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Speaker & Gavel is the publication of Delta Sigma Rho – Tau Kappa Alpha
Becoming a Member of the Editorial Board

So as not to overload our editors and ensure a quick turn-around from subject matter experts, we accept nominations and self-nomination to the board. Contact the editor if you or someone you know has a terminal degree (PhD, EdD, JD, MFA), a forensics background either as a competitor or coach, and some publication experience. You don’t have to be currently active in forensics; as a matter of fact, former forensics people are perfect for our needs because they are not as overloaded during the travel season.
Call for Papers

Speaker and Gavel is an international, peer-reviewed journal publishing high-quality, original research in the field of communication studies. While it has its roots in the pedagogy of competitive speech and debate and welcomes submissions from that sub-discipline it is open to, and regularly publishes, articles from any of communication’s sub-disciplines. We maintain a focus on competitive speech and debate issues but we are also open to submissions from all communication related fields including (but not limited to):

- Applied Comm
- Forensics
- Organizational Culture
- Argumentation & Debate
- Health Comm
- Political Comm
- Communication Theory
- Humor Studies
- Public Relations
- Computer Mediated Comm
- Instructional Comm
- Queer Studies
- Conflict
- Intercultural Comm
- Rhetoric
- Interpersonal Comm
- Small Group Comm
- Cultural Studies
- Organizational Comm
- Speech Anxiety
- Critical Cultural Theory

Additionally the journal is open to all research methodologies, (rhetorical, qualitative, quantitative, historical, etc.). In addition S&G will also except one or two literature reviews for each issue and a limited number of scholarly book reviews may also be considered. Viewpoint articles - research-based commentary, preferably on a currently relevant issue related to the forensics and/or debate community will also be considered. All research, with the exception of the literature reviews and scholarly book reviews, should further our understanding of human communication. The way(s) in which the manuscript does that should be clear and evident. All submissions are independently reviewed by anonymous expert peer referees.

By Submitting an Article for Publication:

When you submit a paper for publication you are stipulating that:

1. The manuscript is your own original work and has not been previously published and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere.
2. If a previous draft was presented at a conference or convention (which will not negatively affect the chances of publication and is encouraged) it has been noted on the title page.
3. The manuscript does not contain anything abusive, libelous, obscene, illegal, defamatory, nor does it contain information you know or suspect to be false or misleading.
4. You have gained permission to use copyrighted material (photos, cartoons, etc.) and can provide proof of that permission upon acceptance.
5. You have conducted any original empirical research after the approval of and in accordance with your institution’s Institutional Review Board (IRB).
The Submission Process

If you are new to the process of publishing do not hesitate to ask questions. We are always willing to help fledgling academics find their ways. Generally when you submit to S&G you will hear back from us within six weeks. If your article is seen as valuable enough for publication you will most likely be offered the opportunity to Revise and Resubmit the article based on reviewer comments. We would like to see those revisions, along with a letter explaining how you have revised the article based on the feedback you received, within a month but if more time is needed we will work with you.

Guidelines for Submission

1. Submission deadlines are January 15th and July 15th of each year. It is never too early to submit your article.

2. Submissions should be made via email as Word document attachments with the author(s) contact information in a separate attachment. (send to toddtholm@gmail.com)

3. Speaker & Gavel requires submissions follow the most recent Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines.

4. The text should be double-spaced throughout and should be standard Times New Roman 12 point font.

5. Personal identifiers should be removed from the title page and from the document. The rest of the information on the title page and abstract should remain intact.

6. Please provide full contact information for the corresponding author including email, mailing address, and preferred contact phone number. Also include academic affiliations for all co-authors. This information should be sent in a document separate from the main text of the article to ensure an anonymous peer review.

7. Please provide information about any special funding the research received or conventions or conferences at which previous drafts have been presented so it can be noted in the publication.

8. Once accepted for publication you will be expected to provide some additional biographical information, a headshot, and recommended pop-out box text.

Editor’s Note: S&G went to an entire online format with volume 41/2004 of the journal. The journal will be available online at: www.dsr-tka.org/ The layout and design of the journal will not change in the online format. The journal will be available online as a pdf document. A pdf document is identical to a traditional hardcopy journal. We hope enjoy and utilize the format.
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*DSR-TKA Constitution on line at* [http://media.wix.com/ugd/c80141_0b76f52812d946e3b0df47a8b190e429.pdf](http://media.wix.com/ugd/c80141_0b76f52812d946e3b0df47a8b190e429.pdf)
DSR-TKA: Rolling with the Times

Even though Delta Sigma Rho-Tau Kappa Alpha (DSR-TKA) has gone through many changes over the past few years, we are still embracing opportunities to best serve the greater forensic community. At the 2015 NCA Conference in Las Vegas, leaders from several national forensic organizations presented survey results from our membership. The data gathered about DSR-TKA was slightly discouraging as most participants either did not know the organization existed or were indifferent. There was plenty of discussion about what should be done with this information.

After much deliberation, the DSR-TKA National Council has determined that the organization cannot successfully recruit members using the current model. Once again, we are thrown into upheaval. However, the National Council has pledged to reorganize DSR-TKA and continue offering awards and grants as well as carry on the tradition of publishing Speaker & Gavel. This seems like a dim message, but I can assure you we are committed to providing valuable, unique service to the greater forensic community. While our future is ever changing and we may function differently than many organizations, DSR-TKA is ready to serve you now and in the future.

Ben Walker
President
Delta Sigma Rho-Tau Kappa Alpha

Ben Walker is an Assistant Professor and the Director of Forensics at Southwest Minnesota State University.
Taking the Journal to the Digital Age

Todd T. Holm, PhD, Editor

When I accepted the Speaker & Gavel editor position last year, I was encouraged to give the publication a cosmetic upgrade. Graphic art, layout, and design are not something I ever studied, nor am I one of those people who have a natural eye for such things. Despite those disadvantages, you will notice changes in the way the journal is laid out and formatted. I wanted to take just a few minutes to talk about the journal’s new look as well as some of the history of the journal.

LAYOUT AND DESIGN

First, I have done what I can to upgrade to journal’s look. If there is a member of our readership with an eye for layout and design who would like to improve upon what I have done...Welcome to the Editorial Staff! I would encourage you to contact me. The journal is an important part of DSR-TKA’s legacy. Unfortunately, the organization had lost some of its history over the years. When I asked for the DSR-TKA logo, the best I could get was the image on the right. A 34X72 pixel image would hardly serve as cover art. Fortunately, I was able to find someone online who produced new cover art based on that tiny image (and some pictures of DSR-TKA logos on trophies) and that is the image you now see on the cover and is shown below. I hope you will agree that this is a nice upgrade from the small and antiquated artwork we had.

HISTORY

Second, one day as I was waiting for a meeting to start, I was perusing eBay.com and found a Vintage Printer’s Press Printing Block for Tau Kappa Alpha (see the following page). Tau Kappa Alpha was originally founded in 1908 and merged with Delta Sigma Rho (founded in 1906) in 1968 to form the organization we know as Delta Sigma Rho – Tau Kappa Alpha today.

You can see the great influence the Delta Sigma Rho pin (below) had on the creation of the logo for the two organizations when they merged in 1968. As an organizational communication scholar with an interest in organizational culture, I understand how important symbols like a logo or lapel pin can be. Symbols provide an opportunity for organizational identification to develop. They allow us to recognize other members of our organization when we see them at tournaments or conventions. But artwork, like the ones presented here, also represent part of our shared history. While the technology available to create our parent organizations’ logos was much different than what we have today, the images are rooted in similar symbols: a key, Greek letters, and a star. These images are symbols for organizations that trace their roots back well over 100 years.
While we have lost some of our history, we also regain some thanks to a generous gift from Dr. James F. Klumpp, Professor Emeritus (University of Maryland) that will preserve more of our history. When he retired recently, he realized that his office was filled with decades of research and journals that he would no longer need. Included in his collection were issues of Speaker & Gavel all the way back to the days of the organizations’ two separate publications: The Speaker and The Gavel. If this collection does not represent every issue of Speaker & Gavel (and The Speaker and The Gavel), it represents nearly all of them. Dr. Klumpp has loaned the collection to us until we have had the opportunity to scan them into digital copies and archive them online. For that, our organization will always owe Dr. Klumpp a huge debt of gratitude.

ALUMNI

Third, we are reaching out to forensic alumni to involve them more in our community. This issue features three articles from distinguished forensics alums. Two of our alumni discuss what the activity did for them and how it helped prepare them for their careers. The third alumni article challenges us to improve forensics. Each issue will feature between one and three articles from forensic alumni across the country. It is our hope that these articles will help directors of forensics when they are asked to justify their program’s existence. It is also a good way for past generations to offer current competitors advice. As a community, we are always looking for ways to improve forensics. We ask that our alumni challenge the activity to evolve and improve. This issue presents the first of those challenges from a former national pentathlon champion who is challenging the activity to get with the times and embrace technology in presentations by using
PowerPoint, Prezi, or similar software in competition. We will be incorporating both of these types of articles in each future issue, so if you know someone who would be able to make an excellent contribution please have them contact the editor of the journal directly.

**ISSUE DEBATES**

Fourth, we are trying to bring debatable issues in the community to the forefront. Important contemporary issues are discussed at national tournaments, national conventions, and even at the average weekend tournament. But rarely are these issues written about in our journals. To foster those discussions, and in an effort to document some of the history of intercollegiate forensics, we will have an “Issue Debate” in each issue of Speaker & Gavel. For this issue, two well-known and successful coaches (and top-notch extempers in their day) debate the issue of note card use in extemporaneous speaking. We have seen this topic debated at length at multiple national events. But the interaction is limited to less than a minute per speaker and usually involves a dozen different speakers with two dozen different reasons as to why the event description language should or should not be changed. A journal’s format provides an opportunity for two scholars, well-versed in the activity, to express their reasoning on the issues related to this topic. It is an interesting read, and both sides make valid arguments. We will be incorporating an issue debate in each issue of S&G, so if you have ideas for topics you would like to see debated, please contact the editor directly.

**AUTHOR BIOS**

Fifth, as part of the cosmetic redesign of the journal we are adding pop-out boxes and author bios to each article. These features are consistent with the best practices of some of leading academic journals. The author bios also include a headshot of the authors to help us put names with faces in the hope that being able to do so will encourage more discussion between scholars about their research when they meet at conventions or tournaments. For convenience, we are also adding the proper APA source citation for each article so researchers who cite the articles can simply copy and paste the citation into their reference material.

**INCREASING EXPOSURE**

Finally, as we move forward with the journal, we are investigating ways to take our articles to a broader audience. In conjunction with the editors of other forensics journals, we are exploring opportunities to incorporate Speaker & Gavel articles into national databases while maintaining open access to everyone. Research in our field is important. But great research is irrelevant if other scholars can’t easily access it. Integrating our research into national databases while maintaining open access means that more people will be able to use the existing research to do more for our activity and the discipline. If you have ideas for other ways the journal could be improved, please do not hesitate to contact the journal editor. Editors want to serve their readers to the best of their abilities.
Creating a Healthy Space: Forensic Educators’ Sensemaking about Healthy Tournament Management Practices

Heather J. Carmack, PhD
James Madison University

Heather J. Carmack, Ph.D. (Ohio University)
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Proper APA citation for this article is:
Creating a Healthy Space: Forensic Educators’ Sensemaking about Healthy Tournament Management Practices
Heather J. Carmack

Organizations are increasingly becoming concerned with the health and well-being of their members. To address these issues, organizations are creating wellness initiatives. One organization concerned with the well-being of its members is collegiate forensics. Forensic organizations have been working since the late 1990s to create formal and informal wellness initiatives to address the health of students and educators at forensic tournaments. The purpose of this study is to explore how collegiate forensic educators understand and implement these initiatives and the tensions they encounter. Collegiate forensic educators who host tournaments completed an open-ended qualitative questionnaire about formal and informal wellness initiatives. The findings suggest that educators struggle with the costs and logistics of tournaments and implementing these initiatives.

Keywords: forensics, wellness programs, health communication, organizational sensemaking

Health and wellness continues to be an important topic for businesses and universities as administrators reflect on the physical, mental, and economic strain poor health habits have on organizational member productivity (Anderson, Harrison, Cooper, & Jané-Llopis, 2011; Bopp & Fallon, 2013; Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005; Geist-Martin & Scarduzio, 2011; Jack & Brewis, 2005; Langille et al., 2011; Michaels & Greene, 2013; Reger, Williams, Kolar, Smith, & Douglas, 2002; Watson & Gauthier, 2003). Not surprisingly, there is a reciprocal relationship between work and health; increasing work hours and work-related stress leads to poor health and poor health contributes to decreases in productivity and work quality and increases in absenteeism (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005).

These concerns have prompted administrators to encourage the adoption and implementation of organizational wellness initiatives. These initiatives can include fitness and nutrition classes, health referrals, ergonomic equipment, and employee assistance programs to address drug and alcohol abuse (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005); some organizations are even building on-site wellness centers so members can exercise before, during, or after work (Zoller, 2004). These initiatives, which often offer members bonuses for weight loss and the implementation of healthy habits, are designed to
promote health and wellness as well as increase productivity (McGillivray, 2005). From an organizational member perspective, these initiatives can increase satisfaction with work and the organization (Grawitch, Trares, & Kohler, 2007). Grawitch, Trares, and Kohler (2007) cautioned, however, that although it is important for organizations to implement initiatives to promote health, it is equally important to focus on the needs of organizational members (subordinates and supervisors) when designing the programs. For example, considering members’ interests, level of health, and what they hope to get out of a wellness initiative should be taken into account when designing these programs in order to maximize involvement. Likewise, understanding how supervisors implement wellness programs, encourage participation among organizational members, and address problems is important to success.

One organization that has engaged in a discussion of wellness is the forensic organization. The forensic organization is a complex web of systems and subsystems (Holm & Miller, 2004), governed by formal and informal rules, rituals, and practices. Be it the larger forensic organization (represented by professional organizations such as the American Forensic Association and National Forensic Association) or individual teams, communication scholars have examined a number of organizational communication issues related to the membership, practice, and pedagogy of forensics, including organizational culture (Derryberry, 1994; Doty, 2008; Friedly & Manchester, 2005; Miller, 2005; Parrott, 2005; Rowe & Cronn-Mills, 2005), socialization and identification (Carmack & Holm, 2005; Croucher, Long, Meredith, Oommen, & Steele, 2009; Croucher, Thorton, & Eckstein, 2006), mentorship and leadership (Nadolski, 2006; Walker & Walker, 2013; White, 2005), and group dynamics.

