced and classed. Despite arguments that this group also includes foreign tourists from China and the Middle East, all of the stock footage used to set the image of the parents shows a specific stereotype of the undocumented immigrant. Almost all of the images are of young men, despite the emphasis on birth. These young men, as mentioned before, are located in deserts and near fences. When they are near fences, the actions in the stock footage suggest they are trying to get through or over these barriers. They are dusty and do not carry many belongings, if any, and in every single clip shown in reference to the anchor baby, the people have dark brown skin. The visual cues that associate the people in the footage with the criminality of undocumented immigration in anchor baby discourse do work that has obvious links to the text of each segment. It is important to establish the criminal and immoral identity of the anchor baby's parents in order to continue the argument that giving birthright citizenship to this child is a danger to American society, but what does establishing a raced image of the parent do?

There are very few explicit references to race in describing the parents of anchor babies. Much detail and a great number of adjectives describe their criminal and undeserving nature, but only passing references like “Southern border” even suggest that there might also be a specific race or ethnicity associated with the anchor baby and her parents. The consistency of the images used to set the subject in the viewer’s mind, and made to refer to pre-existing assumptions about undocumented immigrants resulting from immigration discourse, suggests that this is integral to the construction of the anchor baby subject and the subject positions of her parents. Nothing that is repeated with such regularity across the three sources, and without any difference according to case and subject of text, could be without meaning. This is not to suggest that the editors who insert these images are consciously setting an image that associates a specific brown skin tone to undocumented immigrants.

Instead, let us view this raced image-setting as proof of how deeply ingrained our ideas about immigrants are in the United States, and the reliance of this strand on a foundation of pre-existing discourses in American society. Whatever else the pundits, representatives, and anchors may argue about in these segments, the raced identity of the undocumented immigrant subject is accepted as fact. The footage on each source is indistinguishable from the next. The raced nature of the undocumented immigrant is so deeply a part of the American understanding of immigration it is not even considered as a contestable aspect of the anchor baby idea.

The images are the only explicit reference to the raced identity of the anchor baby’s parents. However, the anchors do make certain raced connections to demographics and voter turnout in the then-upcoming midterm elections of 2010. These

references occur solely on CNN and MSNBC. These two sources generally frame the anchor baby debate in terms of political rhetoric as opposed to serious legislation, and this is where questions of voting demographics come into play.

In a segment from August 2010, the anchor of John King USA brings up a question of how an anti-birthright citizenship stance for the children of undocumented immigrants might impact certain groups of voters in relation to the Republican Party. She cites a statistic on the number of “legal Latinos” who become old enough to vote every month. She then asks Representative Billbray, who is a guest on this particular segment, whether his stance on anchor babies, and the stance of the Republican Party, will “alienate” these new young voters. Billbray responds with his familiarity with Latinos from his childhood and contends that they do not like being associated with flouting the rule of law. If given the chance, Billbray says, people would see that “the Latinos are on our side” when it comes to immigration policies.

Earlier in 2010, Stephanie Miller appeared on MSNBC to discuss the anchor baby issue. She, too, draws a connection between the discourse and voter demographics. Legislation focused on reinterpreting or changing the fourteenth amendment based on anchor baby discourse could be alienating to Hispanic voters, in Miller’s opinion.

On another segment from August on CNN, the possibility of legislation to remedy birthright citizenship for anchor babies brings Rick Sanchez to wonder whether this kind of policy change would affect the Hispanic vote. Sanchez draws on his own experience as an immigrant and a Spanish-speaker to establish his credibility to speak to the influence on the Hispanic voting population, and asks his guest, Representative Phil Gingrey, whether the Republican Party is worried about the possible impact on voter

turnout. Gingrey speaks instead to the importance of the anchor baby issue, because we can't "afford" 380,000 newborns becoming citizens every year.

By suggesting that the children of undocumented immigrants are something we cannot "afford," it is unclear whether Gingrey is referring to an influx of undesirable citizens or if he is literally referring to the burden these children and their family could place on the troubled American economy. From his other comments in the segment, it seems far more likely that he is commenting on the likelihood that these children and their families will become an economic burden for American society.

In this narrative, birthright citizenship for the children of undocumented immigrants is a magnet for immigration flows. Undocumented immigrant parents do not simply happen to have children in the United States, who then happen into access to citizenship. This citizenship is a key motivator for the parents' illegal entry into the country in the first place. Not only is the child assumed to anchor the parents through security and a decreased chance of deportation, but the child is constantly referred to as a method of accessing American benefits and the welfare system.

When Phil Gingrey appeared on the Hardball segment on MSNBC, he pinpointed this connection:

We have seventy welfare programs. Not just TANF, and food stamps, and Medicaid, and free care in the emergency room, and free schooling in our public schools. We are breaking this country if we don't solve that problem [birthright citizenship and the reliance of anchor babies and their parents on American benefits].

In the United States, those citizens who use our social policies, such as the ones Gingrey listed like food stamps and TANF, are demonized in political discourse. They are unable to provide for their families, they are lazy, and they are a drain on the government. This

demonization is most visible in the image of the Welfare Queen popularized under Reagan and used to promote neo-liberal economic policies resulting in the reduction of social safety nets in the United States. This demonization of the poor is evident in the political rhetoric surrounding unemployment payments and the current financial crisis: some politicians suggested that unemployment benefits should not be extended, because the unemployed would become reliant on unemployment checks instead of trying to find jobs.

If we demonize American citizens who rely on welfare, what does that mean for the undocumented immigrants whose children supposedly grant them access to benefits? They are doubly demonized; they are doubly to blame for America's problems. Not only are they taking advantage of our Constitution while flouting our legal system, they are also the undeserving poor. They are not citizens, and so they deserve none of the assistance available through American welfare programs. The undocumented immigrant parent of the anchor baby is using her child to gain access to these services. Like that of the welfare queen, her child serves as a means to an end: dependence upon the state.

When Ann Coulter appeared on the O'Reilly Factor on Fox News, she made a very clear connection between undocumented immigration and a reliance on social programs:

...if you break our laws by entering this country without permission and give birth to a child, we reward that child with U.S. citizenship and guarantee full access to all public services that this country provides.

Coulter says it is "incongruous" to have birthright citizenship in a "welfare state," and that this aspect of birthright citizenship goes against the original intent of the fourteenth amendment: "It wasn't like Americans were upset that dead beats couldn't slip into the

country, have babies, and start collecting welfare.” In another segment of the O’Reilly Factor, Fox News Analyst Liz Wiehl described the undocumented immigrant parents of anchor babies as “poor illegal immigrants,” explicitly relating the undocumented immigrant subject with a socioeconomic class.

When Representative King appeared on Fox in June of 2011, he described birthright citizenship as a motivator. Undocumented immigrant women come to the United States, he argues, for the express purpose of giving birth so that they can be “anchored to American benefits.” King also suggests that there is an economic aspect to birthright citizenship, and uses the story of a Mexican mother giving birth in America despite an effort to train doctors in her town to deliver her quintuplets to illustrate the cost born by hospitals in the border region. When these undocumented immigrant parents enter the country, they are focused on getting access to American social programs, or “benefits.” These programs cost money, and thus the undocumented immigrant and her children become a burden on the American economy.

