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A Functional Analysis of 2008 and 2012 Presidential Candidacy Announcement Speeches

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Abstract

This study investigates messages in the surfacing phase of the presidential campaign, through a content analysis of presidential candidacy announcement speeches from the 2008 and 2012 elections. This study applied the Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse to nine Democratic announcement speeches from 2008, 11 Republican announcement addresses from 2008, and 12 Republican announcement speeches from 2012. This work extends previous research on announcement speeches from 1960-2004 (Benoit, Henson, Whalen, & Pier, 2007). Overall, announcements from 2008 and 2012 used acclaims (75%) more than attacks (25%) or defenses (0.5%). The same announcements discussed policy more than character (58% to 42%); Democrats in 2008 discussed policy more, and character less, than Republicans in that campaign. General goals and ideals were used more often as the basis of acclaims than attacks in these speeches. These speeches were more negative (25% to 22% attacks) and discussed policy more (58% to 50%) and character less (42% to 50%) than past announcements. In 2008, Democratic speeches discussed Democratic issues more, and Republican issues less, than Republican speeches.

Key Terms: presidential announcements, surfacing, functions, 2008, 2012, Democratic, Republican

Introduction

I'm Newt Gingrich and I'm announcing my candidacy for President of the United States because I believe we can return America to hope and opportunity, to full employment, to real security, to an American energy program, to a balanced budget. (Gingrich, 2011)

And if you look at the record of spending under this President, he came in, sure he came in with a problem. And then in that hole that he was in, he kept digging and digging and digging. Now for every dollar we spend thanks to this President, forty cents is borrowed. Forty cents is going to be put on every man, woman, and child to pay the interest on for the rest of their lives. (Santorum, 2011)

I've never introduced a bill in Washington, DC to emphasize heroin. So they take all of what I said and turn it around and say, he would legalize heroin. Well you know the plain truth is that heroin at one time in our history was legalized and there was essentially no abuse of it, and it's only in our recent history.... I happen to have a personal real disgust with the abuse of drugs,

but it's all drugs, those that are considered illegal, and I think physicians prescribe way too much medications. (Paul, 2011)

Although some scholars have argued that the contemporary U.S. political system operates in a perpetual campaign mode marked by continuous political jockeying, public opinion polling, and media speculation (Blumenthal, 1980), the campaign for America's highest office does not officially begin until candidates formally announce their intent to run for President. This occasion provides an opportunity to lay out a rationale for their candidacy. Trent (1994) has argued that it is important to study the communication that characterizes the surfacing stage of a campaign because it "sets the scene for all that follows" and "frequently determines what will happen in later stages" (p. 45). These speeches may not be watched by millions of voters, but the media and other candidates do pay attention: announcement speeches provide a public record of the beginning of a candidate's campaign.

On April 17, 2006, former Alaska Democratic Senator Mike Gravel became the first person to formally announce his bid for the presidency in 2008. This announcement came 861 days before the Democratic Party was scheduled to hold their nominating convention in Denver in August of 2008. Sam Brownback, Senator from Kansas, announced his candidacy on January 20, 2007, becoming the first Republican to officially enter the race (590 days before his party's convention). On April 21, 2011, Gary Johnson was the first Republican to announce his candidacy for president, 494 days before the Republican Nominating Convention. Table 1 presents the formal announcement dates for candidates in the 2008 and 2012 primary campaigns. These announcements, and all those that followed, marked the first stages of the 2008 and 2012 primary campaign seasons.