Although the forensic organization is not completely analogous to other organizations (for example, students are not the same as workers), many of the same guiding organizational principles are at play. More importantly, the forensic organization and workplaces share a similar concern: the health and well-being of their members. The health of students and coaches in particular is important to maintain the well-being of the activity, meaning that the implementation of formal and informal health practices is of concern for forensic educators. An odd paradox exists in forensics; it is not uncommon to see competitors speak about the importance of health issues during competitive speaking rounds and then step out to smoke cigarettes and go all day without eating or eating poorly. The health and wellness of forensics competitors and educators has been a long discussed topic in the forensics community. Indeed, the topic was deemed so important that National Forensic Journal devoted a special issue to it in 2004. Most of the forensics research on health and wellness focuses on the negative impact of forensics competition.
and coaching on physical and mental health (see Carmack & Holm, 2013, 2015; Dickmeyer, 2002; Leland, 2004; Olson, 2004b; Trejo, 2004). Although the forensics community has discussed issues of wellness on the community, communication researchers have yet to explore how wellness initiatives are understood and implemented by forensic educators. The purpose of this study is to explore how educators understand and implement formal and informal healthy tournament management policies and the tensions that exist as they attempt to enact the practices. After a brief discussion of organizational approaches to wellness and the study methodology, I discuss forensic educators’ understandings of healthy tournament practices. I conclude with a discussion of the findings.

**Literature Review**

Wellness initiatives are typically guided by two philosophical approaches to health promotion (Shain & Kramer, 2004). The first philosophy assumes health is the result of individual characteristics and behaviors. This philosophy emphasizes personal health capital, or the idea that an individual can accrue benefits from making personal changes (such as replacing soda with water). This perspective often relies on a series of incentives and punishment to encourage organizational members to engage in health behaviors (Anderson et al., 2011). Examples of this include paying (or giving “health bonuses”) organizational members who lose weight, stop smoking, or use in-house workout facilities. This philosophical approach can backfire, however, if the incentives and punishments are not in line with organizational members’ beliefs about the organization. In 2013, Pennsylvania State University employees rebelled against a new university mandated wellness initiative that required employees submit to an annual biometric screening or pay a $100 a month insurance charge (Flaherty, 2013). Administrators and the university’s health insurance company also tried to charge a monthly $75 surcharge to all employees who smoked. The wellness initiative was eventually discontinued, in part because of employees’ actively providing false answers to the screening tool.

The second wellness philosophy approaches health and wellness from a more holistic view, assuming that health and wellness are the result of internal and external factors (Shain & Kramer, 2004). External factors can include a number of different things, such as socioeconomic status, access to healthy food and activities, and positive organizational attitudes toward organizational member wellness. Organizations with cultures that foster a positive wellness climate report more success in the implementation and impact of wellness initiatives (DeJoy & Wilson, 2003). The second philosophy is in line with many communication scholars, who argue that wellness be viewed as an organizational, not an individual, issue (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005; Geist-Martin, Horsley, & Farrell, 2003).
Communication researchers examining wellness initiatives have almost exclusively focused on organizational members’ reasoning for using and understanding of wellness programs (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005; Parker, 2009; Parker & Spinda, 2007; Zoller, 2003, 2004). Relying on case study approaches, researchers have identified a number of often conflicting communication issues which influence the acceptance of wellness initiatives. One of the major concerns is a disconnect between the meaning of the wellness initiative and how members make sense of the initiative. Organizations often publicly tout wellness initiatives as a way to promote healthy behaviors (Langille et al., 2011), including the importance of socializing and “having fun” with other organizational members (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005). However, this is not always how organizational members perceive them. Supervisors and subordinates both reported that the main message communicated is one of cost reduction (Parker, 2009; Parker & Spinda, 2007). In these instances, the health and wellness of organizational members is not communicated as an organizational priority.

Tied to the meaning disconnect is organizational members’ attitudes about wellness initiatives. Although communication researchers suggest that organizational members are not outright hostile to wellness initiatives, attitudes are also not positive. At best, organizational members appear to be skeptical or ambivalent about these initiatives (Parker, 2009). In more extreme cases, as Zoller (2003, 2004) found, organizational members believed the programs were designed to divide members, creating resentment and concertive control (where peers, rather than managers, control each other; Barker, 1993). These organizational members believed that wellness initiatives were just another way for the organization to control and discipline them. These ambivalent and negative attitudes may be a result of organizational members’ needs not being incorporated in the wellness initiative design process (Grawitch et al., 2007). Zoller’s (2003, 2004) participants specifically stated that they would be less skeptical about these initiatives if they had been included.

Another conflicting communication issue is structural constraints. Organizational members reported the ways organizational life is structured makes it too difficult to participate. These reasons included job demands, shift schedules, and heavy workload (Parker, 2009). All of the wellness programs these authors examined involved optional member participation, meaning that organizational members could decline participation in these programs. In some cases, members did not want to spend “free time” with other organizational colleagues (Parker & Spinda, 2005). Why participate in something extra if there is no reason or requirement to do so? This also contradicts the public message some organizations use to promote wellness initiatives as social opportunities (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005).
Wellness in the Forensic Organization

In his poetic reflection on forensics and wellness, Alexander (2004) paints a picture of what competitors and coaches encounter on a weekly basis:

But I am thinking about donuts for breakfast, fast foods for lunch and pizza for dinner. I am thinking about late tournament ends and early beginnings. I am thinking about district wide travel in university cared for vehicles. I am thinking about long drives and late night departures. I am thinking about seat belts. I am thinking about Minnesota winters and rocky terrains. I am reminded of accidents, and injuries, and deaths. I am thinking about the caution of caring and the culpability of not caring. (p. 9)

Alexander’s poem critically questions the health choices competitors and coaches are presented with when attending a tournament. Forensic educators are not ignorant to these dilemmas. For example, Trejo (2004), while reflecting on an anecdote where she encountered competitors eating pecans off the ground because of the lack of food options at a tournament, argued that coaches can directly control nutrition at tournaments and promote healthy behaviors. Eating habits is only one issue encountered by members of the forensics community. Stress, mental health issues such as depression, weight gain and loss, and malnutrition are also concerns (Alexander, 2004; Dickmeyer, 2002; Leland, 2004; Trejo, 2004). Most of the examinations of these issues are presented in the form of personal narratives, so the extent to which they are experienced by coaches and students nationwide is unclear. In one of the few empirical studies of forensic educators and health, coaches reported high levels of stress and burnout, which contributed to them actively considering leaving the activity (Carmack & Holm, 2013, 2015). Coaches reported receiving some social support from colleagues and families (Carmack & Holm, 2013, 2015), but because the lack of wellness in forensics is a systemic problem (Olson, 2004b), social support will not be enough to address these health issues.

As a response in the 1980s and 1990s to the growing concern of the health of forensic educators and students, the American Forensic Association crafted the AFA-NIET wellness initiatives for tournament hosting in 1997 (AFA, 1997).1 Designed to be a guide for forensic educators in the quest for health promotion, the AFA-NIET tournament director wellness initiative is comprised of eight recommendations which outline strategies for tournament direction and planning. The recommendations include (1) considering regional activity when scheduling a tournament, (2) scheduling tournament

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1 A wellness initiative for coaches and directors was approved in 1998.
rounds to start no earlier than 8:00 am and no later than 6:30 pm, (3) scheduling in meal breaks for competitors, (4) making available healthy food choices during the tournament, (5) hiring enough judges so that coaches can have judging breaks, (6) providing a lounge area for competitors, coaches and judges to rest, (7) promoting activities that encourage wellness, and (8) offering competitors alternative options to pentathlon sweepstakes so that competitors do not have to enter as many events (Workman, 2004). Olson (2004a) described in more detail how forensic educators could integrate wellness into tournaments, heavily emphasizing the importance of providing food, beverages, and breaks for students. To date, the AFA-NIET wellness initiative is the only publicly available health-related organizational document from any forensic organization.

Organizational Sensemaking

Examining how organizational members understand organizational policy, practices, and beliefs and how that understanding impacts how members exist in the organizational world is the foundation of Weick’s (1995) organizational sensemaking perspective. Weick (1979) originally posited that the hallmarks of organizational life—ambiguity, uncertainty, and disruption—ruled members’ understanding and action. As members of an organization, members must find ways to reduce uncertainty, turn ambiguity into concrete action, and calm disruptions. To be successful in any organization, all members must find a way to “wade into the ocean of events that surround an organization and actively try to make sense of them” (Daft & Weick, 1984, p. 286). Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005) argued that two questions helped organizational members: (1) how does something come to be an event for organizational members? and (2) what does the event mean? There are a number of different events which members encounter, including the creation and implementation of formal and informal organizational policies and practices (Dougherty & Smythe, 2004).

Organizational sensemaking operates under two major premises. First, in order for members to make sense of organizational life, they must follow a sensemaking “recipe”, formal and informal guides to help them interpret, enact, and maintain the rules, practices, and beliefs of the organization (Weick, 1995). Importantly, these ‘recipes” may not always reduce uncertainty, and in some cases, may create more ambiguity for organizational members (Heiss & Carmack, 2012). Members of the forensic organization are presented with a number of formal and informal “recipes”, which mostly guide the competitive performances of students. As Paine (2005) pointed out, there are just as many informal rules for competition as there are formal rules, which often create ambiguity for student competitors. Second, it is
shared experiences, more than shared meaning, which creates the “glue” that connects organizational members and the organization (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). In the case of wellness in forensics, shared experiences and shared meaning are sometimes at odds. Although many forensic competitors and educators may be able to articulate healthy practices, there are still well-established unhealthy shared experiences, such as smoking circles between rounds. Integration of tournament wellness practices help to create shared experiences; the more students and educators attend tournaments with wellness practices, the more likely they might be to try to implement these at their tournaments.

Organizational sensemaking is made of up seven properties: social activity, identity, retrospection, continuous, enactment, plausible, and cue extraction (Weick, 1995). First and foremost, organizational sensemaking is a social activity; it cannot occur with consideration of how organizational members experience organizational events with others. This is evident at the forensic tournament, where teams come together to not only compete but also to celebrate the activity. Identity is concerned with how organizational member situates themselves in the organization based on their interactions with others. How members define themselves in relation to the organization influences how they make sense of specific organizational events. Farrell and Geist-Martin (2005) argued that wellness is an organizational issue because it involves the integration of individual identities and organizational ideologies. For example, in the case of forensic wellness initiatives, the ways in which educators define their identities as coaches, educators, and mentors may influence how they enact healthy practices. In other words, do educators feel like it is part of being a forensic educator to worry about the health of competitors? Sensemaking is inherently retrospective because members make sense of things after they happen; however, it can also be prospective because organizational members use past events to anticipate how to respond to future events (Weick, 1995). Sensemaking is also a continuous act where contextualization is important given that past events influence present events.

How organizational members enact or carry out organizational practices and beliefs is highly influenced by organizational narratives (Weick, 1995). These narrative accounts of events, passed down to new organizational members, are instrumental in teaching members how to perform certain roles or carry out initiatives. The forensic organization has a long and rich history of using narrative to communicate organizational life to members (Orme, 2012). It is possible that tournament direction narratives may include discussions of healthy practices, and eventually become an engrained part of those narratives. Tied to enactment is cue extraction, where organizational members must determine what is important in a narrative. Many rules, practices, and beliefs are not explicitly communicated and it is up to the organizational member to determine what is important. Finally, organizational sensemaking emphasizes plausibility of interpretation. Sensemaking is not as much concerned with “accuracy”, primarily because members’
different identities and understanding of events makes it too difficult to determine a “correct” interpretation (Weick, 1995). Instead, sensemaking is concerned with whether the interpretation of an event is appropriate given the context of the event. In the case of wellness initiatives, this could be accomplished with how educators make sense of how they enact certain practices which speak to the spirit of a formal or informal policy. All of these properties are important for making sense of participation in the forensic organization and for how forensic educators make sense of organizational rules, policies, and practices.

Communication researchers have primarily examined how organizational members make sense of organizational wellness initiatives (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005; Parker, 2009; Parker & Spinda, 2007; Zoller, 2003, 2004) or the communicative strategies managers use to garner worker compliance (Freimuth, Edgar, & Fitzpartick, 1993). Missing from the conversation is the impact of wellness policies on organizational practices and how managers implement these policies. Although communication scholars have been slow to develop an elaborate literature base on the role of communication in wellness initiatives, the examination of how formal and informal wellness practices are used to improve the health of forensic participants and educators is needed. Although forensics is not completely congruous to some of the organizations previously studied, the uniqueness of the forensic organization, coupled with the fact that formal and informal wellness practices exist, make it worthy of study. Specifically, this study is interested in the communicative practices and organizational tensions educators encounter when enacting these wellness practices. The study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How do forensic educators make sense of healthy tournament management practices?

RQ2: What tensions exist in attitudes about healthy tournament management practices and implementation?

Methods

Participants

Fifty-two collegiate forensics educators (21 females, 31 males) who host tournaments completed the online qualitative survey. Ages ranged from 20 to 64 years, with a majority falling in the 25 to 34 age range (n = 21). Participants were predominantly Caucasian (n = 43); a majority of participants had earned a Master’s degree (n = 22) or doctoral degree (n = 18). Participants were primarily midlevel career coaches, coaching between four to six year (n = 9) and between seven and nine years (n = 9), or senior level coaches, coaching between 16 and 20 years (n = 9) or more than 20 years (n = 9). Participants’ schools were affiliated with a wide range of forensic organizations,
including American Forensic Association \((n=7)\), National Forensic Association \((n=9)\), CEDA \((n=18)\), Pi Kappa Delta \((n=4)\), National Christian College Forensics Association \((n=3)\), National Parliamentary Debate Association \((n=3)\), Phi Rho Pi \((n=3)\), and other \((n=5)\).

Participants were also active in tournament direction. Forty-three participants had hosted a tournament in the last five years and 38 are hosting a tournament the year of data collection \((2012-2013\) competitive season). Directors host a variety of tournaments, including single school tournaments \((n=35)\), swing tournaments \((n=22)\), and state or nationally affiliated tournaments, such as state tournaments, Districts and/or MAFL \((n=24)\). Of the forensic educators hosting a tournament this year, 18 are hosting a single school tournament, 11 are hosting a swing tournament, and eight are hosting a state or nationally affiliated tournament. Nineteen directors are also hosting multiple tournaments, ranging from hosting 2-5 tournaments this competitive season, while 22 participants are hosting a tournament not associated with their university.

Data Collection Procedures

After receiving university IRB approval, participants were contacted via e-mail and through forensics and communication list-servs. This ensured that educators from across the country and who were members of any of the forensic organizations were invited to participate. Forensic educators interested in participating were provided a Qualtrics link to an online open-ended qualitative survey. The open ended questions asked participants about their knowledge of healthy tournament policies, implementing of healthy tournament policies, healthy behaviors on teams, and benefits and challenges associated with implementing healthy tournament policies. Participants were also asked a number of demographic questions as well as to report on demographics about their teams and tournament direction.