On CNN in August of 2011, Robert Traynham, a Republican campaign consultant, framed the issue of birthright citizenship in specifically economic terms. This issue, he argued, is a “societal” one, because it relates to taxes and the taxpaying citizen. Traynham describes the undocumented immigrant parents of anchor babies as “having kids in this country and getting in the front of the line for basic services.” The anchor baby issue, according to Traynham, is about “whether or not we believe as a society that we should be giving benefits to illegal immigrants.” Traynham also relates the anchor baby debate to “policy,” “tax,” and “deficit,” framing birthright citizenship as an economic issue instead of an issue of immigration policy. The “real question,” according

to Traynham, “is whether we can afford it [birthright citizenship] or not.” In Traynham’s account, the assumed reliance of undocumented immigrants and their children on American social programs is the real issue because of its economic implications during the recession.

The common thread that runs through all of these accounts that describe American “benefits” as a motivator for immigration and that label undocumented immigrants and their children as “burdens” on the American economy is that this population is poor. The only time the socioeconomic status of anchor babies and their parents is mentioned is once on Fox News, in the instance quoted above, when Liz Wiehl describes the parents as “poor illegal immigrants.” Otherwise, the reliance of undocumented immigrants on social programs is accepted as a reality because immigration discourse sets a subject position for undocumented immigrants that includes not only race but also socioeconomic status. If these immigrants were not poor, why would access to American social programs, or “welfare” and “benefits” be enough of a motivating factor to spur the unauthorized entry into this country and the eventual birth of a child in American territory? The reasons for this economic inequality are not questioned by those appearing on these segments, and the onus for poverty and the social ills it brings with it remain on the undocumented immigrant parents. Their poverty further demonizes them, because it is the motivator for transgressing the American rule of law and crossing into the country illegally.

This is not simply about babies. It is also not simply about geographically situated birth. It could be argued that the anchor baby debate is not about children at all, but instead a commentary on undocumented immigration and the traits that separate us from

them. However, it touches on too many complex issues to be boiled down to undocumented immigrant subjectivity alone. Anchor baby discourse does do work to reinforce and draw upon existing images and meanings surrounding the undocumented immigrant, this is certain.

Through discussions about birthright citizenship, the fourteenth amendment, and the history of the Constitution, those people featured in these clips touch on issues of identity and construct the image and subject position of the undocumented immigrant parent of the anchor baby. The identity of the parent is central to the importance of the child. The threats brought by undocumented immigration are embodied in the anchor baby, who carries the traits of the parents but holds the security of American citizenship.

One of these traits is the criminality that is central to the act that creates the undocumented immigrant subject: the assumed unauthorized border crossing into the United States. This is represented through naming and the use of the phrases “illegal immigration,” “illegal immigrants,” and “illegals” in the clips reviewed here. This criminality is one aspect of what makes the undocumented immigrant parent and the anchor baby child in turn undeserving of American citizenship.

The identification of other groups as deserving of citizenship is central to setting up the deserving/undeserving binary. Freed slaves at the time of Reconstruction and the Native American population act as the two most prominent and cited deserving groups. The unarguably deserving nature of these two groups historically combined with the criminal identity of the undocumented immigrant parent places both the parents and the children firmly in the position of undeserving other.

The race and class of the anchor baby and her parents is also set here and refers to accepted ideas from immigration discourse more generally to set these images in these clips. Through the text and the use of videos and pictures, the brown-skinned undocumented immigrant assumed to be from Mexico because she crosses the southern border for entry is constantly reconstructed for the viewer without the necessity of verbal cues. The poverty of the undocumented immigrant parents and their anchor baby child is accepted and used to frame arguments that portray this population as a burden on the American economy at a time when we cannot afford extra economic weight.

All of these aspects combined are the subject position of the undocumented immigrant parent to the anchor baby. The image setting and meaning making efforts of the news sources though perhaps not a conscious endeavor are effective because they rely on ideas the American public already accepts as fact. The pre-existing narrative about undocumented immigrants provides the foundation for anchor baby fears, and the anchor baby reaffirms the viewer's biases and strengthens the position of previously accepted knowledges about immigrants in society.

The Gendered Implications of Anchor Baby Discourse

In the previous two chapters, the text and images that make up anchor baby discourse provided the basis for analysis; critically engaging the content of these clips allowed both explicit and implicit instances of meaning-making and image-setting to come to the surface. Engaging the anchor baby narrative these media sources communicate allows us to focus on the political and discursive work done by the discourse, but the silences within a narrative can provide equally important clues.

The “anchor baby,” as defined through these clips and in this discourse, is a child born in the United States. This situated birth is an integral piece of the anchor baby’s identity. The parents of the anchor baby are the subject of a great deal of image setting and meaning making, both implicitly and explicitly. In the parents, the anchor baby discourse is most directly tied to the existing immigration discourse. Both parentage and birth are important aspects of the anchor baby subject, and yet gender does not play a large enough part in the discourse to make it through analysis and into this paper’s definition of anchor baby discourse. For a concept so invested in parentage and birth, gender is conspicuously absent from the coverage.

In any instance of narrative formation, conscious and unconscious decisions are made about what will be included and what will not. Many of these decisions regarding the anchor baby and the clips included in this study have multiple possible sources. The politicians that appear on these shows and inform so much of the text content reviewed here are responding to instruction from political advisors, voters, their national party, and think tanks that produce information about political issues. The news channels

themselves are constrained by time and the interests of the viewing audience and the companies that advertise on their channels. As each actor involved in creating and maintaining anchor baby discourse communicates their strand of the narrative, certain aspects of the story are featured prominently and others are cut out. Here, the silences that inform the gaps in the anchor baby narrative come into being. After reviewing the defined anchor baby discourse resulting from the methods chosen for this paper, gender was glaringly absent.

Identifying the absence of gender is not to say that it is never addressed: the gender of the parents is sometimes mentioned. Representative Gutierrez consistently plays upon the image of the vulnerable mother when explaining why he opposes anchor baby rhetoric. When Representative Phillip Gingrey is called upon to explain how his proposed legislation would determine whose children receive citizenship, he mentions the importance of the mother's status because paternity is difficult to determine in the case of the anchor baby. Gendered expectations of parenthood clearly inform both of these representatives' opinions on anchor babies and birthright citizenship, so why is gender used only as an emotional tool or mentioned in passing when discussing the intricacies of legislative action?

Though gender did not pass through the methods to inclusion in the definition of anchor baby discourse, the use of statistics as a meaning making tool did. Most of the statistics used in these clips are explicitly tied to gendered experiences, such as birth and maternity. Though the majority of statistics are used to discuss the birth of children, in multiple cases the statistics explicitly focus on the status of the mother giving birth to children in the United States. It is important to note that not all those who have the

capacity to become pregnant and give birth identify as women. However, in the social understanding of birth in the United States it is a gendered act associated with the role of the mother. For this reason, birth is associated with the female experience for the purposes of this paper. Birth and motherhood are gendered ideas, but immigrant women receive little to no coverage or discussion.