Table 1
Presidential Primary Announcement Speeches 2008 and 2012

Candidate	Date	Days before Convention	Words
2008 Democrats			
Joe Biden	1/31/07	572	760
Hillary Clinton	1/20/07	583	1140
Chris Dodd	1/11/07	592	1119
John Edwards	12/28/06	637	4037
Mike Gravel	4/17/06	861	3827
Dennis Kucinich	12/12/06	622	2256
Barack Obama	2/10/07	562	2581
Bill Richardson	1/21/07	582	1444
Tom Vilsack	11/30/07	634	1268
Mean		627	2048

2008 Republicans			
Sam Brownback	1/20/07	590	1186
Jim Gilmore	4/26/07	494	2316
Mike Huckabee	1/28/07	582	2755
Duncan Hunter	1/25/07	585	2691
Alan Keyes	9/14/07	353	1969
John McCain	4/25/07	495	2350
Ron Paul	2/19/07	560	943
Mitt Romney	2/13/07	566	2087
Tom Tancredo	4/2/07	518	1195
Fred Thompson	9/6/07	361	2450
Tommy Thompson	4/4/07	516	2465
Mean		511	2037
2012 Republicans			
Michele Bachman	6/13/11	442	2431
Herman Cain	5/21/11	464	2961
Newt Gingrich	5/11/11	474	347
Jon Huntsman	6/21/11	434	1464
Gary Johnson	4/21/11	494	561
Thaddeus McCotter	7/2/11	422	920
Ron Paul	5/13/11	472	5555
Tim Pawlenty	5/23/11	462	2332
Rick Perry	8/13/11	379	2408
Buddy Roemer	7/21/11	370	1370
Mitt Romney	6/2/11	452	2349
Rick Santorum	6/6/11	446	2513
Mean		443	2101
1960-2004 Mean		386	2108

This study investigates the content of candidate announcement speeches from the 2008 and 2012 presidential campaigns. To begin, we review the pertinent literature in this area. Then, the theory driving this research, the Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse, will be explicated, and hypotheses and research questions for this study will be advanced. This is followed by a description of the method and presentation of the results.

Literature Review

Several areas of research can inform this analysis of 2008 and 2012 announcements of presidential candidacy. The first approach is Judith Trent's pioneering work on the nature and function of the surfacing phase of political campaigns. The second is research which has already applied the Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse to announcement speeches given in previous

presidential campaigns.

The Surfacing Phase

Candidates' formal announcements of their candidacy can be placed in the context of the surfacing phase of presidential campaigns. This "pre-primary" phase of presidential campaigns is marked by candidates' "initial efforts to create a presidential interest and image for themselves in the public imagination" (Trent, 1978, p. 282). According to Trent and Friedenberg (2004), this time in a campaign serves seven purposes. First, it permits candidates to demonstrate their fitness for office. Second, it initiates important, long-held political rituals. Third, the process gives the public an opportunity to learn about candidates who may otherwise be relatively unknown. The fourth purpose of the surfacing phase is to develop voter expectations of candidate style. Fifth, this time period helps determine what campaign issues will dominate a campaign. The sixth purpose is that this phase of the campaign operates as a process for selecting serious contenders for the White House. Last, candidate-media relations are established during this time.

Because the early campaign phase is marked by a lack of information about most presidential contenders and policy issues, candidates are afforded the opportunity to inform voters about their candidacy and influence perceptions of their character and policy positions (Kendall, 2000; Popkin, 1991). Diamond and Bates (1993) explained that this is why the early stages of campaigns are so filled with biographical information about candidates.

Politicians' formal announcements of their presidential candidacy are one of the most important elements of the early campaign stage. The timing of these announcements often prompts much discussion, as candidates attempt to use these occasions to generate as much interest from media and voters as possible. According to Trent and Friedenberg (2004), announcement speeches may serve four valuable purposes. First, they signal a candidate's intention to run for office. Second, they can deter electoral competition, discouraging potential opponents from running. Third, they indicate a person's reasons for running. Fourth and finally, they introduce campaign themes. Until recently however, the actual content of these addresses had gone virtually unexplored.

Functions and Topics of Announcement Speeches

Benoit, Henson, Whalen, and Pier (2007) used Functional Theory to analyze presidential announcement speeches from 1960 to 2004. These speeches were given an average of 386 days before their candidate's respective convention, and their mean length was 2,184 words. Results indicated that the tone of these messages is similar to that of other campaign discourse forms, such as acceptance speeches. Acclaims (positive statements) were most common function (78%), followed by attacks (22%), and then defenses (0.3%).