Data Analysis

A constant comparative method was used to analyze open-ended survey answers \((Strauss \& Corbin, 1998)\), starting with data “reduction” and “interpretation.” A constant comparative method, as a part of grounded theory, requires researchers to “take control of their data collection and analysis, and in turn these methods give researchers more analytic control over their material” \((Charmaz, 2002, p. 676)\). Taking control of data in an emergent thematic analysis meanings engaging in open coding to identify potential categories, refining and combining those categories into themes, and providing explanations for what themes mean \((Lindlof \& Taylor, 2010)\). The constant comparative method allows researchers to identify recurring patterns of behavior and meaning in the participants’ accounts and performances. After reading all questionnaire responses, I began the “reduction” and “interpretation” stages of data, characteristic of the constant comparative method. The analysis process begins by manually coding the data. Constant
comparison of these data was continued until “theoretical saturation” was achieved (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 110). Organizational sensemaking emerged after the analysis as a theoretical lens through which to make sense of the findings. The themes presented emerged from the constant comparison of data. Reoccurring, repetitious, and forceful comments were showcased in the analysis in an attempt to explain the themes from the discourse (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001). Comments are presented as written by participants; spelling, grammar, and mechanics are presented without editing.

### Results

Twenty-two participants (55%) were aware of formal healthy tournament policies issues by the American Forensic Association (AFA), yet surprisingly, 67% of participants reported implementing healthy tournament policies, regardless if they were an AFA-affiliated school. Participants all identified health as the primary benefit to these policies. As one participant succinctly noted, “Everyone is happier when healthier.” Forensic educators saw the everyday health of competitors and coaches as a gateway to the health of the activity; many noted that healthy students perform better and are more likely to stay in forensics, healthy judges wrote better ballots, and healthy coaches are less burnt out. As one participant commented, “I think it’s better for the students and makes our activity more sane [sic] for schools and coaches.”

Forensic educators see two primary elements to healthy tournament management policies: time and food. A healthy tournament space is one that encourages healthy behaviors in competitors and coaches and is a well-balanced event. However, educators must negotiate balancing the benefits of implementing healthy tournament practices and the constraints of running an efficient tournament. Two tensions emerged from participants’ comments: (1) the price of health and (2) scheduling health.

### The Price of Health

Implementing wellness practices at tournaments is an expensive endeavor. For many of the participants, wellness was primarily implemented through food. Participants identified providing healthy food options to competitors, coaches, and judges as key to healthy tournament practices. The challenge became how to provide healthy food options for participants while finding money to cover the cost of food. One forensic educator told the story of supplying his team members with miniature Snickers bars and granola bars to help fuel students who do not have time to eat. These little actions are important, because as several participants noted, teams might not have time to eat a complete meal until after the tournament ends that day (which could be 8:00 pm or 9:00 pm). One forensic
educator provided an extensive list of what is needed for healthy food options: “food or
time for students/coaches to get something to eat...healthy snack, providing water.” As
many of the educators pointed out, providing food for competitors and coaches leads to
higher quality presentations and ballots.

Forensic educators offer a number of options for competitors, coaches, and judges
to eat during the tournament. Many of the educators noted that they provide breakfast for
competitors and have healthy food options in the judges’ lounge. These are free to
participants, but are an added expense to educators. One participant said,

We provide food (nearly always free) to tournament participants. Sometimes
pizza but I like to try to do Chinese food whenever possible. We also provide a
breakfast (combination of good for you and bad for you foods) and snacks
throughout the day.

Another educator “provide[s] cookies and lemonade and ice tea just as finals are being
posted.” Although the first forensic educator points out that they do not always provide
the healthiest options, it is important to note that this food is nearly always provided free
of charge to competitors, coaches, and judges.

Although forensic educators recognize the importance of providing food options
for competitors, coaches, and judges, they wrestle with the costs associated with
providing healthy food. One participant articulated this tension: “Healthier food is
typically more expensive and when working on a shoestring budget, something has to
give.” As many directors are forced to do more with less (travel to tournaments, pay entry
fees, etc. with smaller budgets), justifying the extra costs of paying for fresh fruit,
vegetables, and bottled water is an added expense that may be the first to be cut. For
another participant, the cost of food is compounded by university regulations:

Another major obstacle is that many universities require that we cater our events
through their local food service, often raising the cost even further without really
providing any major health benefit (healthy food isn’t healthy if the kids don’t eat
it!).

Some forensic educators have identified ways to offset the costs of food by including
“admission to our cafeteria for tournament participants as part of the individual’s entry
fees” or by “charg[ing] $3 extra per person for lunch.” Many participants, however, say
they “eat the cost” of providing healthy food options because it is important for
competitors to be able to eat.

Scheduling Health

A second tension which arose for forensic educators is balancing how to create a
healthy schedule with the demands of finding time for multiple events, running swing
tournaments, and finding enough judges to judge events. One of the recommendations of
Healthy Tournament

the AFA-NIET wellness initiatives is to offer tournaments which do not exceed 12 hours and provide coaches at least one round off from judging. Many educators strive to meet these standards, as one director pointed out, “Provide a reasonable tournament schedule that allows for breaks for judges…Rounds shouldn’t begin before 8:00 am and shouldn’t run more than 10-11 hours that day.” From scheduling in lunch and snack breaks to scheduling rounds to only have five competitors so that the rounds are shorter, forensic educators attempt to design tournaments which encourage healthy competition and healthy behavior.

For many of the participants, it is not enough to just schedule tournament days to be less than 12 hours or give coaches a round off. An important part of attending tournament is the energy needed to travel and many forensic educators take that into consideration when designing schedules and assigning judging. One educator stated that they try “to get people out in time to have a safe, earlier drive home”, while another explained, “I try hard to keep the coaches with the longest drives after the tournament out of the final rounds.” Although they do not specifically state it, travel requires healthy drivers (coaches and students); by giving coaches a chance to have a break, they can rest and safely return home.

Forensic educators run into problems however, when they attempt to integrate healthy tournament practices in the face of real logistical constraints. One participant clearly articulates the many constraints educators encounter when designing a schedule:

It’s not always possible to get enough rooms at the times we need them, thus tournaments run later than desired…The tournaments I run in this way are all 3 round/semifinal in IE and either 4/4 or 6/4 in parli, with additional events as well. People don’t want 4 day tournaments, yet want to be able to do myriad events (at one tournament, students choose to do as many as 9 events in a weekend, something I don’t encourage, but they can do so). It takes time to do those things.

The pressure to run multiple events was named as one of the major stressors for trying to include healthy tournament strategies in the schedules. Forensic educators described frustrations with attempting to allow students to compete in multiple events (although sometimes limiting the number of events per students) or to compete in both individual events and debate.

More than the pressure of managing multiple events, educators identified the culture of competition as a major constraint to implementing healthy tournament practices. As one participant bluntly stated,
People continue to assume only “more” is “more” with number of events per weekend versus well being and quality of events. The emphasis is on quantifying the experience. People thing [sic] more rounds per dollar is a better justification than the quality of the experience. Also as people travel to fewer tournaments they need more rounds per experience to compensate.

The ramifications of this tension are not lost on forensic educators, as they often find themselves changing schedules from three rounds to two rounds, hosting more swing tournaments, and limiting the number of entries a school can have. One educator’s comment illustrates the negative impact of balancing the culture of competition and healthy tournament practices:

Honestly, I think the never ending quest for AFA legs drives the “hurry up and get another tournament in” mentality. I grow weary of TDs [tournament directors] starting awards by saying, “I know its [sic] been a long day so I’ll hurry through this,” and attitudes like that seem to belittle the entire tournament process. If we don’t look at the tournament like a celebration of our student’s work, we will shortchange their experience in whatever ways possible.

Discussion

This study explored how forensic educators make sense of healthy tournament management practices and the tensions that arise as they attempt to implement these policies. Not surprisingly, participants struggled with the logistical issues associated with tournament scheduling, which confirmed Schnoor’s (2004) concern about implementing healthy practices. Schnoor (2004), although supportive of healthy tournament practices, was concerned especially about the logistics of hosting a tournament that allotted numerous breaks and did not overwork students and educators while still providing students numerous competitive opportunities. Participants added to the conversation with their discussions of the tensions associated with the cost of implementing healthy practices.

Awareness is an important organizational sensemaking factor to the success of healthy tournament factors. It was surprising that almost half of participants were unaware of such formal or informal practices. There are a number of reasons for why this may be the case, including not being an AFA-affiliated school or attending AFA-affiliated tournaments, or newness to tournament direction. Moreover, the lack of other forensic organizational policies about wellness initiatives could contribute to lack of awareness. Even if a school is not an AFA-affiliated school does not mean the school’s forensic educator has not been exposed to wellness initiatives or healthy practices. Lack of knowledge about healthy practices does not mean that forensic educators are not implementing these practices. Participants in this study, although not always being aware of formal organizational policies about health and wellness, were implementing healthy
practices at tournaments. The question then becomes: how can the forensics community raise awareness so that more members engage in these practices?

Tied to the discussion of awareness is the role of forensics organizations in creating initiatives and recommending health promotion practices. Some participants questioned whether this was even a topic appropriate for the forensics community to address. Scholars exploring wellness programs posit that these programs serve as a way to monitor and control workers (Jack & Brewis, 2005; McGillivray, 2005). Some organizational wellness programs discipline members who do not enact healthy behaviors, issuing sanctions or charging fees for those who do not lose weight, quit smoking, or eat healthy. This is not the case for forensic organizations, as the wellness initiatives are recommendations and there are not sanctions for educators who do not design tournaments to follow these recommendations. However, the participants’ questions are valid. What is the role of the national forensic organizations and educators in promoting healthy behaviors? Olson (2004b) argued that educators are their team’s role models, meaning they have a responsibility to promote and model health behaviors. But, can we expect them to promote healthy behaviors if they do not enact them, as well?

The tensions related to the logistics of healthy tournament practices were particularly enlightening when considering the approach many coaches and students take to qualifying for nationals. Although educators are sensitive to their students’ needs, the qualifying rules for national tournaments such as the AFA or NFA national tournament might not match forensic wellness initiatives. Be it working toward legs for AFA or qualifying enough events to triple or quadruple a student in one flight at NFA, the qualification requirements might make it difficult for educators to schedule tournaments where students are able to take advantage of healthy tournament practices. Can a team be nationally competitive and still maintain the health of students and educators?

Limitations and Future Directions

There are several limitations associated with this study. First, the sample size is small and only directors on forensic list-servs received the call for participants. It is possible there are more forensic educators who are not on the list-servs who could have participated in this study. The study was also limited to educators who had hosted a tournament during a specific time frame (2007-2013); coaches who took time off from hosting during that time were not able to participate in this study. Finally, I also did not ask about educators’ funding for hosting; tournament budgets could impact how they are able to implement healthy practices.
This study explored only one part of educators’ forensic jobs—tournament direction. I did not ask questions about how educators encourage and implement healthy practices during practice or in students’ non-forensics lives. Moreover, I did not focus on the personal healthy practices educators used themselves when not at tournaments. It might not matter if educators implement healthy tournament practices if they are not engaging in healthy practices when not at tournaments. One specific voice missing from this study is that of the forensic student—the person for whom wellness tournament practices were initially created. How do students feel about the integration of wellness tournament practices? Do they even know they exist?

This study serves as a beginning to exploring the role of health and wellness in the forensics community. Because of the limited research on issues of health and wellness in forensics, there are many directions for future research. Specific to this line of research, scholars need to explore the health and wellness of competitors and their understanding of tournament wellness practices. Many participants mentioned that information about healthy tournament practices were communicated to competitors and coaches either in the invitation or the schematic. It would be interesting to study the messages in those documents to see how forensic educators are framing healthy tournament practices. Tied to this, we also need to explore team approaches to health. Implementing healthy tournament practices is one part of a competitor’s wellness experiences, but what about when competitors are not travelling? The forensics community has long been interested in the well-being of its members. Understanding the organizational sense-making surrounding healthy tournament practices is a step in the right direction in order to understand the complex health discourses that impact competition and coaching.
References


Agitation in Amsterdam: The International Dimension of Carrie Chapman Catt’s Suffrage Rhetoric

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Agitation in Amsterdam: The International Dimension of Carrie Chapman Catt’s Suffrage Rhetoric
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The rhetoric of Carrie Chapman Catt has only recently begun to be studied and theorized across several disciplinary contexts. In the field of communication and rhetorical criticism, previous studies have focused on either Catt’s domestic addresses to her followers and to the U.S. Congress, or have identified Catt’s international diplomacy as one of many motivating factors that spurred action toward suffrage by the American Congress. The focus of this essay is an attempt to analyze Catt’s shame appeals from an audience-centered perspective and begin to make plausible arguments about the instrumental effect of those strategies. Through an examination and close-textual analysis of Catt’s 1908 address to the Amsterdam Congress (a speech heretofore neglected by scholars), and of her 1923 address to the International Alliance of Women (IWA), this essay builds upon and enriches previous scholarship in this area of critical importance.

Keywords: Carrie Chapman Catt, suffrage, rhetoric, international, feminism

In the late 1800s, the political, social, and cultural situation for women in the United States was limited in myriad ways. Often discouraged from even appearing in public, let alone actually speaking out on a social issue, many women often simply (and contentedly) filled the traditional roles of motherhood without participating in the public sphere. Of the many structural and attitudinal barriers facing women in the nineteenth century, “none was more formidable than the charge that it was improper for women to speak from the public platform” (Zaeske, 1995, p.191). Due to prevailing conservative notions about the proper role and place of women in society, the early leadership of the woman’s suffrage movement faced fundamental challenges “over the right to use the power of rhetoric—for the right to act in the public sphere by speaking, organizing, publishing newspapers, and lobbying” (Campbell, 1989, p.x).

As an outgrowth of these prevailing attitudes, opposition to the idea of woman’s suffrage was both strong and predictable. Nonetheless, the drive for suffrage gradually gained momentum, and a legitimate social movement began to take shape, one characterized by the emergence of strong leadership from progressive women who wanted to see enfranchisement for females in the United States. Scholars in the fields of history, and more recently in
communication studies, have undertaken the task of investigating and explicating the work of the most visible leaders of the suffrage movement; Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Anna Howard Shaw, Jane Addams, Mary Wollstonecraft, Margaret Fuller, Angelina Grimke, Susan B. Anthony, Virginia and Francis Minor, and others (Campbell, 1989; Huxman, 1996; Ray & Richards, 2007; Wheeler, 1995). However, there is a noticeable dearth of scholarship regarding one of the key figures of the movement, one who spoke both publically and persuasively on the suffrage issue, and one who tirelessly organized and agitated behind the scenes: Carrie Chapman Catt.