The anchor baby is an American citizen, but anchor baby discourse is concerned with differentiating this child from other American citizen children through the identity of their parents. What is it about the children of the undocumented immigrant mothers that necessitates this separation? Immigrant mothers have historically been taxed with the responsibility for raising the next generation of American citizens. The mother is the site of cultural reproduction. Part of the discourse of undocumented immigration, as explored in the previous chapter, is an inassimilable and fixed criminal identity. The anchor baby is constantly framed within the subject position of her parents. She cannot be separated from this undesirable identity of undocumented immigrant. Unlike her parents, however, she is an American citizen. It is this citizenship and inclusion that makes her a threat to the future of American society. With the exception of a few comments made by Representatives Gingrey and Graham, this aspect of the anchor baby is similarly silenced in the discourse.

This chapter also attempts to draw the connections between the silences in anchor baby discourse and the historical expectations that placed the responsibility for replicating social ills in the United States on the bodies of immigrant women. At the turn of the century the first immigration laws came into effect and were subject to interpretation by border patrol officers for the first time. Immigrant women were much

more likely than immigrant men to be turned away at the border. They were excluded for their potential to become poor and place a burden on American society. These women were also turned away for their proclivity for immorality. When they were not excluded on the basis of their unfavorable traits, they were admitted based upon gendered expectations of filling the roles of mother and wife. This history of gendered exclusion and inclusion in immigration does not play a large role in contemporary conversations about immigration in the United States. The similarities between the silences in anchor baby discourse and the historical expectations and biases focused on immigrant women and their bodies as sites of cultural reproduction suggest that the discourse should not be considered without exploring these connections and bringing this historical context into focus.

The silences in anchor baby discourse around futurity and gender help establish the focus of anchor baby discourse. The pundits, representatives, and anchors featured in these clips contend that this focus is on the definition of citizenship and exploring Constitutional history. A conversation about birthright citizenship is incomplete without considering what work the anchor baby does for fears about futurity. Anchor baby discourse also holds clues to the gendered nature of the legal treatment of immigration women in the United States, both at the present and in the past. A historical grounding in immigration policies and practices towards immigrant women helps the anchor baby appear as part of a long trajectory instead of an anomaly of political strategy during a midterm election. By interrogating the silences in the discourse, first around gender and then around childhood and futurity, this chapter fills in the gaps of anchor baby discourse concerning these two important aspects of immigration discourse.

Fertility, Futurity, and Fear

The content of the anchor baby discourse revealed in the previous chapter suggests that the discourse is not, in fact, about women. The entirety of the anchor baby concept relies on reproduction and birth and the mental image of women literally carrying another person inside of them as they transgress United States law and cross the border. Why is it that almost all of the discussion focused on policy, legislation, and questions of citizenship? If one were only to look at the concepts and images repeated explicitly, it would be easy to forget that immigrant women are implicated in this discourse. The idea that they will reproduce is such a widely accepted notion it does not need further explanation. The immigrant woman's reproduction is a taken for granted in anchor baby discourse. This taken for granted nature of the information obscures how centrally existing discourses about Mexican-origin women's reproduction plays into the construction of the anchor baby.

Immigrant women's reproduction has been a source of nativist anxiety since the 1890's (Gutierrez 5). The reproductive capacity of Mexican-origin women, immigrant and citizen alike, has been a visible news issue in the United States for the last twenty years (xii). Gutierrez' work, in *Fertile Matters*, shows how the population control movement and anti-immigrant movements converged in the 1970's to trace the production of the overly fertile Mexican-origin immigrant woman in discourse.

Gutierrez details the trajectory of the population control movement, which grew to a peak in the mid-seventies, at the same time as a peak in anti-immigrant concerns (22). Population control concerns and concerns with immigration, specifically undocumented immigration from Mexico, converged to name overpopulation in Mexico

as the cause of undocumented immigration in the United States in the mid-seventies (24). Women in Mexico, the source of the unregulated population surge, were represented as irresponsibly invested in having far more children than the replacement rate called for. Further, the fertility of Mexican women, evidenced by undocumented immigration, made them deviant and set them apart from the “normal” American woman (61). The presence of Mexican-origin people in the United States was already considered a problem for population growth, and so the reproductive Mexican woman became its source. In 1973, the concerns about undocumented women’s reproduction found a focal point in statistics of welfare use: “aliens” were found to make up 8 to 9% of those receiving welfare benefits. Benefits stemming from reproduction and birth were the most troublesome. Access to prenatal care for undocumented women and the cost of birth in American hospitals are a few examples. Anchor babies, though they did not have this name yet, were a topic of discussion in the immigration and population control debates. The 1970’s concern about the children of undocumented immigrants is directly tied in to the idea that these children and their mothers were a drain on the American government (53). Many explicit assumptions of anchor baby discourse are also mentioned by Gutierrez as coming out of these public debates over the fertility of Mexican-origin women, including this access to benefits and the calculated nature of pregnant women’s border crossings (115). There are many parallels between the women’s treatment documented in *Fertile Matters* and the issues still facing those assumed to be of Mexican origin today. *Fertile Matters* is mainly concerned with the sterilization of Mexican-origin women at LACMC. Many of the current proponents of legislation to address the anchor baby problem openly support

deportation of undocumented immigrants. One woman from Gutierrez' study recalls being threatened with deportation if she refused sterilization (44).

The demographer's impact on immigration fears did not stop in the 1970's. Demographic studies showing and predicting shifts in the ethnic majority in the United States population that came out in the late 90's and early 2000's implicated Hispanics and, in particular, Mexican-origin people as the fastest growing demographic and the largest ethnic population in the United States (2). Demographic studies like these from the earlier decades aided Mexican-origin women in becoming legitimate subjects of public policy by the 1990's. This allowed them to become the object of the mass media (111). Media representations of women of Mexican-origin have a direct impact on policy. Patricia Hill Collins uses the concept of "controlling images" to discuss how discourses about African American women are constructed and reified. Immigration discourse also relies on "controlling images," such as the "virtual realities" discussed above, and one of those images is the Mexican illegal immigrant woman with a high reproduction rate (9). In the evolution of discourse about Mexican origin immigrant women, one image is that of the woman completely defined by her desire to reproduce. Here, her one aim and focus is toward motherhood: her only goal is reproduction (12). This simplification of her subject down to a focus on motherhood creates a space for calculated birth in the United States as the sole motivator for the parent of the anchor baby.

The image of birth as the real motivator for border crossings appeared in a California newspaper in 1995 (115). The emphasis of the person writing about their concerns was that the public was focused on the wrong immigration magnet. Birth, not jobs, brought immigrants to the United States. This argument is echoed in the

contemporary statements of representatives found in the clips reviewed for this project supporting legislation to deny anchor babies access to citizenship. This reflects a shift in the gendered image of the immigrant: labor has historically been associated with male immigrants, like the braceros, coming across the border to provide money for their families back home. Birth as a motivator is explicitly gendered: only immigrants with the capacity to reproduce can respond to this magnet. At its very core, anchor baby discourse is focused on female immigrant and her reproductive capacity.