The topics of the utterances in these messages were split equally between policy (50%) and character (50%), indicating that the early campaign phase might in fact lead candidates to discuss character more than they typically do in other forms of campaign discourse (acceptance addresses from 1952-2004, for

example, used 55% policy and 45% character; Benoit, 2007) . Differences were found between Democrats and Republicans, as Democrats were found to speak more about policy and less about character than Republicans. General goals dominated the policy topics (53%), followed by past deeds (32%), and future plans (16%). A closer look at the form of the character topics revealed that statements about ideals were most common (48%), followed by personal qualities (34%), and leadership abilities (18%).

Theoretical Foundations

This study is based on the Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse (Benoit, 2007). Functional Theory posits that political candidates use their campaign messages to distinguish themselves from opponents. A candidate does not need to disagree with opponents on every issue; however, a candidate must be perceived as preferable to opponents on some points and achieving this goal requires some distinctions between opponents. Candidates use three functions (acclaims—positive statements about the candidate; attacks—criticisms of an opponent; defenses—refutations of attacks) and these functions occur on two topics (policy—governmental action and problems amenable to governmental action; character—the candidates' personality). The first excerpt at the beginning of this essay illustrates acclaims (Gingrich, 2011), the second is an example of an attack (Santorum, 2011), and the last passage exemplifies a defense (Paul, 2011).

This study extends previous research on the nature of presidential candidacy announcement speeches to include the 2008 presidential campaign (with contested primaries in both political parties) and the 2012 presidential campaign (in which only the Republican nomination was contested). Most research on presidential campaigns focuses on the general election period; research on the primary is also common. There is little empirical research on the content of presidential campaign messages in the "surfacing" phase of the contemporary campaign (see Trent, 1978).

Building on past research into announcement speeches (Benoit, Henson, Whalen, & Pier, 2007), and consistent with Functional Theory (Benoit, 2007), we test five hypotheses and answer two research questions. First, Functional Theory argues that acclaims (although not necessarily automatically accepted by the audience) have no inherent drawbacks. Attacks should be less common than acclaims because voters dislike mudslinging (Merritt, 1984; Stewart, 1975). Defenses are expected to be the least frequent function because they have three potential drawbacks. First, defenses must identify an attack to refute it, which could remind or inform the audience of a potential weakness. Second, defenses are likely to target a candidate's weaknesses, which means that responding to it could take a candidate off-message. Third, using defenses could create the undesirable impression that a candidate is reactive rather than proactive. Hence, we predict that:

> H1. Announcement speeches from 2008 and 2012 will use acclaims more than attacks and attacks more than defenses.

Functional Theory predicts that, in general, candidates will discuss policy more than character. Presidents implement governmental policy; some may view them as a role model (which would make character important) but they are probably not in the majority. Furthermore, research has established more voters report that policy is the most important determinant of their vote for president and candidates who stress policy more than their opponents—and character less—are more likely to win elections (Benoit, 2003). These considerations lead us to predict that:

H2. Announcement speeches from 2008 and 2012 will discuss policy more than character.

Past research has established that Democrats tend to emphasize policy even more than Republicans and character less than Republicans (Benoit, 2003). This may due to the fact that Republican ideology generally prefers private action (e.g., charity) to governmental action to solve social problems, which may mean that Republicans discuss policy less, and character more, than Democrats. Hence, we predict that:

H3. Announcement speeches from Democrats in 2008 will discuss policy more, and character less, than Republicans in 2008.

Functional Theory divides policy utterances into three forms. Past deeds discuss a candidate's successes (acclaims) or an opponent's failures (attacks) in office. Future plans are specific proposals for governmental action (means) whereas general goals are the ends sought. Some goals, such as creating jobs or keeping American safe, cannot really be criticized. This means that general goals will be used more frequently as the basis for acclaims than attacks. Therefore, we predict that:

H4. Announcement Speeches from 2008 and 2012 will use general goals as the basis for acclaims more often than attacks.