The rhetoric of Carrie Chapman Catt has only recently begun to be studied and theorized across several disciplinary contexts (history, communication, feminist studies, etc.). In the field of communication and rhetorical criticism, previous studies have focused on either Catt’s domestic addresses to her followers and to the U.S. Congress, or have identified Catt’s international diplomacy as one of many motivating factors that spurred action toward suffrage by the American Congress (Campbell, 1989; Huxman, 2000; Amidon, 2007; Manolescu, 2007; Huxman, 2000). Other research endeavors have focused on Catt’s troping of arguments regarding the opposition to suffrage (Birdsell, 1993), on Catt’s method of inventing and arranging arguments (Clevenger, 1955), and on Catt’s hesitance to employ radical tactics like arson and property destruction as part of her suffrage advocacy (Kowal, 2000, p.246).

Through an examination and close-textual analysis of Catt’s 1908 address to the Amsterdam Congress (a speech heretofore neglected by scholars), and of her 1923 address to the International Alliance of Women (IWA), it is my hope that this essay builds upon and enriches previous scholarship in this area of critical importance and also extends and amplifies the arguments put forth by Manolescu (2007) and others. What is missing in previous scholarly research on Catt’s rhetoric is a more thorough treatment of the ways in which shame appeals, and/or attempts to use guilt or international embarrassment, function in terms of being a motivator for Congressional action. Manolescu’s approach, while useful, and indeed the only article that approaches Catt’s rhetoric from this methodological perspective, tends to focus more on the formal/proprietary aspects of shame appeals as an argumentative form. The focus of this essay, in an area of this sub-field that I hope to enrich and expand upon, is an attempt to analyze Catt’s shame appeals from an audience-centered perspective and begin to make plausible arguments about the instrumental effect of those strategies.

Before delving much deeper into Catt’s speeches, and because this essay also attempts to make some claim to Catt’s intent as a rhetor, I will briefly outline Catt’s role as a thinker and strategist for the movement. Following that section of the essay, and before engaging the text and intricacies of the 1908 Amsterdam speech, it is also necessary to set up a theoretical framework for the project, and thus, to outline the basic tenets of Manolescu’s normative pragmatic model for analyzing Catt’s shame appeals. As part of that explanation, I offer a
snapshot of the historical context in which Catt’s arguments were made, a critical component in any type of historical/rhetorical analysis, and one essentially omitted in Manolescu’s article. This essay concludes with textual analysis of Catt’s 1908 Amsterdam address, as well as examination of Catt and NAWSA’s discursive position on World War I, which I argue helped to bolster support for suffrage with the Congress.

**Carrie Chapman Catt as Advocate and Strategist**

Any thorough analysis of the rhetoric of Carrie Chapman Catt must take into account her central role in the woman’s suffrage movement both as a key activist, and as a behind-the-scenes planner and strategist. Catt’s service to the cause was tremendously important, and her work is often placed on the same level of such reformers as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and Susan B. Anthony (Reynolds, 1991, p.94). Born in 1859 on a small farm in Ripon, Wisconsin, Carrie Lane was a bright child who had inherited her mother’s love of reading and pensive study (Fowler, 1986, p.6). While a complete treatment of Catt’s early life is not possible due to the length of this essay, it is necessary to note that she was well-educated, an exception for young women at that time, and a privilege only afforded to white females, though slavery had been abolished for over a decade. Catt thus occupied a privileged social position in relation to most of her female contemporaries. In 1877, Carrie Lane began her college studies at Iowa State University, one of six women in attendance! The fact that only six females were able to pursue higher education at Iowa State also speaks to the lower social status and lack of educational access that women faced in the late 1800s. In 1880, Carrie Lane graduated from Iowa State University and began a teaching career where she was paid the sum of forty dollars per month. Carrie married her first husband, Leo Chapman, in 1885, but he soon died of typhoid fever while in San Francisco. Carrie Chapman remained in California following Leo’s death, where she became reacquainted with George Catt, an old friend from Iowa State whom she then married in 1890.

Shortly after her second marriage, Catt herself developed typhoid, and proceeded to publish no less than eight articles on suffrage from her sickbed. That same year marked her first appearance before the NAWSA organization, where her address helped to catalyze and secure her involvement in NAWSA over the coming years. In 1900, after Catt led the drive for suffrage in Colorado, she was elected president of the NAWSA. Catt’s organizational skills and strategic choices provided the NAWSA with much needed leadership. Catt’s election “marked a new era, an age of organization, and Catt was its prophet” (Fowler, 1986, p.18). Catt served as president until 1904, when Anna Howard Shaw assumed office. Shaw was perhaps the only orator of the movement more accomplished than Catt. Shaw’s presidency, however, was marked by a decrease in organization and structure, and eventually Catt served another term as president beginning in 1915 (Reynolds, 1991, p.91).

In order to thoroughly interrogate Catt’s strategy of linking internationalism with the domestic struggle, it is critical here to note Catt’s abilities as a thinker and as a strategic planner. Catt’s single-minded idea of equality for women did not cloud her thinking as a strategist.
fact, throughout the drive for suffrage Catt adopted many diverse strategies, and made many controversial deals and compromises to reach the end goal. While many argue that Catt was too eager to sacrifice morals for political advantage, few can argue the point that Catt’s choices were crucial in winning the vote. Fowler (1986) argued that “thinking strategically was natural to her”, and that it was “integral to Catt’s very being” (p.154).

Problems with the Normative Pragmatic Approach to Catt’s Shaming Strategies

This essay takes as its theoretical jumping-off point an article by Beth Innocenti Manolescu (2007) who correctly identified Catt’s effective use of shame appeals as a critical component of her suffrage rhetoric. While shaming strategies were clearly foregrounded in Catt’s rhetoric, and identified as such by Manolescu, I argue here that shame appeals offer only a partial explanation of how and why Catt’s appeals were persuasive with her audience, and that shame, in and of itself, probably doesn’t alone account for the change in mindset required for the ultimate passage of the suffrage amendment. Manolescu’s article also fails to consider Catt’s address to the Amsterdam Congress, one of the most illustrative exemplars of the use of shame appeals in Catt’s overall corpus of discourse. According to Manolescu, a “normative pragmatic account of shame appeals in argumentation” functions to “explain how discourse strategies pressure addressees to do something” (2007, p.380). Catt’s rhetoric was both normative and pragmatic. It sought to create new legislative norms, codified in the law, that ensured and protected women’s voting rights. It was also pragmatic (in the expedient sense of the word), in that Catt made compromises and engaged in “horse-trading” with politicians to help secure the right to vote.

However, the rationalistic angle espoused in Manolescu’s theory lacks explanatory power when applied to the audience of Catt’s rhetoric. Around the turn of the century, politicians, and the general public, held decidedly irrational views about the enfranchisement of women. Women were thought to be unable to cope with weighty political issues, easily corrupted, prone to irrational and hysterical outbursts, and generally ill-equipped to make rational political decisions based upon logic and evidence (Stein, 2005). In the late 1800s and early 1900s, woman’s suffrage was “still unthinkable to anyone but radical abolitionists” (Stansell, 2010). Opponents of suffrage offered multiple reasons to keep women out of the public sphere, however most were based on pervasive conceptions of the “proper” role of women as “creatures of the home, under the care and authority of men” (Stansell, 2010). Why then, would that Congressional and public audience be expected to suddenly be persuaded by shame appeals regarding woman’s suffrage or lack thereof? Why would shame appeals, an appeal to the emotions, be sufficient to reverse strongly held beliefs about women’s role in the public sphere? Why would members of Congress suddenly be amenable to pressure based on the risk of being criticized “for lack of moral judgement” (Manolescu, 2007, p.389)? At least part of the answer
lies in the fact that in conjunction with these irrational (or at least provincial) views of the role and nature of women, the American public, and by extension, the Congress, was obsessed with the promotion abroad of the ideals of democratic government. After the conclusion of World War I, “the United States emerged as a great power” and “its influence accordingly grew more ubiquitous and often more direct” (Muravchik, 1992, p.88). Indeed, “America championed the cause of national independence for the colonial world, and its example as well as more direct forms of influence made a mark on the new nations” (Muravchik, 1992, p.88).

I argue that Manolescu’s essay, while important and on-point in terms of its explication of the shaming strategy, fails to adequately explore the pragmatic angles of the normative pragmatic model. In other words, I argue that the Congress would not have been prone to vote for suffrage because of a newly discovered sense of guilt and shame over their treatment of women in the political sphere. Rational arguments were unlikely to be persuasive with an audience whose beliefs and values on this particular issue were irrational. Rather, a model with more explanatory power would elevate the pragmatic aspects of the audiences approach to decision-making. In other words, Congress felt pressured to vote for suffrage not because it felt shamed for mistreatment of women, but because it believed that support for women’s right to vote would result in political advantages in other areas.

The legislature supported suffrage not because it felt shamed by Catt’s rhetoric, or because it feared it would “look badly to historians” but because Catt outlined the ways in which lack of support for the movement could result in harming U.S. prestige and its ability to export democracy globally (Manolescu, 2007, p.392). The critical missing piece in Manolescu’s essay is an even cursory analysis of the audience and historical context in which these arguments took place. I argue that the most important issue in the minds of Congressional leaders at the time, particularly as the storm clouds of World War I were brewing, was the sustainable exporting of democracy and American ideals to other nations. It was at least in part due to the overwhelming concerns about the loss of American prestige and the potential impact on the ability of the U.S. to secure its empire that caused Congress to finally consider passage of the 19th Amendment. As the next section reveals, appeals to exactly that sort of reasoning were evident in Catt’s 1908 address in Amsterdam, and in her 1923 address to the IWA.

**Textual Analysis of Catt’s 1908 Amsterdam Address: The Attack on U.S. Global Prestige**

Catt campaigned for suffrage vigorously in several states, although her unstated mission all along was passage of the full federal amendment. This determination for federal recognition of the rights of women probably drove her decisions regarding the rhetorical linking of international events and the domestic struggle. While there is a notable dearth of rhetorical scholarship surrounding the international dimension of Catt’s rhetoric, some have argued that her voice not only helped the cause of suffrage, but helped to shape American foreign policy discourse before, during, and after World War I (Namikas, 1999, p.843; Shepler, 1999, p.151). While Catt’s most famous speech, titled “The Crisis” has been widely analyzed and cited, little scholarly attention has been paid to the arguments she employed in addresses to international
audiences, particularly while she was president of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (Croy, 1998, p.49-50; Campbell, 1989, p.461-502).

Catt delivered an address to the Congress of Amsterdam on June 15, 1908 (Keller, 2006, p.66). The Congress was at the fourth annual meeting of the IWSA, of which Catt was president. There were two primary audiences for this speech, those in attendance, and secondarily, members of the U.S. Congress and government. For the immediate audience in attendance, Catt had to construct the speech especially for this event. She did so by noting that the day of the speech, June 15, also marked the anniversary of the signing of England’s Magna Carta; a document which guaranteed certain statutory protections of rights. She argued that this document also helped other nations of the world to progress by sending a strong signal that it was no longer acceptable for governments to violate the rights of its people. Another interesting way of reading this argument is that Catt used the Magna Carta as a symbol; perhaps she was really referring implicitly to the U.S. constitution and its protections. At the very minimum, her reference to the Magna Carta helped to foreshadow the signaling argument that she used later in the speech to indict U.S. policy.

The second audience of Catt’s address was the U.S. government, and specifically, those in Congress with the power to legislate change. Catt spent over half the speech directly discussing the shortfalls of U.S. policy. Catt’s apparent intent was to indict the U.S. ban on women voting in front of an international audience as a means to generate external pressure on Washington to change its laws:

in her Amsterdam speech she devoted the major portion of the speech to detailed accounts of what each nation was doing to promote woman suffrage and from these experiences she drew inferences to be applied to plans for the future (Clevenger, 1955, p.100).

Catt used this opportunity to lambaste U.S. policy and attack the image of the U.S. as an example of a healthy democracy. Catt used three primary rhetorical devices to indict U.S. policy. First, Catt spent much of the speech listing and repeating advances and accomplishments that other countries had made toward suffrage. In these arguments Catt wasn’t explicitly attacking U.S. policy, but was instead implicitly comparing the status of women in other countries to the situation in America. Catt proclaimed victories for woman suffrage in no less than fifteen countries (Catt, 1908, p.1-4). The countries in question, Norway, Great Britain, Denmark, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Germany, Austria, Russia, Finland, Iceland, and Sweden, were all European. Catt’s implicit argument here seemed to be that the so-called “civilized” nations of Europe were ahead of the United States in the particular area. She also made the persuasive argument that “even in far away South Africa, Cape Colony, and Natal have each effected an organization, and are seeking the suffrage from their respective parliaments” (Catt, 1908, p.4). In a final attack on American recalcitrance to suffrage, Catt argued that the movement had become global, indicating that not only was the U.S. lagging behind, but that global suffrage was inevitable.
Catt’s second main rhetorical device in the speech was to directly attack U.S. policy by discussing the situation in America. Her first strategy was to indict the image of America as the shining example of democracy and human rights. She argued that because of the serial failures to grant women the vote, other countries would no longer look to America as the “chief example of democracy”, and that far from being a beacon of freedom to other nations, the situation for women in the U.S. was dismal:

for some decades in the nineteenth century it was the chief example of democracy, and the advocates of popular government in other lands looked to the United States of America for proof of its advantage. For the past 30 years, however, reports have been largely current declaring universal male suffrage to be a signal failure there. The picture, as painted by these reports and embellished by many, a starting detail, is dark and forbidding, and without doubt, has had a powerful restraining influence upon the growth of the movement for government by the people (Catt, 1908, p.7).

Here, Catt effectively illustrated the use of the “signal” argument. Congressional reluctance to grant woman’s suffrage had dampened U.S. efforts to lead by example in the crusade against fascism. That statement from Catt was probably aimed at shaming U.S. policymakers for diminishing U.S. prestige in the eyes of the world. Catt’s second strategy here was to remind her audience that the process by which woman suffrage could be attained was a process controlled solely by men. It would be years before any females would be elected to the U.S. Congress, and Catt minced no words when she argued that “the additional fact that woman suffrage must come through a referendum to the votes of all men, has postponed its establishment” (Catt, 1908, p.7). Another clear attack on the U.S. Congress and electorate came when Catt specifically argued that it was a drain on American prestige and pride that the women who had started this global movement were not able to lead it. Catt argued, “naturally, it would have flattered the pride and patriotism of American women, could their country have continued to lead the movement which there had its organized beginning” (Catt, 1908, p.8). She then sarcastically added that it didn’t matter where the victories for women happened earliest, as long as victory was achieved in the long run. Catt seemed almost resigned to the fact that although American women had so earnestly started this global movement, they were doomed to watch the women of other countries achieve their dreams of suffrage.