“Likely to Become a Public Charge:” the Potential for Poverty

The term, “likely to become a public charge,” or LPC, entered into immigration law in 1891. If immigrant officials found reason to believe that a person would not be able to support themselves, they were able to exclude potential immigrants and send them back to their country of origin. LPC was also used to deport immigrants living in the United States (Moloney 101).

The application of LPC was, like all other aspects of immigration exclusion, subjective. It was also heavily based in sexist and patriarchal assumptions about women’s economic viability and their appropriate role in society. Immigration officials were much less likely to view female immigrants as able to support themselves and earn a living as they were male immigrants (96). In the early nineteenth century industrialization of the urban centers was in full swing. American women moved in increasing numbers to cities where they worked in factories and earned a living as single women. Many of the women immigrants examined by immigration officials hoped to do the same. However, those possessing skills that required them to work outside the domestic sphere were more likely

to be designated LPC than those who sought employment as domestic workers (Gardner 92).

Etta Horowitz came to the United States in 1910 hoping to enter as an immigrant with two of her children. She was a widow. In the eyes of the immigration officials, the absence of a male breadwinner put her at higher risk for becoming a public charge. Horowitz was not without skills. She was a tailor and had been supporting herself and her family through her work for years. Though she tried to communicate this to the immigration officials during her interrogation, her age and her appearance coupled with the skepticism of the immigrant officials about a woman's ability to support a family without the help of a man kept her from entering the United States (87). Though judgments on a female immigrant's ability to support herself and a family, if she entered with one, were certainly colored by traditional expectations of women's involvement in labor, they also reflected the realities of work available to immigrant women in the United States at the time to a certain extent. Immigrant women faced racist and sexist barriers to employment, and were often forced to accept positions in the "dirtiest, meanest, most low-paying work available" (93).

Instead of treating immigrant women's lack of access to labor as institutional and reflective of social and political biases and shortcomings within the United States, immigrant policies relied on eugenics to name poverty as something that immigrants brought into the country with them (90). Poverty was an individual issue, and each immigrant was held responsible.

Poverty was not something one simply had. An immigrant did not have to be currently in poverty to be LPC. She did not have to have a history of poverty in her home

country, either. Instead, poverty was something that occupied the immigrant's past, present, and future. Poverty, and LPC, included the potentiality that the immigrant could become poor and end up becoming a burden on the state (87).

The designation "LPC" was mired in racist, classist, and sexist expectations. Immigrant officials were charged with detecting not only poverty itself, but the ability to become poor upon entry into the country. Poverty, as something immigrants brought into the country, was associated with physical markers like race and nation of origin.

As discussed in the previous chapter situating anchor baby discourse within the existing discursive strands concerning undocumented immigration, the parents of the anchor baby are assumed to be poor. Like the immigrant women at the turn of the nineteenth century, these undocumented immigrants are always coded with the potential for poverty.

One of the issues associated with the anchor baby's access to citizenship is her assumed reliance on public programs throughout her lifetime. She is not the only one who will benefit from this access: her parents are also characterized as taking advantage of her citizenship to gain access to American social programs. This assumption of reliance on social programs relies on an accepted image of the parent as poor: if the parent was not poor, the family would not have to rely on American benefits. Further, if the undocumented immigrants were not poor, access to American social programs would not be a motivator for unauthorized entry into the country and the eventual birth of their American citizen children. Though the poverty of the parents is mentioned very rarely in explicit terms, the characterization of the parent as a burden on American society

involves an implicit assumption of poverty on the part of those communicating the anchor baby narrative.

In a segment that aired on Fox News in June of 2011, Congressman Steve King explicitly links access to social programs with the motivation for entering the United States: “pregnant women com[e] into this country illegally” so the family can be “anchored to American benefits” through the birth of their child. Appearing on CNN in August of 2010, Representative Billbray suggested that “benefits” were the focus for the parents of anchor babies. This did not apply to all immigrants, as he pointed out, but just those “gaming the system.” These parents of anchor babies are taking advantage of the existing legal structure in order to access American social programs.

When analyst Robert Traynham appeared on MSNBC in the same month, he explicitly connected the anchor baby debate to economics, arguing that birthright citizenship in the case of the children of undocumented immigrants is a “social issue.” It is an issue of undocumented immigrants “having kids in this country and getting in the front of the line for basic services,” and “whether or not we believe as a society that we should be giving benefits to illegal immigrants.” The anchor baby debate is so inextricably tied to the image of the poor immigrant parent that Traynham bases his argument for considering changes to birthright citizenship around it: changing access to birthright citizenship is about whether we can “afford” to continue giving these services to undocumented immigrants and their children.

By consistently charging the parents of anchor babies with a socioeconomic status that requires their reliance on American benefits, and attributing a drive towards social programs so strong as to induce unauthorized border crossings, these actors in anchor

baby discourse are calling on the same potentiality for poverty that their predecessors cited in the early twentieth century as the basis for turning away young immigrant women and mothers at the border. The mother of the anchor baby is always deemed “LPC.” She does not exist in a subject position where she will not become a public charge. Though her poverty is not explicitly mentioned in the context of anchor baby discourse, she, like immigrant women from generations before, bears the responsibility of her poverty and that of her children.

Morality and the Immigrant Woman: from Prostitution to “Criminal” Entry

In navigating the increasingly restrictive immigration laws after 1875, women immigrants relied on different gendered identities to gain entrance into the United States. As wives and daughters of resident immigrants in the United States, women used their gender and a performance of traditional domesticity to circumvent laws that sought to exclude them (Gardner 13). Within the confines of these gendered identities, women were always defined in relation to their morality and always under suspicion of disguising their immorality from immigration officials.

The Page Law of 1875 outlawed the immigration of Asian women who were brought over as prostitutes or for “immoral purposes” (50). This put immigration officials in the position of determining morality during interrogation at points of entry. Women’s bodies became markers of their morality in the eyes of immigration officers. Officers were charged with stopping the flow of immorality into the country, and so they had to be trained to “know one [an immoral immigrant or prostitute] when they [saw] one.” Appearance, behavior, and presentation during the interrogation of their testimony combined to create the basis of decisions of morality and entry into the country (52).

Race was an integral part of this bodily representation of morality: laws codified Asian women's preponderance toward prostitution despite the low numbers of Asian immigrants actually involved in prostitution in the country (51). This began with Chinese immigrants at the turn of the century, and continued to define Japanese women who immigrated later in the early 20th century as potential prostitutes.