Functional theory divides character comments into those concerned with personal qualities (character traits), leadership ability (executive or administration ability), and ideals, which represent values such as freedom or equality. As with general goals, some ideals are simply difficult or impossible to reasonably attack. Who could attack an opponent who seeks equality or justice? Therefore, we predict that:

H5. Announcement Speeches from 2008 and 2012 will use ideals as the basis for acclaims more often than attacks.

As just explained, Functional Theory divides policy utterances and character utterances into subforms (see, e.g., Benoit, 2007 for illustrative examples).

We also answer two research questions about the distribution of these forms of policy and character:

> RQ1. What are the proportions of the three forms of policy in 2008 and 2012 announcement speeches?
>
> RQ2. What are the proportions of the three forms of character in 2008 and 2012 announcement speeches?

One additional prediction, derived from issue ownership theory (Petrocik, 1996) will be investigated in this study. Over time, each of the two major political parties in the U.S. has become associated with different issues; more voters think one party can better deal with a given issue than the other party. For example, people tend to believe that Democrats can do a better job handling such issues as education and the environment; citizens are prone to think that Republicans can do a better job handling such issues as taxes and crime. Petrocik (1996) predicts that presidential candidates are likely to discuss the issues owned by their own political party more often than candidates from the other party. Research has supported this prediction in presidential nomination acceptance addresses and general television spots (Petrocik, Hansen, & Benoit, 2003/2004) as well as in presidential primary and general election debates (Benoit & Hansen, 2004). This study will investigate this prediction in the 2008 presidential primary debates, in which nominations for both major parties were contested:

> H6. Democrats discuss Democratic issues more, and Republican issues less, than Republicans in 2008 American presidential primary debates.

Together, the tests of these hypotheses and the answers to these research questions will extend our knowledge of surfacing messages in political campaign announcement speeches.

Method

To ensure comparability of data between this study and previous research, we followed the same procedures used for other Functional analyses generally and the previous research on announcement speeches from 1960 to 2004 specifically (Benoit, Hansen, Whalen, & Pier, 2007). Functional Theory unitizes the texts of campaign messages into themes. Themes are complete ideas, claims, or arguments; a single theme can vary in length from one phrase to an entire paragraph (see, e.g., Berelson, 1952; Holsti, 1969). The coders first identified themes present in these speeches. Then each theme was categorized by function: acclaim, attack, or defense. Next, coders categorized the topic of each theme as policy or character and identified the form of policy or character for each theme.

Many of the announcements analyzed here were located at www.4president.org. When necessary, additional or more accurate transcripts were taken from candidates' webpages and major news databases such as Lexis-Nexis Academic. The sample includes speeches from nine Democratic primary

candidates in 2008, 11 Republican candidates in 2008, and 12 Republican can-
didates in 2012. The texts included in this analysis take a variety of forms and
were given across a diversity of occasions. Some candidates made pre-
announcements and/or multiple announcements in different cities and via differ-
ent media (we used the earliest speech we could locate when more than one was
available). Whereas some candidates, such as John Edwards, delivered tradition-
al addresses, other candidates such as Tom Tancredo and Mike Huckabee made
their announcements during radio or television interviews. Still others, such as
Fred Thompson, chose to broadcast video of their announcements view the
World Wide Web. The mean word count for candidates from both parties was
2,064, and these speeches were given an average of 518 days before their re-
spective party's nominating convention.

Two coders analyzed the debates. Inter-coder reliability was calculated with
Cohen's (1960) *kappa*. Five announcement speeches were coded by both coders
to calculate inter-coder reliability. *Kappa* was .94 for functions, .89 for topics,
.92 for forms of policy, and .89 for forms of character. Landis and Koch (1977)
indicate that *kappa*s of .81 or higher reflect almost perfect agreement between
coders, so these data have acceptable reliability.