A final strategy employed by Catt in the speech was a plea for transcendence of national politics and identity by women all over the world. She argued that “within our alliance we must try to develop a lofty sense of internationalism” and that the repudiation of “national antagonisms” would forge a stronger, more powerful alliance for suffrage (Catt, 1908, p.8). Again, Catt seemed to argue that despite setbacks in the U.S., the movement would ultimately
succeed. She was also arguing, however, that victories abroad did not compensate for the electoral isolation of women in America. Interestingly, Catt also used these arguments later in her career, as she was traveling abroad. Upon return from a trip to China, Catt employed the prestige argument again when she remarked at the New Jersey State Suffrage Convention in 1913, “I used to be a regular jingo but that was before I visited other countries. I had thought America had a monopoly on all that stands for progress, but I had a sad awakening (Catt, 1913, p.371).

It is difficult to determine the precise effects of these arguments on U.S. policy, or upon the opinions of policymakers. Because it was so long ago, it is difficult to surmise whether or not Catt’s message reached this secondary audience in the way it was probably intended. That said, as scholars we can still strive to make historical arguments based in plausibility. While we obviously cannot travel back in time and interview the audiences involved in critical speech-making situations throughout history, we can, based on thorough review of the historical context in which that speech was delivered, determine if an outcome (in this case legislative action to grant women the right to vote) could plausibly be linked to a discourse strategy. While there is a shortage of direct evidence to speak to that point, as Henige (2005) intimated, “for the ancient historian plausibility was part of the evidence” (p.167). In other words, in the absence of falsifiable historical data (as is the case with most academic historical endeavors), scholars should be trusted to surmise plausible cause and effect relationships based on thorough and detailed analysis of the situation and context.

It is reasonable and plausible to argue that given the international political context, and in the years leading up to World War I, Catt’s repudiation of America as a responsible, accountable democracy almost certainly had an impact on the political audience in Washington. In fact, the ways in which nations often respond to national embarrassment or a sudden lost in perceived prestige, seem to support this conclusion. As Conti (2011) argued, “while generally underexamined in international relations, sociologists of emotion have argued that shame and its avoidance play a prominent role in shaping social action” (p.93). For Conti, “shame and embarrassment are the inverse of the reputational pressures for nations to behave as good international citizens” (2001, p.93). That said, the rhetorical force of Catt’s shame appeal would have been nullified if not for the surrounding rhetorical situation. The impact of Catt’s argument went beyond shaming and embarrassing the audience; it was not simply an appeal to the conscience of the Congress, but an implicit pragmatic appeal that called into question the ability of the U.S. to continue its export democratic ideals should the Congress fail to grant women the right to vote. Congress wasn’t concerned with being able to take the moral high ground unless the by-product of that decision (voting for suffrage) was to enable the U.S. to seize the literal high ground, territory, through a credible exporting of democracy to foreign countries. While scholars can only plausibly speculate about such conclusions, an excerpt from a California newspaper, picked up from an unidentified Washington D.C. article in July of 1908, and covering the Amsterdam Conference, helps to solidify the argument:
Two of the notable women attending the Women’s International Congress at Amsterdam are Carrie Chapman Catt and Ida Husted Harper. Mrs. Catt is the presiding officer. This international congress assembles every two years. It met last in Copenhagen, it began its sessions this year at Amsterdam, and will end them at Rotterdam and The Hague. The congress is the guest of the National Suffragist society of Holland. It meets in the Concert Geboun, a large music hall. There are present delegates from every country of Europe, from Great Britain, and the United States. The first session was opened with the singing of a cantata, followed by a speech of welcome by the president of the Netherlands Suffrage association. Among the delegates from the United States are Mrs. Oliver W. Stewart of the Illinois Suffrage association, Mrs. Rachel Foster Avery Mrs. Coonley Ward of Chicago, Miss Lucy Anthony of Philadelphia, Mrs. Marie J. Howe of Cleveland, and Miss Janet E. Richards of Washington. On the Sunday prior to the beginning of the congress the Reverend Anna Shaw of the United States held services in the Walloon church of Amsterdam—the first time a woman has ever officiated in the pulpit in Holland. Altogether the United States has been a controlling figure in the congress, and its representatives have brought great credit to their country (Sacramento Union, July 5th, 1908, p.9).

This piece of evidence helps to make a stronger case for the conclusion that the U.S. Congress was feeling pressured by Catt’s arguments. First, it proves without a doubt that Catt’s agitation in Amsterdam was at least perceived, and known of, by a Washington-based audience. Secondarily, the exhortation of Catt and Shaw’s good work at the end of the excerpt, wherein they “brought great credit to their country” sounds like damage control. Given the nature of Catt’s scathing indictment of U.S. policy in the speech, the news excerpt seems like someone in Washington was trying to put a positive spin on what could otherwise be seen as a direct attack on U.S. democratic prestige and preeminence. From a rhetorical perspective, it is critical to highlight the importance of Catt’s choices here. What seems on the surface to be a “state of the movement” speech is actually replete with persuasive devices aimed at securing suffrage for women in the United States. Of course, Catt was pleased that gains were being made in other countries, but the point of this speech was not simply to celebrate those modest advances. Catt, always the strategist, chose her language and arguments carefully, likely for the reasons I have outlined here. This is not to say that Catt’s work on the international scene was cynical or insincere, in fact, quite the contrary; but it does seem obvious that Catt was using descriptions of the external, foreign situation to justify a change in policy at home.

Catt, NAWSA, and World War I

International events again forced Catt to make strategic decisions about how to frame the movement when it began to appear that the U.S. would not be able to avoid intervention in World War I. Catt, a well-known pacifist, remained silent about the war to avoid offending Jane Addams and her followers, also pacifists, and vocally opposed the war. However, in February of
1915, Catt broke her allegiance with Addams and issued a public statement announcing that NAWSA would support President Woodrow Wilson’s war initiatives. This move by Catt was widely criticized and “to this day historically minded pacifists talk of her treachery in selling out to the war machine” (VanVoris, 1987, p.138). The pressure on Catt at this point must have been tremendous, and the entire movement teetered on the brink of collapse around the controversy. However, Catt’s two-part justification for this move was a rhetorically powerful tactic that both silenced her critics and ultimately contributed in the securing of the right for women to vote.

Catt was able to again use the external situation to help bolster the drive for suffrage in the United States. Catt justified NAWSA support for the war in two ways; first, she argued that NAWSA must support the war effort to deflect even harsher criticism being leveled upon the pacifists, namely Jane Addams and her followers. Wheeler (1995) argued that although Addams was “dismayed” by Catt’s reversal, the decision “saved Catt and the NAWSA from the extreme hostility and loss of influence that Addams and other peace advocates endured during the war” (p.295). Catt probably recognized the need to distance NAWSA from what was perceived by the public as radical anti-war activities. The backlash that Catt endured for this decision was miniscule compared to the hostility directed at the peace advocates. Catt was also able to effectively link war service and suffrage. The service of NAWSA helped to convince a skeptical public that women could be trusted to work for the good of the country if given the power to vote. Catt accomplished this linkage by constantly arguing that “we ask woman suffrage as a war measure as the emancipation of the slaves was a war measure” (VanVoris, 1987, p.143). Some have argued that during this time suffrage played a secondary role as NAWSA focused on the war effort, however, it was clearly the opposite; NAWSA support for the war effort obviously paid high dividends in terms of political capital for the organization and the movement itself, and also provided Catt with an ideal rhetorical situation in which she could explicitly ask for suffrage in return for the hard work of women before and during the war (Lunardini, 1986, p.113).

Finally, NAWSA’s participation in the war effort also provided benefits in terms of publicity, which Catt was happy to exploit. As the mobilization for war began, women began taking over the jobs that men had previously performed, and Catt let it be known that “the National Woman Suffrage Association allowed no Congressman or legislator to remain in ignorance of these facts” (Catt, 1969, p.249). Here, Catt had continued to employ the shaming strategies she had since the drive for suffrage began, albeit in a different rhetorical context. Catt’s second rhetorical justification for NAWSA’s support of the war effort involved the framing of the war as a woman’s issue, a global issue that concerned the women of the world. Despite her apparent shift away from pacifism, Catt didn’t support World War I in principle. She would later argue that she supported the war because it was the politically expedient thing to do. At the same time she was calling for NAWSA to contribute to the war effort, she was also arguing that women, if enfranchised, possessed the power to end all wars. This strategy helped set the stage for Catt’s rabid internationalism at the close of the war; in the words of Catt biographer Mary Gray Peck (1976), “Mrs. Catt was the first international leader of the political
phase of the feminist movement” and “she considered the emancipation of women essential to the establishment of a peaceful world order” (1976, p.6). Even in later speeches, Catt retained and rhetorically employed the argument that the domestic and international struggle were inextricably linked. In her 1923 address to the International Alliance of Women (IWA), “Catt declared that women of all nations, races, and religions are united together in the demand for individual freedom” (Sandell, 2015, p.1). Here again, Catt employed at least a more opaque version of shame appeals; she reminded Congress that America was lagging behind the rest of the world on the women’s rights issue.

**Conclusions and Implications**

This essay has highlighted and examined the international and foreign policy dimension in the suffrage rhetoric of one of the movement’s most critical but oft-overlooked advocates, Carrie Chapman Catt. Specifically, I have argued that Catt effectively employed the global, international dimension of the struggle for women’s rights. Catt used the external situation (outside the United States) in the early 1900s to help bolster her arguments about why suffrage should be granted to American women. Catt employed two primary strategies that helped to rhetorically link internationalism and the domestic situation for women in America. First, in numerous speeches and writings, Catt drew on her experience traveling abroad to make the argument that conditions for women in the so-called “uncivilized” countries were in fact better than in the United States. She explicitly made the argument that the U.S. has been left behind, and could no longer claim to be the most progressive, democratic country in the world. Catt hoped that these arguments would shame and embarrass the American Congress enough to add momentum to the suffrage cause; she believed that if suffrage could be framed as an issue directly related to U.S. international prestige, it would have a better chance of eventually being granted. Given the historical context in which these arguments were made, one which was characterized by an intense Congressional and public desire to establish and maintain American military primacy through democratization of foreign countries, I argue that scholars can plausibly surmise that Catt’s rhetorical strategy of shaming played at least some instrumental role in the passage of woman’s suffrage.

Catt’s second use of events on the global stage to boost the persuasive power of her crusade at home involved the beginning of World War I. To the dismay of many feminist pacifists, including the influential suffrage advocate and the first woman elected to the U.S. Congress Jeanette Rankin, Catt pledged NAWSA’s full support of President Woodrow Wilson’s war initiatives (Zeinart, 2001, p.28). In what turned out to be a major success for the cause, Catt was able to justify to her many detractors that the war was about women everywhere, and that if NAWSA did its part to end this war, perhaps women could end all wars with power of the ballot. While there were many proximate causes and contributions to the ultimate realization of the
cause, Catt’s effective framing of the domestic struggle for suffrage as an international issue with global implications certainly helped to spur ratification of the 19th amendment.

It is my hope that this essay has helped to deepen our scholarly understanding of the ways in which shame appeals function. Catt’s shame appeals were only transformative with the Congressional audience because of the external situation; Congress sought a pragmatic reward (in the form of enhanced ability to export American democratic ideals) in exchange for making an unpopular decision. I have also argued that a more explanatory version of the normative pragmatic model espoused by Manolescu (2007) would benefit from more emphasis on the pragmatic side, and less reliance on manifest rationality. Simply put, rational arguments often fail to convince audiences who hold irrational beliefs about an issue; in this case, woman’s suffrage. It was only when suffrage became politically and geopolitically beneficial to those already in power (men) that Catt’s shame appeals began to resonate. This essay has also helped to enrich our understanding of how historical arguments can function, and how rhetorical scholars can approach historical texts without substituting “evidence in favor of interpretation” (Henige, 2006, p.17). While it is clearly impossible to re-create historical context and to gauge the response of audiences to a speech after such a passage of time, as scholars we should do our best to conduct thorough and rigorous historical analysis so as to reach well-supported, justifiable, plausible conclusions about the import of particular text.
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A functional analysis of 2013 mayoral campaign web pages

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A Functional Analysis of 2013 Mayoral Campaign Web Pages

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This study adopts The Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse to content analyze political campaign web pages produced by mayoral candidates in six large American cities in 2013. Specifically, this analysis examines online campaign communication from Boston, Charlotte, Detroit, Houston, New York, and Seattle. Results of this analysis found that mayoral candidates used their websites to acclaim themselves more often than to attack their opponents or defend themselves against previous attacks. Additionally, these web pages addressed policy topics more often than they spoke about character concerns. The data also reveals important differences between the way incumbents and challengers use their websites in local elections. Differences also exist between the communication choices of winning mayoral candidates and losing mayoral candidates.

Keywords: Functional Theory, Campaign Websites, Mayoral Campaigns, Political Communication

Praised for its “potential to invigorate electoral politics” (Davis, Baumgartner, Francis, & Morris, 2009, p. 13), the Internet continues to attract the attention of both political candidates and political communication experts. Today, political campaigns for all levels of government use websites to inform, involve, connect, and mobilize voters (Schneider & Foot, 2006). However, most research about online political campaigns has relied exclusively on presidential politics for information and insight (Germany, 2014; Hendricks, 2014; Tedesco, 2011). Although candidates for local positions also use political campaign websites to communicate their messages, such discourse has attracted woefully little attention from scholars.

Much is at stake in mayoral elections. Chief executives of large American cities are responsible for managing enormous economies that often rival the size and influence of entire countries (Simpson, Nowlan, & O'Shaugnessy, 2011). Foreman (2014) argued, “the sheer size and governing challenges of municipalities mean that large-city mayors often become national or international figures” (p. 3). It is little wonder then that mayoral campaigns are attracting high-profile candidates and that fundraising and spending for mayoral campaigns is on the rise. Still, there is much more to local government than money and celebrity. In noting the many crucial functions that local government can and must serve, Barber (2013) referred to American cities as...
“democracy’s best hope” (p. 11). Given the undeniable importance of the position, it is imperative that scholars understand the communicative processes that determine who is elected to the mayor’s office.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the campaign messages from web pages produced by U.S. mayoral candidates in 2013. More specifically, this content analysis examines messages from mayoral campaigns in Boston, Charlotte, Detroit, Houston, New York, and Seattle. This project addresses a rather large gap in the research pertaining to mayoral campaign messages in general, and mayoral campaign messages on the web more specifically. Shaker (2011b) has argued that understanding online election information is essential for ensuring “the strength and vibrance of local democracies” as traditional sources of local political information, such as newspapers, disappear from the media landscape (p. 53). Ultimately, the results also build upon Benoit’s (2008) Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse by testing its application to local campaigns’ websites.

Functional Theory is based on six basic assumptions about the nature of political campaigns and elections. First, “voting is a comparative act” that requires voters to choose between two or more candidates (Benoit, 2014a, p. 13). Second, candidates must therefore distinguish themselves from their opponents if they hope to win election. Third, use of political messages lets candidates distinguish themselves. Fourth, candidates establish preferability via three specific types of messages – acclaims, attacks, and defenses. Fifth, campaign messages can occur on two topics – policy and character. Sixth, candidates must win a majority of votes in an election. In elections with more than two contenders, candidates must win a plurality of votes (Benoit, 2014b).