Potentiality, as with the determination of LPC, played a large part in designations of immorality. Gook Chin, a teenage immigrant from China in 1936, travelled alone though she intended to meet male relatives upon arrival in the United States. Her upper middle class appearance gave her claim to morality and entrance more legitimacy, but the thing that secured her exclusion was her clothing. The immigration officials examined her luggage and determined that she had too many articles of clothing to be considered moral. No young woman, they decided, had the need for so many clothes unless she was intending to become involved in prostitution (54). Women immigrants entering the United States would have known about the laws against prostitution. Thus, immigrant officials always suspected that women were lying during their interrogations. Also, immigration officials needed to be able to follow up on women immigrants to make sure they were not involved in immoral activities and prostitution once they gained access to the United States as residents (77). Prostitution, like poverty, expanded from the immigrant's present into her past and her future. If the immigrant had participated in prostitution before entering the country, she was suspected of wanting to continue engaging in prostitution upon entry. Even if a woman had no history of prostitution and gave no indication of intention to become a prostitute, the potentiality for prostitution always existed for the female immigrant in the eyes of immigration officials (80).

Morality was important for two reasons: first, the moral nature of the person was considered predetermined through the concepts of eugenics. To protect the United States population from immorality, those predisposed to immoral behavior, which was associated with different races and nationalities not included in the “natural” American gene pool, were excluded through entrance to the country. Those excluded and deported had not committed legal crimes, but had instead committed moral crimes which posed an equal or greater threat to American society (82). These immigrants did not fit the racial categories for eventual naturalization, but all immigrants posed a threat through reproduction because of the concept of *jus soli* (16).

Immigrant women had to be moral, because they were site of cultural reproduction of American citizens. If they did not embody the moral values expected of the American populace, then they posed a threat for America’s future in the role they played in mothering children born in America (169). When immigrant women’s reproduction of difference was not the focus of their potential motherhood, their sexuality became policed as central to the reproduction of the American population (171). Whether a woman was condemned for reproducing difference or highly regulated and policed to maintain her ability to correctly reproduce American citizens and culture, the potentiality of motherhood was a constant companion to the regulation of immigrant women’s morality.

The mother of the anchor baby is an undocumented immigrant. This subject position carries with it certain indicators of morality that do not fit with expectations of American citizenship: mainly, the undocumented immigrant mother entered the United

States in a willful act of opposition to and transgression of the American legal code. This criminality, as mentioned previously, is integral to anchor baby discourse.

An undocumented immigrant comes into being through the unauthorized border crossing. As a subject constructed through and constantly in relation to this first “criminal” act, the mother of the anchor baby cannot exist without her criminal identity. She is the evolutionary descendent of the Asian women at the turn of the century. Unlike those turn of the century immigrants, her immorality is not a potentiality. Where they were constantly under suspicion of becoming immoral and policed for their proclivity towards immorality, the mother of the anchor baby is already known to be immoral. She occupies an immoral subject position, as an undocumented immigrant in the United States. The mother of the anchor baby does not simply threaten American society with the possibility of immoral actions once she gains entrance into and stability within the United States; instead, she begins her residence in the country with an immoral act. Her immorality is a part of her identity, and so she is an unacceptable member of American society.

Further, her immorality makes her completely incapable of raising moral American citizen children. Her children, then, are even more threatening to American society because they are indistinguishable from other citizens. The mother is the site of cultural reproduction, so in the case of both poverty and immorality she cannot help but reproduce these social ills. She is never seen simply as a lone threat in and of herself. The threat of her fertility, already realized in anchor baby discourse, is always part and parcel of her identity.

In January of 2011, Bill O'Reilly deftly explains the relationship between birthright citizenship for the anchor baby and the undocumented status of her parents. Her citizenship and the access it provides for social programs encourage unauthorized entry into the country. Interpreting the fourteenth amendment in such a way "encourages foreigners to sneak across our borders to give birth." The foreigners in question are entering the country without permission, and they are going to reproduce. O'Reilly's statement places these immigrant women in the position of the immoral undocumented immigrant before they even enter the country.

While appearing on Fox News in August of 2010, Representative Lindsay Graham discusses the undocumented immigrant and anchor baby populations in the United States as a basis for changing the fourteenth amendment. The immigrants come into the country with the intention of giving birth. Though the population in question remains gender neutral while Graham discusses them, this focus on birth suggests he is talking about immigrant women. Further, "they broke the law to get here," so they do not have a valid claim to residence and security in the United States and neither do their children.

In April of that same year, Congressman Hunter appeared on MSNBC to discuss anchor babies and border security. When the question of citizenship was raised, Hunter conflated the parents' unauthorized entry into the country with the child's citizenship, as well as the eventual citizenship of the parents, in this statement: "We're just saying it takes more than just walking across the border to become an American citizen."

The assumption of unauthorized border crossing is central to the construction of the anchor baby through the identity of her parents. Whether through using words such as

“sneak” to describe the parents’ method of entry or by consistently naming the mother an “illegal immigrant,” all those involved in mediating anchor baby discourse are constantly reiterating her criminal identity. This reiteration drives her immorality home, and sets this as an unassailable fact of anchor baby discourse.

Fertility, Birth, and Futurity

The anchor baby is an American citizen. She was born in the United States, and in the images set by anchor baby discourse will remain in the United States for the rest of her life. This is the way she acts as the anchor for her family and future immigration flows into the country. Without the focus on her parentage, the anchor baby could be indistinguishable from other American citizen children. She is not the same as these other children, and something about this difference creates the urgency behind these calls for amending the fourteenth amendment and contesting birthright citizenship. What is it about this anchor baby that necessitates the explicit differentiation that these representatives, pundit, and anchors establish through anchor baby discourse? It is never explicitly stated, though some representatives come awfully close.

Representatives appearing on the three news sources make multiple references to the future while discussing anchor babies and birthright citizenship. Representative Lindsay Graham acknowledges the presence of undocumented immigrants living in the United States at the present, and contends that this group can become a legal part of the citizenry. However, he does not want a “third wave” in the future. This is, in his opinion, inevitable without a Constitutional amendment. We must "change our laws, because if we don't, we're going to have 20 million more in twenty years." While those that are already in the United States cannot be helped, a greater influx of this population in the future is

not something we should want for American society. The threat of a larger population of undocumented immigrant and anchor babies in the future is great enough to suggest that the fourteenth amendment ought to be changed.

In her book, *Growing Sideways*, Kathryn Stockton explores the different identities of the queer child and how this child subject thwarts expectations of children. The anchor baby, like many of the other children featured in Stockton's book, is a child queered not only by race, but also by her parentage.

A key concept in Stockton's work on the queer child is that of "backwards birth." This has multiple methodological meanings. In every case, it refers to the creation of the queer child subject. The first backwards birth is that recognition of the queer child by the queer adult. In this backwards birth, childhood has already ended when the queer adult brings her queer child subject self into being by a recognition of its existence. The queer child subject that could not exist before becoming an adult is thus birthed backwards; after it has already passed from existing (7). The child queered by color births its parents backwards. The parents become the liberal and accepting subjects they always assumed they were by accepting and acknowledging the subjecthood of the child queered by color (184). In both of these backward births, the subject, laden with meaning the instant it is called into being, arrives already positioned in discourse. The anchor baby experiences a similar transfer of meaning onto its subject, but this occurs at the moment of literal birth.