Lexis-Nexis polls from the Roper Center in 2007 were employed to select
the issues employed to test the last hypothesis on issue ownership. Iraq, the
economy/jobs, health care, education, and the environment were chosen as is-
sues owned by the Democratic party; immigration, terrorism, abortion, taxes,
and crime were selected as Republican issues. Use of these issues were counted
and compiled into Democratic and Republican issues.

Results

This section presents the results of our study of 2008 and 2012 announce-
ments of presidential candidacy. Tests of each hypothesis and answers to the
two research questions will be presented next.

Functions of 2008 and 2012 Announcement Speeches

Overall, acclaims were most common function (75%) in presidential candi-
date announcement speeches. For instance, former Speaker of the House Newt
Gingrich (2011) boasted of his fitness for office by saying,

> As Speaker of the House, I worked to reform welfare, balance the budget,
> control spending, to cut taxes to create economic growth – unemployment
> came down from 5.6% to under 4. For four years we balanced the budget
> and paid off $405 billion in debt. We've done it before, we can do it again.

This statement contains multiple acclaims as Gingrich lists several accomplish-
ments and then claims that he can duplicate them as president. Attacks were the
second most common function in these announcement speeches (25%). An ex-
emplary instance of such attacks was provided by Barack Obama (2007), who
launched a string of criticisms against the sitting Bush administration in 2008.

> For the last six years we've been told that our mounting debts don't matter, we've been told that the anxiety Americans feel about rising health care costs and stagnant wages are an illusion, we've been told that climate change is a hoax, and that tough talk and an ill-conceived war can replace democracy, and strategy, and foresight.

Instead of remarking about his own positive qualities, Obama spoke about the Bush administration's failures, including a poor economy, bad environmental policy, and the war in Iraq.

Defenses were very rare in these announcements (0.5%). Mike Huckabee (2007) was one of the few candidates who did defend himself on the occasion of his announcement:

> Did we raise taxes on fuel? Yes, but 80 percent of the people voted on it because it was on the ballot. So it wasn't that I raised it. I joined with 80 percent of the people in my state to improve what was the worst road system in the country.

In this instance, Huckabee acknowledges an attack on his decision to raise fuel taxes, and then attempts to explain or otherwise "defend" his position by invoking the popular opinion of citizens in his home state of Arkansas.

A *chi-square goodness-of-fit test* reveals that these three functions occurred with different frequencies (χ^2 [$df = 1$] = 1585.2, $p < .0001$). The first hypothesis was confirmed. These data are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2
Functions of Announcement Speeches

	Acclaims	Attacks	Defenses
2008 Democrats	404 (79%)	107 (21%)	1 (0.2%)
2008 Republicans	460 (84%)	84 (15%)	4 (1%)
2012 Republicans	514 (66%)	266 (34%)	4 (0.5%)
2008-2012 Total	1378 (75%)	457 (25%)	9 (0.5%)
1960-2004	3744 (78%)	1052 (22%)	10 (0.3%)

Topics of 2008 and 2012 Announcement Speeches

Overall, policy utterances (58%) were more common than character utterances (42%) in these announcements. An example of a policy utterance can be found in this series of attacks by Mitt Romney (2011) on the incumbent Democratic president:

> Barack Obama has failed America. When he took office, the economy was in recession. He made it worse. And he made it last longer. Three years later, over 16 million Americans are out of work or have just quit looking. Millions more are underemployed. Three years later, unemployment is still

above 8%, a figure he said his stimulus would keep from happening. Three years later, foreclosures are still at record levels. Three years later the prices of homes continue to fall. Three years later, our national debt has grown nearly as large as our entire economy. Families are buried under higher prices for food and higher prices for gasoline.

The topics of recession, unemployment, foreclosures, the national debt, and inflation addressed in this quotation are clear examples of policy utterances. Herman Cain (2011) offered this example of a discussion of his character:

I grew up right here in Atlanta, Georgia.... I stand in the shadows of my upbringing. I stand here today as the son of a chauffeur and a domestic worker, who taught me and my brother three of the most important values we could have ever learned. Belief in God. Belief in what we could for ourselves. And belief in this exceptional nation called the United States of America.

