Abstract
The Birther Movement originated right before the Democratic National Convention when Barack Obama was campaigning for president of the United States. Birthers were those who believed that he was not a natural born citizen, which was a requirement outlined in the Constitution. Although Birthers camouflaged their principles under a cloak of nationalism, I argue that this movement is charged by racial grievances and the fear of the other. Using Underation’s (2012) interpretation of symbolic convergence theory, the resonance of the Birther movement can be explained. Through their positioning in the time of the Framers, the sharing of common symbols, their drive to create what they thought was positive change, synergy, and using mass media to share their ideas with the world the Birthers were able to sustain a movement that is still talked about today. Donald Trump, a 2016 presidential candidate and key player in the movement, epitomizes the way that Birther ideals have changed over time. His platform of “Make America Great Again” is fueled by goals to rid the country of Muslims and Hispanics. This is a clear representation of the fear of the other, which is what the foundation of the Birther Movement is built upon. The implications of the study of the Birther Movement are important in understanding how movements can last and evolve over time depending on the political climate as well as for analyzing the way that these beliefs can transfer over into the mainstream.