All children are marked by their parents as they live out their "diverse heritages" (Levine xxx). For the anchor baby, it is more than just "heritage." The transgressions of the parent transfer onto the child. Where the parents of the child queered by color become in reality what they always assumed they were and the queer child inherits its queer

identity from the adult self that names it, the anchor baby is born branded with the image of its undocumented immigrant parents in anchor baby discourse. The anchor baby subject is birthed forward by its parents. It does not experience a childhood without its subjectivity, unlike the queer child. Instead, this forwards birth assigns meaning to the child at the moment she is born. This is the moment of conflation; physical birth is the moment of transfer for the anchor baby subject.

How we, as a nation, treat children has a lengthy history of contestation in the public sphere. All children exist at the intersection of the “historical, cultural, and moral.” Childhood is a constructed idea that reflects and reinforces our moral beliefs, as do the laws society creates to regulate and protect children (Levine xxxii). Anchor baby discourse reflects less of an emphasis on what is best for the child, though certainly some of the rhetoric is couched in these terms. It considers the anchor baby child subject within the frame of what is good for society. This child subject occupies a far more threatening position than the “normal” child.

This anchor baby subject, like all children, holds possibility for the future. Once it is birthed into existence and assumes the criminal identity of its parents, the possibilities it holds are a threat to society.

Delinquent and criminal children’s eventual criminal acts are often seen as the result of deferred motives (159). Though the child may not yet have the conscious intent to commit a crime she cannot be said to be without intentions of criminality. Instead, those intentions exist in deference until they become manifest (160). The deviant child, the one that does not conform to the expectations of childish innocence, carries stigma from the label that may never disappear (Levine 66). For the anchor baby child, this

criminal intention, this deviance, is assumed from the beginning; the anchor baby is a born deviation of childhood. The concept of refusing birthright citizenship to the child based on the actions of the parents is punishment for this deferred intent. All children live in a state of delay. For the anchor baby, this delay is insurmountably linked to criminality and immorality. Perhaps it is also this delay that makes the anchor baby subject such a threatening concept.

The Body of the Mother: The Legacy of Eugenics and the Culture of Poverty

From independence to the end of the nineteenth century, the United States had an infamously lax set of immigration policies that differed by state (Hansen 241). Then, at the end of the nineteenth century, concepts of eugenics became popular and widely accepted within American society. Eugenics established the hereditary nature of unwanted characteristics. It also lent credibility to hierarchies of race, where certain attributes were assumed to follow from biological factors dependent upon race. In the United States, fears about the falling birthrates in white communities and high levels of fertility in immigrant populations as well developing nations led eugenicists and Social Darwinists to deem this a population emergency. The white American tradition, they believed, was threatened by the reproduction of immigrant populations who were inherently less valuable and did not meet the standards for inclusion in what it meant to be American. Further, the collusion of eugenics and ideas about race lent credibility to blatantly racist immigration policies, like those regulation the entrance of Asian populations (247). Both immorality and poverty could be inherited through birth, and so through eugenics the body of the immigrant mother bore the responsibility for their presence in United States society.

Immigration became a federal responsibility under the influence of eugenic concepts that legitimated racial hierarchies. Policies governing the entrance of immigrants found credibility in eugenics and Social Darwinism at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century for their explicitly exclusionary nature. The social ills of American society, such as the shifts in traditional gender roles resulting from industrialization and growing numbers of the poor, did not have to be blamed on institutional issues within. Instead, responsibility shifted onto the growing numbers of immigrants from countries that did not fit the traditional American racial and national profile. Eugenics placed responsibility on the individual instead of society, and so racist, classist, and sexist immigration laws were put in place to keep the immoral and unwanted out of the country.

In the 1960's and 70's, the "culture of poverty" thesis gained traction in the United States. Like immigration policies in the beginning of the century that placed the onus for poverty on incoming immigrants instead of structural inequalities in the labor force, those invested in the discourse of the culture of poverty placed blame on poor communities for poverty instead of racist policies and deindustrialization (Gardner 30). Again, poor bodies were accused of containing and reproducing poverty. This time, it was a cultural reproduction instead of eugenic inheritance. Despite this difference the outcome was quite similar. Poor women and women of color were perceived as the sites of literal reproduction through high and uncontrolled fertility as well as cultural reproduction of the poverty through their children.

In the case of the anchor baby, the subject position of the child never exists outside of the criminal identity of the parent. As discussed in the chapter outlining the

content of anchor baby discourse, an integral piece of the narrative is the undocumented status of the parent and its relation to the citizenship status of the child. Where at the turn of the century eugenicists explicitly focused on the hereditary nature of poverty and immorality, contemporary representatives, pundits, and anchors conflate the immigration status of the parent with whether or not the child deserves access to American citizenship.

The fourteenth amendment's provision of birthright citizenship severs this tie between the identity of the parents and the citizenship of the child. As some point out in the clips reviewed here, this is what makes the fourteenth amendment such an important piece of the American legal system. It is not one's parentage that guarantees a person access to and inclusion in American citizenship: if a child is born in the United States, she is a citizen of this country.

When the border patrol officers were turning women away because of their potential for immorality and poverty, this aspect of birthright citizenship was overshadowed by eugenicist concepts and fear that this new wave of immigration would pollute the American gene pool and, thus, society. Today, despite the assertions of some about the fourteenth amendment and birthright citizenship's position as a fundamental building block of American nationalism, this separation between the identity of the parent and the citizenship of the child still cannot overpower fears for the future of the country. Over a century after we first began policing immigrant women based on their immorality and the possibility that they may one day become a burden on society, the actors involved in mediating anchor baby discourse on Fox, MSNBC, and CNN are still favoring eugenicist and culture of poverty-based concepts over the idealistic concepts behind universal birthright citizenship.

Gender, Futurity, and Silence in the Discourse

The methods chosen for this project, replication and triangulation, are intended to draw out the instances of image setting and meaning making from a collection of data in order to make those concepts that are reiterated within and across sources more visible. Discourse is powerful because it is pervasive. If a piece of the anchor baby narrative appears on multiple different segments originating from one source, it is safe to assume that the viewing audience for that particular cable news channel will have absorbed and accepted it. When that same aspect of the discourse repeats across all three sources, which are targeted at different demographics, these reiterated pieces of the narrative combine to form the discourse that permeates societal understanding of the anchor baby. Gender, the immigrant woman, the immigrant mother, and futurity did not pass these tests.

Perhaps this is because gender does not matter in the large picture of anchor baby discourse. However, I am inclined to believe that it is the deeply ingrained nature of our gendered assumptions and accepted truths surrounding the anchor baby narrative that creates this silence around gender within the clips included in this study. It does not need to be explicitly stated that issues of reproduction, fertility, and birth are gendered for the American viewer. Nor does the link between increasing numbers of undocumented immigrants and their children and the changing face of American society need to be stated for the fears about futurity to exist in the mind of the audience. Allowing these aspects of anchor baby discourse to escape unchallenged and unexamined does not do justice to the full impact of anchor baby discourse.