This passage discusses both his personal qualities (humble beginnings) and his ideals (three values). A *chi-square goodness-of-fit* test establishes that these values are significantly different (χ^2 [*df* = 1] = 47.34, *p* < .0001), confirming the second hypothesis.

The third hypothesis anticipated that the two political parties would differ in their emphasis of the two topics of campaign discourse. In 2008, Democrats discussed policy more (66% to 61%) and character less (34% to 39%) than Republicans (χ^2 [*df* = 1] = 3.92, *p* < .05, φ = .06). So, H3 was confirmed with these data. See Table 3 for these data.\

Table 3
Topic of Announcement Speeches

	Policy	Character
2008 Democrats	336 (66%)	175 (34%)
2008 Republicans	332 (61%)	212 (39%)
2012 Republicans	396 (51%)	384 (49%)
2008-2012 Total	1067 (58%)	771 (42%)
1960-2004	2391 (50%)	2406 (50%)

Forms of Policy in 2008 and 2012 Announcement Speeches

The first research question concerned the distribution of the three forms of policy in these announcement speeches. In this sample, past deeds (51%) were the most popular form of policy utterance, followed by general goals (47%), and then future plans (3%). It seems likely that future plans—specific policy proposals (means)—would be less common at the beginning of a campaign; although some candidates campaigned informally prior to their announcement

(Blumenthal, 1980), the candidates and their staff may not have developed all of their proposals before their announcement speeches.

H4 expected that general goals would be used more often as the basis for acclaims than attacks. In these data, candidates were significantly more likely to use utterances about general goals to praise themselves (91%) than to attack their opponent (9%). Statistical analysis using a *chi-square goodness-of-fit* test confirmed that this difference was significant (χ^2 [df = 1] = 384.4, $p < .0001$). These data are reported in Table 4.

Table 4
Forms of Policy in Announcement Addresses

	Past Deeds		Future Plans		General Goals	
	Acclaims	Attacks	Acclaims	Attacks	Acclaims	Attacks
2008 Democrats	79	83	5	2	161	7
	162 (48%)		7 (2%)		168 (50%)	
2008 Republicans	69	72	8	1	181	1
	141 (42%)		9 (3%)		182 (55%)	
2012 Republicans	56	153	14	7	128	38
	209 (53%)		21 (5%)		166 (42%)	
2008-2012 Total	204	308	27	10	470	46
	512 (48%)		37 (3%)		516 (48%)	
1960-2004	203	526	343	15	1222	82
	729 (32%)		358 (16%)		1204 (53%)	

Forms of Character in 2008 and 2012 Announcement Speeches

When addressing character, announcement speeches most often discussed ideals (46%), followed by personal qualities (39%), and then leadership ability (14%). The last prediction expected that candidates would use ideals, like general goals, more to acclaim than to attack. This hypothesis was confirmed in these data: 95% of ideals were acclaims and 5% were attacks. A *chi-square goodness-of-fit* test confirmed that these frequencies were significantly different (χ^2 [$df = 1$] = 493.23, $p < .0001$). These data can be found in Table 5.

Table 5
Forms of Character in 2008 Announcement Addresses

	Personal Qualities		Leadership Abilities		Ideals	
	Acclaims	Attacks	Acclaims	Attacks	Acclaims	Attacks
2008 Democrats	84	7	15	9	60	0
	91 (52%)		24 (14%)		60 (34%)	
2008 Republicans	87	3	21	4	94	3
	93 (42%)		27 (12%)		101 (46%)	
2012 Republicans	94	34	43	20	179	25
	128 (32%)		63 (16%)		204 (52%)	
2008-2012 Total	265	44	79	33	333	28
	309 (40%)		112 (14%)		361 (46%)	
1960-2004	501	212	323	118	1052	100
	813 (34%)		441 (18%)		1152 (48%)	

Issue Ownership in 2008 Announcement Speeches

    Hypothesis six predicted that announcements from Democrats would discuss Democratic issues more, and Republican issues less, than Republican announcements. Content analysis confirmed this prediction in the 2008 presidential announcement speeches. Democrats discussed Democratic issues more (86% to 52%) and Republican issues less (14% to 48%) than Republicans. Statistical analysis confirms that these differences are significant (χ^2 [df = 1] = 41.54, $p <$ .0001, φ = .37). See Table 6.