A major advantage of the Functional approach to political campaign communication is its applicability to messages from many different media at any level of political campaign. Therefore, Functional Theory presents opportunities to compare and contrast large amounts of data from many different political campaign situations. A functional analysis of mayoral campaign web pages allows for comparisons between this message form and others previously conducted by Benoit and his colleagues, therefore contributing to our understanding of how political messages differ according to medium and level of office. Thus, the research presented here addresses important gaps in political communication research while simultaneously contributing to a well-established research tradition that can only be strengthened by the introduction of new data and conclusions.

**Review of Literature**

Two bodies of literature are particularly pertinent to the study of mayoral campaign websites. First, this section reviews literature about mayoral campaigns.
Second, this section examines research about campaign websites, with special attention to studies that have used functional analysis.

**Mayoral Campaigns**

Most of the scholarly literature concerning mayoral campaigns focuses on how “old media,” such as newspapers, influence campaigns. For instance, Shaker (2011a) demonstrated community newspapers play a significant role in informing voters about local elections. Benoit, Furgerson, Seifert, and Sagardia (2013) found, compared to senate and gubernatorial campaigns, mayoral contests generate more newspaper coverage of character-related themes and less about horse race coverage or policy reporting. Clearly, newspapers have played an important role in informing voters. However, it is crucial to recognize that the political media environment has changed. Daily newspapers are disappearing, forcing citizens to look elsewhere for their political information (Johnson, Goidel, & Climek, 2014). With this trend in mind, Shaker (2011b) noted how the web has become a vital source of political information about local campaigns and elections that is still “far from maturity” (p. 21).

Functional analysis has not yet been applied to mayoral campaign websites, but it has been applied to mayoral campaign debates. Benoit, Henson, and Maltos (2007) studied debates from 10 different mayoral elections between 2005 and 2007. Candidates used those debates to acclaim themselves 75% of the time, attack 19% of the time, and defend 7% of the time. Where topic is concerned, candidates spoke about policy (70%) significantly more often than they spoke about character (30%). General goals statements were the most common form of policy utterance, and personal qualities statements were the most common form of character utterance.

**Political Campaign Websites**

Praised for being a “master medium” capable of incorporating all other forms of media (Sellnow, 1998, p. xxiii), the Internet is now an integral and indispensable part of political campaign communication. In today’s political environment, a candidate’s website functions as a database for all of a candidate’s communicative attempts. Given all the advantages the Internet offers political candidates, this should be little surprise to researchers. Relative to other media forms, websites attract large audiences and offer candidates maximum control over their message, but with far less expense than television ads (Benoit & Benoit, 2005). Political communication scholars are wise to ask what sort of messages political candidates produce under these unique circumstances.

Most of the published research about the content of campaign websites examines presidential elections. Because mayoral candidates must address different audiences and
different issues than presidential contenders, it is reasonable to suspect their websites may be different as well. Moreover, many studies of political websites are now over a decade old. Therefore, earlier studies do not address recent developments in how campaigns design and use websites. Benoit’s (2000) study of non-presidential websites from 1998 offers a rare glimpse at the earliest uses of the Internet in local elections. The study revealed that utterances on candidate web pages were overwhelmingly positive (99%), occasionally negative (1%), and did not include any defenses. Candidates used their websites to discuss character (69%) more often than policy (31%). Notably, these results are markedly different from recent studies of presidential campaign websites, which tend to find more policy discourse than character utterances. Researchers have been left to ask whether these unique results are a product of the local campaign environment or simply reflect the peculiarities of the earliest political campaign uses of the Internet. The project discussed here was designed to clarify this inconsistency by providing a more contemporary examination of how political campaigns use websites.

Although most functional analyses of political campaign websites have focused on presidential discourse, they are nonetheless instructive for the purposes of this study. Both presidential primary elections and some 2013 U.S. mayoral races feature multiple candidates from the same party. For instance, the top two vote earners in Seattle’s election were listed as Democrats.

In the 2000 presidential primary, candidates’ web pages acclaimed (95%) far more than they attacked (5%), and barely included any defenses (0.1%). Where topic of discourse is concerned, the web pages discussed policy (79%) more often than character (21%). General goals statements were the most common form of policy discourse in the primary web pages, while ideals statements were the most common category of character rhetoric. In the general campaign phase of 2000’s presidential election, which pitted Democrat Al Gore against Republican George W. Bush, candidates’ web pages acclaimed 98% of the time, attacked 2% of the time, and featured no defenses. These general campaign web pages included more discussion of policy (90%) than character (10%). Past deeds utterances dominated the policy discussion, and ideals were once again the most common form of character discourse (Benoit, McHale, Hansen, Pier, & McGuire, 2003).

Presidential primary campaign web pages in 2004 featured more positive utterances (88%) than negative utterances (12%) and included very few defenses (0.1%). Primary candidates used their websites to discuss policy (72%) more often than character (28%). Past deeds claims were the most common form of policy discourse. Statements about ideals were the most common form of character utterance in the data set. The 2004 general election campaign for president featured Democratic challenger John Kerry against Republican incumbent George W. Bush. These candidates’ web pages acclaimed in 87% of the utterances, attacked in 13% of the utterances, and defended themselves in 0.2% of the discourse. General campaign candidates used their pages to discuss policy most of the time (90%), but also featured some character discourse (10%). Past deeds
statements were the most common type of policy discourse and ideals discourse was the most common type of character discourse (Benoit, Stein, McHale, Chattopadhyay, Verser, & Price, 2007).

According to Benoit, Henson, Davis, Glantz, Phillips, and Rill (2013), candidates’ websites during the 2008 presidential primary acclaimed (85%) more than they attacked (15%) and featured relatively few defenses (.04%). Furthermore, these pages discussed policy (81%) more often than character (19%). Where subtopic of discourse is concerned, candidates tended to focus on general goals when discussing policy on their web pages and ideals when discussing character in the same medium.

Although functional analyses of presidential campaign web pages created after the 2008 primary are unexecuted or unpublished, a number of clear trends emerge from the available research. First, acclaims are the most frequent function of presidential campaign web pages. This is probably because defenses and attacks have drawbacks or disadvantages, while acclaims do not (Benoit & Stein, 2005). For example, candidates who attack their opponent risk generating a backlash effect against their own campaign. A second trend is policy is the most common topic of presidential campaign web pages. This is consistent with analyses of several other campaign media, including television ads (Benoit, 2014a) and televised debates (Benoit, 2014b).

**Hypotheses**

Based on existing literature, this paper posits a number of hypotheses about the content of 2013 mayoral campaign web pages.

**H1**: 2013 mayoral candidate web pages will acclaim more than they attack.

**H2**: 2013 mayoral candidate web pages will discuss policy more than they discuss character.

Taken together, H1 and H2 essentially predict that mayoral candidate web pages will function similar to presidential candidates’. Because the frequency of subtopics of policy and character discourse is less consistent in previous research, this project poses research questions regarding the specific content of each topic.

**RQ1**: What is the frequency of past deeds, future plans, and general goals in 2013 mayoral candidate web pages?

**RQ2**: What is the frequency of personal qualities utterances, leadership abilities utterances, and ideals statements in 2013 mayoral candidate web pages?

Previous political communication research has found that incumbents and challengers differ in their message production. Specifically, incumbents are more positive than, and discuss policy more frequently than, challengers (Benoit, 2008).

**H3**: Incumbents will acclaim more, and attack less, than challengers in 2013 mayoral campaign web pages.
H4: Incumbents will discuss policy more, and character less, than challengers in 2013 mayoral campaign web pages.

Research regarding differences in the tone or functions of messages from winners and losers is inconclusive (Benoit, 1999; Benoit, 2003; Benoit, Delbert, Sudbrock, & Vogt, 2010), and mayoral web pages have never been studied using this methodology. Hence, a third research question is posed.

RQ3: What is the difference in frequency of acclaims, attacks, and defenses between winners and losers in mayoral campaign web pages?

A number of studies have suggested winners and losers differ in regard to which topics they choose to address (Airne & Benoit, 2005; Benoit, 2008; Benoit, 2007; Benoit, Delbert, Sudbrock, & Vogt, 2010).

H5: Mayoral campaign winners will emphasize policy more, and character less, than losers in campaign web pages.

Although previous functional analyses of political communication have often probed how party affiliation influences message choices (Benoit & Harthcock, 1999), such a query is not warranted here. Most of the 2013 mayoral campaigns scrutinized here did not feature a traditional two-party standoff. As noted previously, Seattle’s race featured two Democrats. The top two finishers in Houston’s race were also Democrats. In other cities, such as Boston and Detroit, candidates ran as “non-partisan,” listing no official party affiliation.

Method

This content analysis adopted the same sampling, coding, and analytic procedures used in previous functional analyses of political campaign web pages. The details of this methodology are presented below. Benoit (2014a, 2014b) presents a comprehensive explanation of all codebook procedures for those who wish to replicate these methods.

Sample

Using the U.S. Conference of Mayors website, researchers chose the corresponding mayoral elections from the six largest American cities that held mayoral elections on November 5, 2013. As a result, this study examines Boston, Charlotte, Detroit, Houston, New York, and Seattle. It is not uncommon for mayoral elections to feature more than just two candidates. Therefore, this study is limited to those candidates who earned more than 10% of the vote. The researchers accessed and archived all relevant mayoral campaign web pages on the evening of November 4, 2013. In total, an estimated 208 unique web pages were archived for this study. These web
pages were converted to portable document format and printed, resulting in an estimated 1,256 physical pages for analysis.

Coding Procedures

Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (1998) instructed, “No matter what content form an analyst selects to study, content must be reduced to units in order to measure it” (p. 68). Accordingly, researchers began by unitizing the text of each web page according to themes, which typically range in length between one phrase and an entire paragraph of discourse. Benoit (2014b) explained, “a theme is the smallest unit of discourse capable of expressing a coherent idea” (p. 28). The 13 mayoral campaign web pages analyzed here were unitized into 6,046 unique themes.

Each theme was then coded according to its function. Candidates can acclaim a candidate’s positive attributes, attack an opponent’s negative attributes or defend a candidate against previous attacks. As Popkin (1994) wrote, “each campaign tries hard to make its side look better and the other side worse” (p. 232). Acclaims can increase a candidate’s perceived benefits or advantages in an effort to make them appear preferable to opponents. Attacks on the other hand, attempt to decrease an opponent’s relative advantages. Defenses refute a rival candidate’s previous attacks, and may therefore reduce harm to a candidate. The inclusion of defenses is a major advantage of Functional Theory, as other methods of content analysis tend to ignore this function.

Next, themes were further classified according to topic (policy or character). Policy assertions address what a candidate does. Character assertions address who a candidate is. These topics can each be broken down into three subtopics. Policy discourse consists of messages regarding past deeds, future plans, and general goals. Character discourse consists of messages about personal qualities, leadership abilities, and ideals.

Three researchers coded the data. Intercoder reliability was determined using approximately 10% of the sample and calculated with Cohen’s (1960) Kappa. Kappa was .79 for functions, .84 for topics, .93 for subtopics of policy, and .85 for subtopic of character discourse. In sum, these data have acceptable reliability. Landis and Koch (1977) indicate that a Kappa of .81 or greater reflects almost perfect agreement. A Kappa of .61 or higher suggests substantial agreement. The coders’ high level of agreement, and the regularity with which the Functional codebook produces acceptable intercoder reliability, eliminated a need to reject or recode disparities in the coding process.

Results

The first hypothesis predicted that 2013 mayoral candidates would acclaim more than they attack. Consistent with this expectation, candidates acclaimed in 93% of their messages. For instance, Detroit mayoral candidate Mike Duggan’s website used an acclaim when it quoted a supporter as saying, “Mike is just a people person, and I love him.” In 2013, mayoral candidates attacked in just 7% of their messages. Eric Dick, a
candidate for Mayor of Houston, used an attack when he wrote that incumbent mayor Anise Parker “has no respect for the citizens vote [sic.]” Finally, defenses were particularly rare in this body of discourse, totaling just 0.5% of the data. Boston candidate John Connolly’s website included several defenses, including this one regarding his relationship with Boston’s labor force:

Labor PACs have leafleted the city with claims that Connolly does not understand working-class people. But Connolly, a father of three who grew up in Roslindale and earns roughly $100,000 per year…understands well enough.

A chi-square goodness of fit test confirmed the difference among these frequencies is statistically significant ($\chi^2 [df=2]=9,639.14$, p<.0001). Frequency and proportion of functions for all candidates are presented in Table 1.

The second hypothesis predicted that mayoral candidates would discuss policy more than character. The mayoral web pages studied here discussed policy in 71% of utterances and discussed character in 29% of messages. The website of incumbent candidate for Seattle Mayor, Mike McGinn, focused on policy when it boasted that he had, “increased road maintenance spending by 37% over 2010 levels.” New York mayoral candidate Joe Lhota discussed his character by including a message on his website that noted, “Joe was born and raised in the Bronx to two hard-working parents.” A chi-square goodness of fit
test affirmed the statistical significance of H2 ($\chi^2 \ [df=1]=1039.54$, $p<.0001$). See Table 2 for data regarding topics.

RQ1 asked about the relative proportion of subtopics of policy discourse in 2013 mayoral campaign websites. Candidates spoke about general goals in 45% of their policy utterances, past deeds in 29% of their policy utterances, and future plans in 26% of their policy utterances. These differences are statistically significant ($\chi^2 \ [df=2]=289.91$, $p<.0001$). The website for Patrick Cannon, mayoral candidate for Charlotte, spoke of past deeds when it noted that in his role as mayor pro tem, Cannon “supported the one-half cent property tax reduction for taxpayers.” Cannon’s opponent, Edwin Peacock, discussed general goals in the following utterance: “Charlotte deserves a Mayor that will work with his Council to pass a capital plan that focuses on more effective spending and public-private partnerships, rather than relying on a property tax increase.” Here, Peacock states a goal, but does not include specific information about reaching that goal. Note that New York candidate Bill de Blasio’s website was more specific in the following utterance, which, therefore, counts as a future plans utterance:

\[
\text{de Blasio will increase the city’s income tax on earners over $500,000, from 3.86 percent to 4.41 percent. This five-year surcharge would yield $530 million in new}\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Topics of 2013 Mayoral Webpages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connolly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston Totals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peacock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Totals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duggan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napoleon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detroit Totals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston Totals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de Blasio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lhota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Totals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGinn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle Totals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
revenue to pay for universal pre-K for all 4-year-olds and fund after-school programs for all middle school students.

This utterance is very particular about how much the tax increase would cost, how much revenue the tax increase would generate, and the education project on which that revenue would be spent. Table 3 includes topics of policy discourse from all campaigns studied here.