Historically, immigrant women have been imbued with the potential for many social ills. Two of the most visible of these were the potential for poverty and the proclivity towards immorality, specifically through prostitution. Eugenics combined with Social Darwinism and an American belief in a hierarchy of races allowed immigration policy to place the responsibility for reproducing these social ills on the bodies of immigrant women. Because of this hereditary nature of poverty and immorality, countless women were turned away when they attempted to immigrate into the United States.

None of the actors involved in mediating anchor baby discourse on the three sources go so far as to even suggest that poverty and immorality are inheritable traits. The transmission of potentiality for poverty and criminality is not cited as a core reason behind challenging the fourteenth amendment and its provision for birthright citizenship. Instead, constitutional history, levels of undocumented immigration, and the importance of deserving American citizenship bolster these claims. When the rhetoric forming anchor baby discourse is considered outside of the frame of the historical treatment of immigrant women in the United States, it is possible to miss this connection altogether. Once the tendency of immigration policy to push the responsibility for social ills onto the bodies of immigrant women becomes more evident, however, it is impossible to ignore.

The anchor baby is gendered. It cannot escape gender, as it struggles with issues of reproduction and the future of American society through the child. The mother is the site of cultural reproduction in America, and her position in this role is an important aspect of American national identity. When the mother is an undocumented immigrant who exists as a deviant subject, her children run the risk of deviance as well because of

her influence. For the anchor baby there is no non-deviant subject position, because she is birthed forwards into her criminal subject position the moment she comes into existence. This forwards birth is the continued belief in eugenics and the inheritable nature of poverty and immorality, though it is delivered in hushed tones and silences beliefs about the culture of undocumented immigration informing anchor baby discourse.

The anchor baby is yet another link in a long chain that yolks the body of the immigrant woman to the responsibility for the future of American culture. Invoking the immigrant mother and her body is inescapable in any honest examination of the anchor baby, because the undocumented mother is the ultimate source of both life and subject identity for her anchoring child.

Conclusion

Discourse has a profound effect on our political and social reality. It informs our understanding of issues and shapes what we accept as truth. It is made powerful because it permeates so many planes. Discourse is communicated constantly from multiple different sources. When the meanings and images mediated to us consistently reiterate the same ideas, and when we trust those sources as the legitimate narrators of truth, accepted knowledges about everything from immigration to gay marriage solidify in our collective social conscious.

Though the accepted credibility of Fox News, MSNBC, and CNN differs among viewers with different ideological identifiers most citizens in the United States who watch cable news value and accept the information delivered by at least one of these three sources (“Americans”). This ideological divide might suggest a difference in coverage of the anchor baby from source to source. Certainly, the commentary of the anchors and the framing of the discussion reflected some differences in approach to covering immigration policy. Bill O’Reilly’s response to a representative appearing on his show on Fox News differs in tone and delivery from that of Anderson Cooper. Applying critical discourse analysis to these clips allows the assumed differences to fall away and real similarities in image setting and meaning making to become clear.

Anchor baby discourse is pointed. It consists of very specific ideas about the nature of undocumented immigration and the value of citizenship. The discourse also communicates accepted ideas about immigrant women that have been a part of our national discourse around immigration policy for over a century. Mapping the discourse out in a palatable fashion reduces some of the complexity of the discourse in favor of

linear organization to aid in communicating those aspects of the discourse that are the most consistently repeated and pounded into the American understanding of the anchor baby. In future projects with longer time frames and greater resources, perhaps the more nuanced aspects of the anchor baby could be explored.

The anchor baby does not represent the lived experience of a child born to undocumented immigrants in the United States. Neither do her parents as constructed in anchor baby discourse reflect the realities of undocumented immigrants living in this country. Instead, the anchor baby is a virtual life. She is a construct of the media, a media spectacle that incites viewers and pushes ratings as well as drawing voters out to the polls. Though she is the creation of the media sources that communicate this narrative, this difference between the virtual life of the anchor baby and the reality of the children of immigrants is blurred for the viewer through the mediation of discourse.

The viewing audience comes away with certain accepted knowledges based on cable news coverage of the anchor baby. Firstly, the anchor baby is a child. We as a society accept the innocence of children. It is important to our understanding of us and our hopes for the future. “Normal” children are born innocent and become deviant, but the anchor baby, like other queer children, does not occupy this subject position of innocence. Instead, she is born forwards through the criminal identity of her undocumented parents. Her citizenship grants her access to the United States at the same time as it brands her the interior “other.” She is always deviant, always in a state of delayed criminality. If she is not the criminal herself, she is viewed as a reward for her parents’ criminal behavior.

The anchor baby is constructed entirely in reference to her parents. They are the ones who give her meaning that is different from that given to other children born in the United States. In this way, the anchor baby is truly commentary on undocumented immigration no matter how loudly it protests that the conversation is, in fact, about citizenship.

The parents are carefully constructed and the images and meanings surrounding them remain constant across the three sources. They are always called “illegal immigrants,” or in some extreme cases, “illegals,” placing their criminal subject position at the forefront. This criminality stems from an assumed unauthorized crossing of our southern border. The presence of fences and deserts in the images used when discussing the anchor baby and her parents references this border crossing. The association of undocumented immigration with unauthorized entry in the Southwest is so strong that no commentary is necessary to establish that these areas represent the border, or that these images communicate the criminal nature of the parents’ method of entry.

This criminality firmly assigns the parents an immoral identity. This immorality makes them the opposite of the wanted immigrant and separates them from our nationalist immigration discourse. Those immigrants who founded our country and who continue to enter legally are the immigrants our country is built on. These immigrants, these immoral law breakers, are not. And so, they and their children carry the stigma of blatant immorality.

Immorality and criminality are key when constructing the parents in reference to other deserving populations. Through the use of history, discussed further below, and descriptive language the anchors who are communicating the anchor baby narrative first

establish a deserving and undeserving binary in reference to citizenship and then place the anchor baby and her parents firmly on the undeserving end of the binary. They cannot occupy another position, because their immorality based on their willful flouting of United States immigration policy, makes it impossible.

In certain cases, this criminal and immoral aspect has the possibility of mitigation. This takes the form of military service as well as fines and getting in the “back of the line.” Still, the parent does not begin from a moral subject position. The need for fines or for other qualifying actions on the part of the parent assumes that there is something to make up for in order for the parent and their children to become deserving of citizenship.

The criminal, immoral, and undeserving nature of the parent is communicated through methods of making meaning around the identity of the anchor baby’s mother and father. The image of the anchor baby’s parents is also set through the use of literal images as well as descriptive terms and assumptions about the motivation for crossing the border.

Every photo and video clip used in the segments reviewed communicates the same literal picture of the anchor baby’s parents. Their subject position is raced in its construction. This, combined with the association of undocumented immigration with Mexico, the southern border, and the Southwest states solidifies the identity of her parents as Mexican and brown. They are not only different because of their lack of respect for American rule of law, but they are also noticeably physically different looking than the average American citizen in immigration discourse.