Table 6.
Democratic and Republican Issues Addressed in 2008 Presidential Primary Debates

	Democratic Issues	Republican Issues
Democrats	**139 (86%)**	23 (14%)
Republicans	73 (52%)	**68 (48%)**

Discussion

There are some important differences between the announcement speeches analyzed here and those analyzed by previous research. For instance, candidates in 2008 made these addresses an average of 563 days before their party's official nominating convention (in 2012, it was not as early: 443 days before the Republican National Convention). This means that in 2008 politicians were announcing their candidacy 57 days earlier than they were in 2004, and 177 days earlier than they were in the years 1960-2004. This is consistent with Benoit, Henson, Whalen, and Pier's (2008) finding that, in general, presidential hopefuls are announcing their candidacy earlier in the campaign over time and consistent with the phenomenon of "front-loading" presidential primary campaigns (Mayer & Busch, 2004).

Where length of oration is concerned however, these speeches were actually a bit shorter than they have been in previous years. The mean word count of 2,042 (and of 2011 words in 2012) indicates a roughly comparable speech length to those orations given in 2004 (2,412 words) and 1960-2004 (2,108). These results are interesting because previous research had revealed a tendency for word count to increase over time (Benoit, Henson, Whalen, & Pier, 2008).

Results of the functional analysis conducted here reveal other important content differences between the more recent announcements of presidential candidacy and those given in previous years. First, these speeches included somewhat fewer acclaims (75% to 82%) and more attacks (25% to 22%) than those speeches given between 1960 and 2004 (χ^2 [$df = 1$] = 7.65, $p < .05$, $\varphi = .04$). Defenses have remained very rare throughout all years of announcement speeches and were excluded from these analyses.

Significant differences occurred between the 2008 and 2012 speeches analyzed here and those given in the 12 presidential campaigns before them. Whereas the 1960-2004 announcement speeches were split evenly between statements about policy (50%) and statements about character (50%), the speeches from 2008 and 2012 used more utterances about policy (58%) than character (42%) (χ^2 [$df = 1$] = 62.39, $p < .05$, $\varphi = .1$). These findings are consistent with post hoc analysis of the data from Benoit, Henson, Whalen, and Pier (2008), which revealed that announcement speeches emphasize policy more in recent years than early campaigns (r [$n = 12$] = .52, $p < .05$). As predicted by Petrocik's Issue Ownership theory (1996), these speeches tended to discuss issues owned by the party of the candidate giving the speech more than issues owned by the other party.

Conclusion

The analysis conducted here produced important information about the content of announcements of presidential candidacy. The results were generally consistent with functional analyses of other media types (candidates used more acclaims than attacks, discussed policy more than character, etc.). A comparison between these announcement speeches and those given in previous election years revealed both similarities and differences. The level of acclaims in the two most recent campaigns was roughly similar to prior campaigns but the 2008 and

2012 addresses discussed policy more, and character less, than in the past (in 2012 the Republicans used these topics about equally often). Acclaims are more common in announcement speeches than in other message forms from the early part of the campaign, such as primary television spots or primary debates (Benoit, 2007).

As in other Functional research, both general goals and ideals were used more often as the basis for acclaims than attacks. These candidates' speeches in 2008 also conformed to the predictions of Issue Ownership Theory (1996), with candidates discussing issues owned by their party more than they addressed issues owned by the opposing party. Any study has limitations and this one is no exception. Functional Theory, for example, does not look at candidates' use of metaphors or evidence. Clearly more work can be done understanding the messages that formally start the presidential election campaign.

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