Table 3.
Subtopics of Policy in 2013 Mayoral Webpages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Past Deeds</th>
<th>Future Plans</th>
<th>General Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acclams</td>
<td>Attacks</td>
<td>Acclams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walsh</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>275 (20%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>390 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connolly</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27 (17%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>70 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bos. Total</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>302 (10%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>460 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannon</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41 (100%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peacock</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 (14%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Char. Total</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 (14%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duggan</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47 (55%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napoleon</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 (23%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det Total</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>130 (22%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>352 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parker</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>101 (78%)</td>
<td>9 (7%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88 (34%)</td>
<td>7 (22%)</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13 (65%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>6 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hou Total</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>118 (65%)</td>
<td>7 (30%)</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de Blasio</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>144 (28%)</td>
<td>9 (18%)</td>
<td>270 (90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lhota</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30 (10%)</td>
<td>21 (7%)</td>
<td>244 (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NY Total</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>141 (45%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>514 (90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGinn</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>346 (60%)</td>
<td>28 (5%)</td>
<td>205 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31 (60%)</td>
<td>51 (50%)</td>
<td>175 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea Total</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>377 (43%)</td>
<td>79 (13%)</td>
<td>380 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1024</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>1094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1237 (29%)</td>
<td>1103 (26%)</td>
<td>1914 (41%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second research question asked about the relative proportion of character utterances on mayoral campaign web pages. Differences among the three types of character discourse analyzed here were statistically significant ($\chi^2$ [df=2]=89.11, p<.0001), as candidates discussed personal qualities in 38% of their character discourse, leadership abilities in 26% of their character utterances, and ideals in 37% of their character claims. Boston mayoral candidate Marty Walsh’s website employed a personal qualities utterance when it bragged, “Marty understands what it’s like to fall down and get back up.” Ed Murray, a candidate for Seattle Mayor, attacked the incumbent mayor’s leadership when he noted that many of Seattle’s problems, “reflect failures of leadership at the top.” An example of an ideals statement came from Houston mayoral candidate

![Table 4](image-url)
Ben Hall’s website. The site said, “We applaud our respective heritages and are all made better by the great span of our cultures and diversity.”

Only mayoral campaigns in which there was a true incumbent candidate could be used to address H3, which predicted that incumbent’s web pages would be more positive than challengers’ web pages. Therefore, the sample was limited to just Seattle and Houston, as all other elections examined here were for open seats. This narrowed sample consisted of 1,794 unique utterances, which was enough to generate a reliable calculation. Previous functional analyses have examined incumbent-challenger differences by using even fewer races and even fewer themes (Benoit & Benoit-Bryan, 2013). Based on the Seattle and Houston mayoral campaigns, H3 was confirmed. Incumbent candidates acclaimed more (99% to 72%), and attacked less (0.2% to 27%) than challengers on their 2013 campaign websites ($\chi^2$ [df=1]=248.44, p<.0001). See Table 5 for more information about difference in functions of discourse between incumbents and challengers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions of 2013 Mayoral Webpages According to Incumbency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acclaims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H4 predicted incumbents would discuss policy more, and character less, than challengers. Calculating only the data from mayoral elections that featured a true incumbent, this hypothesis was confirmed ($\chi^2$ [df=1]=189.53, p<.0001). Incumbents discussed policy more (86% to 56%) and character less (14% to 44%) than challengers in relevant 2013 mayoral campaign web pages. These data are presented in Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics of 2013 Mayoral Webpages According to Incumbency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RQ3 asked whether candidates who won mayoral elections used different message functions than those who lost elections. The winners of these elections were Marty Walsh (Boston), Patrick Cannon (Charlotte), Mike Duggan (Detroit), Anise Parker (Houston), Bill de Blasio (New York), and Ed Murray (Seattle). The losers were John Connolly (Boston), Edwin Peacock (Charlotte), Benny Napoleon (Detroit), Ben Hall (Houston), Eric Dick (Houston), Joe Lhota (New York), and Mike McGinn (Seattle). Winning candidates acclaimed significantly more than losing candidates ($\chi^2$ [df=1]=252.69, p<.0001). A full comparison of the function results for winners and losers is presented in Table 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Acclams</th>
<th>Attacks</th>
<th>Defenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Winners</td>
<td>3523 (97%)</td>
<td>96 (3%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losers</td>
<td>2105 (86%)</td>
<td>322 (13%)</td>
<td>33 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>5628 (93%)</td>
<td>418 (7%)</td>
<td>33 (0.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final hypothesis presented in this paper anticipated that winners and losers would focus on different topics on their web pages. This prediction was supported, as winners discussed policy significantly more than losers ($\chi^2$ [df=1]=22.57, p<.0001). The topic data for winners and losers is presented in Table 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Character</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Winners</td>
<td>2643 (73%)</td>
<td>976 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losers</td>
<td>1634 (67%)</td>
<td>793 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>4277 (71%)</td>
<td>1769 (29%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

Mayoral candidates and their campaign staffs are in complete control of the messages they post on their websites. Under these circumstances, messages on the mayoral candidates’ sites are overwhelmingly positive. Occasionally they attack their opponent and very infrequently they defend themselves against prior attacks. One potential explanation for the emphasis on acclams is that voters typically report that they do not like mudslinging (Merritt, 1984; Stewart, 1975). Therefore, candidates may try to
reduce any potential backlash by using mostly positive messages. In mayoral elections, such as those studied here, it makes sense candidates might perceive even greater negative consequences for sharply attacking members of their own community. The result is mayoral campaigns treat their websites as repositories of positive information about their candidate. This may be a wise choice, as it seems consistent with the needs and goals of voters who intentionally seek out information from candidates’ websites. Still, attacks are present in this sample for the same reason they are present in other forms of campaign discourse; because candidates understand the necessity of highlighting their opponent’s weaknesses.

Defenses were very rare in the mayoral websites examined here. Benoit (2014a) has outlined the numerous drawbacks of defenses. Defenses can take candidates off-message, forcing them to speak about topics on which they may not appear strong. Defensive messages also run the risk of reminding voters of candidates’ perceived weaknesses. Finally, defenses can make a candidate look reactive rather than proactive. One final reason there were so few defenses in mayoral campaign web pages is because there were relatively few attacks (Benoit, 2007).

Incumbent candidates were even more likely to acclaim than challengers. The simple explanation for this finding is that their chances of re-election typically rest on their ability to remind voters of all the positive things they accomplished while in office. Conversely, challengers must devote more time, energy, and space on their websites to attack an incumbent’s record and convince voters they need a change in leadership. Another notable finding related to the function of political discourse is winners acclaimed more than losers. This, of course, is not to say those candidates won because they acclaimed more. In fact, it is just as likely these candidates acclaimed more because polling data informed them they had a lead on their opponent and, therefore, did not have to risk attacking their opponent.

Policy was more prevalent than character in the mayoral web pages analyzed here. These findings are consistent with previous functional analyses of messages from other media and at other levels of political office (Benoit 2014a; Benoit, 2014b; Benoit, Delbert, Sudbrock, & Vogt, 2010; Benoit & Stein, 2005). However, the sharp division between spaces for discussing character and policy makes campaign websites unique. On the web, candidates often save the bulk of their character claims for the biographical sections of their respective websites, including information about where they grew up, whom they married, and where they went to college. Political issues, such as education policy, traffic safety, or parks and recreation, typically receive attention in separate sections of the websites.
Perhaps more than other forms of political communication, websites demand clear and cogent organizational schemes.

This division of individual political issues into unique subsections of a website follows current design principles to reduce the amount of thought users need to employ to find the specific content for which they are searching (Krug, 2014). Designing for mobile devices encourages a reduction in the amount of copy on a site, which allows voters to engage with issues one at a time or only attend to the issues that interest them most. Interestingly, on every mayoral campaign website analyzed here, there were more subpages dedicated to issues than to biography, which partially explains the relative proportions of policy to character discourse. Such designs indicate candidate’s preference to discuss their policy plans rather than their character.

Incumbents discussed policy even more than challengers. This is probably because time spent in office presents candidates with policy achievements to boast about during their re-election campaigns. This communication strategy is consistent with theories of retrospective voting, which suggest citizens make voting decisions based on what candidates have done in the past (Popkin, 1994). It is more difficult for challengers to talk about policy because they do not have a record in the office they are seeking. Winning candidates discussed policy more and character less than losing candidates. Bill de Blasio’s successful bid for mayor of New York City and Marty Walsh’s winning campaign for chief executive of Boston provide excellent examples of effective campaigns that produced copious amounts of policy-themed campaign discourse on a laundry list of different political issues, for the web. Campaign websites do a particularly good job of providing spaces where candidates can address low profile political issues that are important to just a handful of citizens. This is a major advantage of campaign websites over television ads, which tend to be more expensive and must therefore speak to a wide range of voters. These results are consistent with previous functional analyses of campaign discourse (Benoit & Benoit-Bryan, 2013; Benoit, Brazeal, & Airne, 2007).

Despite incumbent candidates’ reliance on past deeds messages, general goals utterances were the most common form of policy discourse in mayoral campaign web pages. There are several explanations for this. First, general goals utterances are more common than future plans because they require less effort for campaigns to construct. In fact, campaigns may have little incentive to detail their future plans because policy initiatives often sound better to voters when the details of achieving them are not discussed. For instance, a majority of voters would probably agree with the general goal of improving education. However, a specific plan to improve education by allocating funds for ten new charter schools would likely receive less support. Despite a relative lack of limits on how much policy detail campaigns can include on the web, politicians still prefer to keep their utterances general. Another reason general goals are more common on these web pages than past deeds is because most candidates studied here were not incumbents. Only two candidates studied here had relevant past deeds to discuss.
Where subtopic of character discourse is concerned, personal qualities was the most common form of utterance. Websites provide a unique opportunity to discuss personal qualities that would seem strange if introduced in other campaign media. For instance, it seems unlikely that Edwin Peacock of Charlotte would have found a way to mention that his favorite movie is “Casino Royale, the 2006 Daniel Craig version of James Bond” during a political ad or a televised debate, but the statement appeared on his website. Despite the emphasis on personal qualities, there were substantial numbers of both leadership abilities utterances and statements about ideals. Overall, the difference among these three categories was statistically significant, but relative to other media, and other campaigns, the distribution of subtopics of character discourse was relatively balanced (Benoit, Blaney, & Pier, 2000; Benoit & Henson, 2009; Brazeal & Benoit, 2001).

The results discussed here extend the applicability of Functional Theory to campaign situations that had not yet been studied. Local political campaigns appear to be much different than national campaigns. Mayoral candidates must appeal to different audiences, address different issues, and work within a very different media environment than presidential candidates. The fact that mayoral candidates often run for office without declaring their political party affiliation would also seem to make local campaigns unique. However, despite the apparent differences between local and national campaigns, the content of mayoral campaign web pages is relatively similar to that of presidential campaign web pages. The basic patterns identified in the discourse of presidential candidates’ websites were also present in the discourse of mayoral candidates’ websites.

**Conclusion**

This essay has successfully filled several troubling gaps in the research concerning mayoral campaign messages. More specifically, this study addressed a lack of research about mayoral campaign messages and a lack of research about campaign websites. The 2013 mayoral web pages examined here exhibit important similarities to web pages from campaigns for other levels of elected office. Like presidential candidates, mayoral candidates’ websites were mostly positive and focused primarily on political issues rather than character concerns. Consistent with previous functional analyses, this study also revealed that incumbent mayoral candidates acclaim more and discuss policy more, than challenger candidates. Similarly, winning mayoral candidates were found to acclaim more and discuss policy more than losing candidates.

With the exception of results related to the subtopics of policy and character, which are notably less predictable, this analysis has found the content of mayoral campaign web pages to be very similar to that of campaign web pages for presidential candidates. In other words, this study offers support for the
Functional Theory of Political Campaign Communication. Despite apparent differences between local and national campaigns, candidates used their websites very similarly.

Given the importance of policy discourse on mayoral campaign websites, this area deserves more attention from scholars of political communication. For instance, researchers should systematically examine the particular policy topics that are covered on mayoral websites. Until then, we can only speculate that local campaigns address different political issues than presidential, gubernatorial, or congressional campaigns. Attention to specific political issues would also be useful for determining how closely local candidates’ platforms match the public’s agenda. Information about the specific issues that local politicians choose to discuss may be of additional interest in contests where those politicians are not required or not permitted to identify their party affiliation. A final suggestion for future study of mayoral websites relates to how they work, rather than what they say. Studies of the interactivity of local campaign websites could present very useful information about how new media engages voters in ways that other political media forms do not or cannot.
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But What Does It Mean?: Incorporating Creative Arts Therapy into Forensics Pedagogy

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University of Nebraska – Lincoln

Christina L Ivery

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Proper APA citation for this article is:

But What Does It Mean?: Incorporating Creative Arts Therapy into Forensics Pedagogy
Christina L. Ivey

In an effort to demonstrate how Creative Arts Therapy (CAT), or the use of art, performance, writing, and music as a therapeutic tool, can be employed to build a repertoire of interpersonal roles for students, this paper focuses on incorporating CAT modalities within forensics coaching pedagogy. As Reid (2012) built a bridge between performance studies and forensics competition to argue for the scholarly potential of interpretation, I construct a bridge between CAT and forensics to uncover another learning moment and engage in a conversation about coaching pedagogy. Integrating a CAT foundation in collegiate forensics is a way to not only get students more interested and invested in their literature but it is also a way to help students see beyond competition and focus on the epistemic process (Littlefield, 2006), or learning about themselves and others, that can come from participation. To demonstrate the collaboration between forensics and CAT, I offer suggestions for how to employ CAT strategies with students who want to engage in an epistemic function of forensics.

Keywords: creative arts therapies, dramatherapy, forensics, pedagogy, epistemic, performance

To maintain their programs, many coaches of forensic programs have sought to explain the learning outcomes of the activity to their administration (Kuyper, 2011). Out of all the benefits named in scholarship, most can either be tied to an educational or competitive learning outcome: educational meaning the scholarly benefits that arise and competitive alluding to the skills acquired through the professional, driven atmosphere (Billings, 2011; Kuyper, 2011; Littlefield, 2006). Some students and their goals, however, do not fit into either one of these categories because they are not competitive or they choose to utilize forensics as a co-curricular mechanism. When administration does not see progress in either of those areas, it can be difficult to rally support. Littlefield (2006) proposes a third way to view forensics to gather the most benefits: Coaches should view it as an epistemic activity or an activity in which students generate knowledge just from their participation. With this knowledge, students understand aspects of how to present themselves and their arguments, and “respond and act with certainty to the world in which they live than they would have been without the forensics experience.” (Littlefield, 2006, p. 4) In this way, forensics is seen as something beyond just a competitive or
educational (read scholarly) activity, and can add to a student’s personal, interpersonal and communicative knowledge. Explaining forensics as a multi-faceted activity that can reach students on three levels gives coaches and advocates another avenue to appeal to administrators.