The Mexican undocumented immigrant parent of the anchor baby is motivated to cross the border based on access to American benefits. The child’s citizenship provides this access, which is why the physically situated birth of the baby is so central to the

migration of the parents. In order to assume that access to benefits is important enough to spur migration and birth in a community far from the parents' home, other assumptions about the socio-economic status of the parents must already exist. To accept the image of the parent as focused on access to welfare programs, the viewer must also accept that the parent is poor. The image of the anchor baby parent is, in this way, both raced and classed in the discourse.

History is constructive and constructed in anchor baby discourse. The original intent of the fourteenth amendment along with the meaning of the word "jurisdiction" frames anchor baby discourse as the legitimate motivation for bringing birthright citizenship into the political arena. This constitutional history, as communicated by the actors in the segments, forms the foundation for questioning anchor babies' access to birthright citizenship. It also firmly establishes the groups that occupied the deserving side of the binary historically.

Questions of whether immigration was discussed on the floor of the legislature when the fourteenth amendment passed are batted around during the construction of history in anchor baby discourse. The fourteenth amendment was passed after emancipation and was a part of Reconstruction, but in anchor baby discourse this has a specific meaning. Because the fourteenth amendment was attempting to address issues of denying citizenship to freed slaves, freed slaves become the true focus of the fourteenth amendment. Though another historically marginalized group, Native Americans, is also referenced, this original intent associated with the freedom of slaves and the African American population defines who should and who should not have access to birthright citizenship.

Both African Americans and Native Americans are generally accepted as historically oppressed and marginalized populations in American history. This is easily accessible for the viewer and something those communicating the anchor baby narrative can rely on the audience to already accept. By placing undocumented immigrants and their anchor babies in negative relation to these two groups, the undeserving nature of anchor babies and their parents becomes readily apparent and acceptable. In this way, history is both constructive of the anchor baby and her parents as well as constructed to deliver certain meaning in the discourse.

The parents of the anchor baby are defined, as discussed above, as criminal, immoral, undeserving, raced, and classed in anchor baby discourse. This identity construction is inescapable and relatively constant throughout the segments. Commentary ranging from the history of the Constitution to the birth of the child relates information about the undocumented immigrant parent. Interestingly, though the gender neutral parent subject receives so much explicit and implicit attention, the mother and all gendered aspects of the anchor baby are almost completely absent from the discussion.

This absence does not mean that the discourse has nothing to say about gender. Instead these silences can be interpreted as meaning making tools in and of themselves. Silences in this discourse reflect choices about which aspects of the anchor baby should be covered in a news segment, as well as which aspects are so widely accepted that they need no further elaboration.

The fertility of the immigrant woman is accepted as truth in immigration discourse. This is part of the reason why the anchor baby is effective in generating anxiety. Even if the anchor baby is acknowledged as the interior other, without high birth

rates or expectations of fertility in the immigrant population of women the anchor baby could not form that great of a threat to American security and the American way of life. This assumption of fertility has a long history in the United States, and is tied to fears about the future. Children are often invoked as the future of America. If the mothers of anchor babies are assumed to have high birth rates, the future will rest in the hands of this interior other; this threatening citizen.

Anchor baby discourse echoes the ideas of immigration policy from as early as the late nineteenth century. Then, the children of immigrants could inherit the social ills of their parents according to widely accepted theories of eugenics. Poverty and immorality were two of the most dangerous social ills assumed to rest in the hands and genes of female immigrants trying to enter the country at the turn of the twentieth century. The proclivity for applying stringent immorality and poverty rules to immigrant women as opposed to a more lax application for men, at least those assumed to be heterosexual, belies a gender bias in exactly who it was that could pass these traits on to their children.

The bodies of immigrant women held the responsibility for the moral state of American culture. If they were upright and moral immigrants, they were then counted on as the sites of cultural reproduction for the next generation of Americans. In any case, the children of immigrants were assumed to carry their traits with them in their genes. Anchor babies are not assumed to be genetically more inclined towards crime or immorality, but they are branded with their parents' identity in much the same way. At the moment of their birth they are constructed as subjects in their mothers' image. If she is an undocumented immigrant, they too hold the stigma of being "illegal."

Placing anchor baby discourse within the broader frame of an evolving rhetoric around women immigrants, fertility, futurity, and the reproduction of culture and social ills allows us to see that the anchor baby truly is nothing new. It is simply another reincarnation of previously accepted discursive strands about immigration. Immigrant women, then as now, are assumed to be highly fertile and they hold the responsibility for transmitting the tendency towards immorality and poverty even as they are expected to mold upstanding American citizens.

The first chapter, where the discourse is mapped out, begins with a quote from former presidential candidate hopeful Michelle Bachmann. This comes from the current 2012 election cycle, where bipartisan views are the order of the day as they were in the midterm elections of 2010. Immigration policy is an important factor as the candidates for the GOP nomination attempt to differentiate themselves from each other and to appear as the ideal Republican candidate to go up against Barack Obama. Immigration policy has continued to be a hot button topic in the years since the midterm elections and will most certainly figure into the presidential debates once the election draws nearer.

The anchor baby herself may not appear on the national stage after the GOP nominee is chosen. However, the images and meanings contained in anchor baby discourse continue to be salient in American society. That the citizen children of undocumented immigrants might not be deserving of American citizenship is not the sole point of anchor baby discourse. Anchor baby discourse also informs our fears of the future, our understanding of undocumented immigration, and our continued demonization of immigrant women as overly fertile and a threat to the culture of our country.

The media was integral in communicating this narrative to the public. Cable news networks made up the majority of anchor baby coverage during the midterm election, and they will undoubtedly be engaged again in making meaning around immigration in this election cycle. Critically engaging media sources is absolutely essential if we are to move towards a more just society in general. Analyzing the content of the media through methods like critical discourse analysis allows us to interrogate the underlying ideas in a mediated narrative. These mediated discourses inform social opinion on many, if not most, of the issues that influence voting.

Reforming immigration policy is absolutely necessary if undocumented immigrants, and not only the virtual versions from anchor baby discourse, are ever to enjoy full access to human rights and a life of dignity within our borders. To achieve reform, representatives open to these ideas about immigration must be brought to the table. Unless the socially accepted knowledges about undocumented immigration change, those politicians will have a much harder time being elected into Congress and having any political power once in office.

Feminist research, like critical discourse analysis, has its roots in a search for social justice within academia. The media plays a powerful role in creating our society and supporting or opposing issues of equality in America. Methods of content analysis like those engaged in this project are integral to holding the media accountable for its role in creating and communicating discourse, like that of the anchor baby. Further, attempting to uncover the discourse behind the sound bites can only help us in determining what we as Americans hold true about issues like undocumented immigration. With a better formed understanding of our social knowledge, we can then

move towards addressing the misinformation and organizing for a more equitable future.

And perhaps, one day, everyone will accept the new definition of the term “anchor baby”

in the American Heritage dictionary: “n: . . . *offensive*”(Novoa).

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