The behavioral revolution of the 1950s and early 1960s is a foundational moment in the history of political science and is widely considered to be a time when the discipline shed its traditional roots by embracing its identity as a modern social science. This dissertation examines reference works published between 1980 and 2012 in order to gauge the contemporary significance of the behavioral revolution. The behavioral revolution is discussed in many foundation narratives throughout reference works like dictionaries, encyclopedias, and handbooks. After sixty years, why does the behavioral revolution still figure centrally in the way political scientists remember their discipline’s past? This study answers this question by developing a theory of political mythology that focuses on the nexus between narratives, identities, and practices in communities like that of academic political science. This mythological nexus provides significance to identities and practices through the repetition of narrative elements centered on the story of the behavioral revolution. Furthermore, this study analyzes the narrative context of each mention of the behavioral revolution in reference works, discusses how they answer a need for significance and how they provide models for practice in a community. Findings reveal that dominance of practices in political science, like quantitative analysis, stem from professional identities that are shaped by the repetition of narratives about the
behavioral revolution. The behavioral revolution mythology also works to marginalize political scientists whose identity and preferred practices are more in-line with humanistic disciplines like history or philosophy. A political theory of mythology makes it possible to understand why narratives about the behavioral revolution are central to identities and practices in the disciplinary imaginary, and this theory may shed new light on what obstacles stand in the way of harmonizing discordant voices in contemporary political science.