For those unfamiliar with forensics, the epistemic function of learning through event participation is easier to see in events that require seemingly more rigorous research, such as platform speeches and extemporaneous speaking. These events require credible evidence acquired through normal research means and are filled with information for the judge and audience. In contrast, interpretation events have been under harsh scrutiny from those who claim that competitors are focusing more on performance and aesthetics as opposed to textual considerations and education (Lowrey, 1958; Green, 1988; Koeppel & Morman, 1991; Reid, 2012; Rossi & Goodnow, 2006). I argue, however, that performances can be evaluated on an epistemological level if one looks beyond normative ways of applying research. Due to the criticism surrounding interpretation events, evaluating them through an epistemic lens seems to be the best way to elucidate ways they can actualize specific learning outcome for students. The knowledge garnered by performance is understood by exploring performance scholar Tami Spry’s (2011) explanation of embodied action:

We live in our bodies, learn about self, others, and culture through analyzing the performances of our bodies in the world. The performing body is at once a pool of data, a collector of data, and then the interpreter of data in knowledge creation, in the process of epistemology. (p. 165)

Through their performance, performers are given the opportunity for self-discovery, studying their lives by analyzing and enacting the stories of others. Clearly, with its focus on argumentation and application, involvement in forensic performance can be a mechanism for mining the data that is within individuals. The knowledge contained within this internal data aids in a level of healing from past trauma, as well as contributing to an empathic understanding of others by comprehending ones’ own struggles (Spry, 2011). Perhaps a way to add to the legitimacy of interpretation events and aid those students who do not necessarily receive tangible educational or competitive benefits from participation is to explore how the epistemic function of forensics is best excavated in those events.

As a way to clarify this epistemic perception of interpretation events, I rely on techniques found in creative arts therapy (CAT) modalities. Previously, work has been done to connect forensics to performance studies to legitimate the scholarly benefits of interpretation events (Reid, 2012). This piece seeks to expand that connection by discussing the other epistemic benefits of performance and putting it in conversation with literature about the therapeutic benefits of CAT. I argue that by knowing of CAT modalities, coaches can help those students
who are epistemically utilizing using forensics as a means of developing skills that are not professional nor academic in nature. CAT is a means of therapy often sought by those who find traditional talk therapy to be insufficient in addressing their interpersonal and communicative needs. Just as its name implies, CAT uses creative arts such as dance, art, music, drama, and writing as mediums for healing processes (Brooke, 2006). Because forensic coaches have to wear a variety of hats, including but not limited to mentor, teacher, and support system, turning to CAT modalities makes sense as a means of uncovering internal knowledge of self through potentially healing performances. Let me be absolutely clear: This paper is not advocating that coaches should try to “heal” their students or act as counselors; but rather, this paper seeks to encourage coaches to be informed about therapeutic techniques to help those students who wish to expand the purpose of forensics to a healing, self-reflexive activity. It is not my argument that coaches should push a student in this direction, but I posit the natural epistemic function of performance leads students to yearn to use their events to explore a personal cause or trial in their own life. Therefore, I seek to begin a pedagogical conversation about the epistemic function of forensics as it is informed by CAT modalities. As such, I begin with the theoretical underpinnings that would aid in such a discussion before offering some advice for moving forward in integrating these practices into one’s own coaching pedagogy. In the following sections, I discuss the traditional benefits of forensics, while exploring Littlefield’s (2006) epistemic forensics. Then, I further explain CAT modalities and demonstrate how I have previously employed these tactics through two student case studies. Finally, I discuss how CAT modalities inform forensics as epistemic and reveal some of the responsibilities coaches should consider if they choose to add this perspective to their personal pedagogy.

**Epistemic Potential**

As a co-curricular (as opposed to extracurricular) activity, forensics provides a unique supplement to lectures in the form of critical thinking and public speaking skills. Research methods, the application of multiple perspectives, and appropriate presentational structure are learned and critiqued in coaching sessions and through ballots received when participating in the activity. These scholarly advantages are clearly acknowledged by coaches, as Kuyper (2011) more eloquently articulates: “if we did not all value the interpersonal and humanistic education that students in competitive forensics receive, we would simply be instructors of communication and not forensic coaches” (p. 21). When explaining benefits that come from forensic participation, it often becomes difficult to quantify abstract learning skills, such as confidence and camaraderie to school administrations. Even though these are valuable outcomes according to former competitors (Billings, 2011), they are difficult to promote to institutions due to their intangible worth. Because of this, many scholars have attempted to outline ways in which students benefit from participation, which leads to many tensions between those who are focusing on the competitive nature and the educational outcomes (Littlefield, 2006).

In search of a “learning outcome,” it is important for educators and coaches to focus on the most important word: learning. Littlefield (2006) explains how forensics can be used to
develop knowledge and to succeed in establishing learning outcomes by establishing the notion that forensic activity is epistemic. By the nature of its name, forensics is an activity where participants are constantly investigating and discovering societal truths (Littlefield, 2006). Students acquire knowledge through forensics, helping students learn how to react to certain social situations and engage in the public sphere in a way that they would not know how to do without the activity. Essentially, “the experience of forensics provides knowledge that is unique to the nature of the activities involved; and from forensic activities comes truth, or certainty, about the nature of the experience for the individuals involved” (Littlefield, 2006, p. 7). The unique knowledge that interpretation provides is a moment to dive deep into characterization in such a way that students learn more about themselves and others to improve communication and understanding.

Personally, as a former competitor, judge, and coach, I have come to realize that forensics affects different students for different reasons. Some students are naturals; the competitive benefits are easily attainable for them. Others are more focused on their studies and reap the educational advantages that accompany forensic participation. Still others come to this activity because they are in search of belonging and for a way to discover their own identity. These students are the ones that I see benefitting the most from an epistemological framework of participation because of the knowledge they gain from learning more about themselves and others. Obviously, these “types” can and do overlap, and epistemic benefits are attainable by any student who participates. This epistemic viewpoint provides a new way to conceptualize learning, and a way to reimagine the educational value of this activity. Forensics is the perfect event for reimagining the educational value, as it is mostly composed of individuals with an open mind and love for its participants, providing a safe haven for those who need to be vulnerable as they choose to work through personal issues in performances.

**Engaging CAT Pedagogically in Forensics**

According to Emunah (1994), “the sharing of one’s real life via the theatrical mode impels mastery and empowerment” (p. 295). Employing CAT modalities in forensics pedagogy helps students claim empowerment from their past traumas, as well as grow their repertoire of roles for their future. By “repertoire of roles,” I am referring to the dramatherapist notion that we all play a series of life roles (partner, parent, employee, caregiver, etc.), and engaging in particular performances helps us to practice and develop the skills necessary to fulfill those life roles (Emunah, 1994). While it is easy to see this investigation of epistemic application in other events (such as Rhetorical Criticism/Communication Analysis, Extemporaneous, and Persuasion) where students are working with evidence and research, epistemic discovery also occurs in interpretation. Emunah (1994) argues “the theatrical act helps to concretize and integrate the transitions, resulting in a modification of self-image” (p. 295). As students portray a myriad of roles in their event programs, their role...
repertoire grows, and they begin to experiment with the different identities they portray. This expansion of identity, or practice performing various life roles, fits well with what Littlefield (2006) expressed, “students are better able to respond and act with certainty to the world” (p. 4). As Spry (2011) posits, embodied knowledge, or learning about oneself, is a residual of performances. Part of the experience garnered through forensics is the social roles that are personified through characterization in interpretation, making this genre just as invaluable of an educational tool as the other genre. Students can then apply aspects of these newly found identities to their own lives, or recall them later as situations arise that evoke prior performances.

**CAT Modalities**

Just as the field of communication studies is broken into several different areas of study (organizational, intercultural, interpersonal, etc.) and yet still works as a cohesive unit, creative arts therapies (CAT) are broken up into different modalities (such as dance, music, drama, etc.) that all represent the same goal: to have clients benefit from the healing power of the arts (Brooks, 2006; Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999; Janzing, 1998; Schmais, 1974). Understanding these modalities allows therapists to help their clients develop a better knowledge of themselves, leading to more productive individuals. This is also the reason forensics coaches should look to CAT techniques to help their students. Once again, I am not purporting that coaches should become counselors for their students. Being aware of a CAT approach can aid coaches in facilitating resources for the students who will inevitably try to personalize a particular performance with their own experiences. For the purposes of focusing solely on forensic activity, I have chosen to discuss three CAT modalities that I see as providing the most insight in forensic coaching: music therapy, poetry therapy (bibliotherapy), and dramatherapy. In CAT literature, these three types of therapy are considered separate modalities and are categorized as such. I argue, however, that music therapy and poetry therapy are very similar in how they can be applied to coaching techniques. Because of this, I will discuss them together under the heading “Lyrical Therapy.”

**Lyrical Therapy**

Whether listening to existing music and relevant lyrics or making music, therapists who employ creative arts strategies often turn to musical therapy to aid in their client’s sessions. Music therapy is a “systematic process of intervention wherein the therapist helps the client to promote health, using music experiences and the relationships that develop through them as dynamic forces to change” those who participate. (Bruscia, 1998, p. 20). Physically, the rhythmic qualities of music have been known to help clients (Gardner, 1991). Gardner (1991) explains individuals have been known to “transcend pain” (p. 75) by listening to musical melodies, making them aware of their physical bodies. In other words, music contains the potential for healing after a traumatic experience as well as attuning individuals to their bodily reactions.
Not only do therapists focus on the rhythmic nature of music, but they also utilize song lyrics that pertain to their clients’ problems. Curtis and Harrison (2006) state “In listening to and discussing songs, abuse survivors can explore their feelings, connect with each other and with the therapist, regain a sense of self-worth, and make meaning of past experiences as they build new lives” (p. 196). This technique combines musical therapy with poetry/bibliotherapy, and suggests that the use of multiple CAT modalities could be beneficial in therapeutic sessions.

Since the age of Aristotle, philosophers have discussed the cathartic powers associated with writing. Therapists who use poetry therapy (bibliotherapy) methods understand this inherent healing power. Pennebaker and Seagal (1999) believe that narratives give authors “predictability and control over their lives” (p. 1243). Fisher (1984) would argue this sense of control and predictability comes from humanity’s innate nature to divulge their stories unto other individuals. Poetry draws upon this innate biological quality and “utilizes the natural rhythm of language and sound to access deeper aspects of the self” (Alschuler, 2006, p. 253). Alschuler argues that by accessing these deeper aspects of self, those engaging in bibliotherapy or poetry therapy gain a concept of better psychological wholeness, and they better understand how certain issues and situations affect their overall psyche. Poetry/bibliotherapy allows individuals to communicate with the unconscious, encouraging full expression of complex emotions in a manner meant to reduce anxiety, resolve conflict, and re-channel energy into problem solving outlets (Alschuler, 2006). When dealing with trauma, telling our personal narratives helps us to sort out what has happened so that we may follow the logical sequence of the narrative, and it helps put events into perspective for us (Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999). Whether it be original material or stories that relate to a personal event, utilizing poetry and narrative provides words to help express internal problems and concerns.

There are three techniques employed by poetic bibliotherapists (Alschuler, 2006). One technique involves individuals analyzing pre-existing literature and connecting it to a certain psychological aspect of the client’s life. The second technique is a form of collaborative writing, where a group will decide on a theme and collectively write a poem reflecting on that theme. The final technique requires that the client write pieces on their own, either during a session or in between sessions. “By creating their own writing in a session, clients are enabled to simultaneously begin to relinquish their own therapy through mastery; clients are encouraged toward independence, not fostered to depend on the therapist” (Alschuler, 2006, p. 258). This independence is crucial, as it enables clients to begin to manage their own situations with the knowledge garnered from tapping into their unconscious through writing.

The Lyrical/Musical modality can be used as a tool to help build programs for incoming freshman and less experienced students on the team. The students should send lyrics from their favorite songs to the coach or coaching staff. Not realizing it, the students will choose songs that reveal a great deal about their personalities, the good and the bad. After reviewing these songs, the coaching staff can try to find a common theme in the music (using the same thematic analysis they would if a student had brought in a random poem) and use that theme as a central idea for a
poetry program. This method aids the student in developing a bond with the program idea, and it has been my experience that students who are truly invested in the program are willing to work on the event. Keep in mind that Curtis and Harrison (2006) explain that studying musical lyrics helps the individuals identify areas of trauma that may exist in their lives, as well as helping them formulate language to communicate these events, if they wish to do so. Because of this, using song lyrics has both individual (personal events) and group (team bonding) possibilities due to the communicative attributes.

**Pedagogical Conversation/Demonstration**

Here, I will discuss instances in which I have used CAT modalities and offer suggestions for implementing this pedagogical change. For example, I had a new student send me lyrics to some of his favorite songs, and I discovered most of them centered on issues of self-acceptance and self-esteem. After meeting with the student and bringing up what I had noticed, I gave him a list of potential ways we could “spin” the theme to work as a poetry program. When we had decided on a topic, we proceeded to find poems that fit along with his favorite song from the original list. He wanted to keep his favorite song in the program, and I thought that would be a good way to have a part of him in the event. Instead of keeping song lyrics, it may be helpful to have the students write their thoughts about the lyrics. This action engages the final technique of lyrical therapy: allowing the student to write on their own after thinking through and researching what they are building as a program. Getting their perspective on the topic once you have discussed options helps them explore various ways of knowing about the repertoire of roles they need to develop and understanding of the situation. As Pennebaker (1990) notes, individuals engaging in therapeutic writing can begin to “organize and understand...major upheavals” that may occur simply by writing about them (p. 185). Through this process, he became a better team communicator as he gained confidence in himself and his role on the team.

Lyrical therapy is not meant to stand on its own, necessarily, but more of a way to help those students who are new to forensics begin to actualize the epistemic potential forensics has. I see “lyrical therapy” as being the pre-performance work and dramatherapy as being the CAT modality that is used during the forensics season.

**Dramatherapy**

A core concept in dramatherapy is the exploration of real life via the *fictional mode* of drama. That is not to say that portrayals of “real life” individuals omit the potential of dramatherapy; but rather, it alludes to the understanding that audiences tend to assume dramatic presentations are not autobiographical. According to renowned drama therapist, Rene Emunah (1994), “Acting or playing out a situation *as if* this situation were real, while at the same time knowing it is in fact *make-believe*”(p. 15). Often compared to playing pretend as a child, dramatherapy depends on the realm between reality and the unconscious to provide clarity to therapy sessions (Irwin, 2009). This dual level of consciousness allows performers to understand
their own connection with the script and work on that aspect of themselves while carrying out the act. Due to the subtle separation between the script and the performer’s own experience, individuals who find emotional expression difficult take refuge in drama as a therapeutic tool (Emunah, 1994). In other words, who may be afraid of societal repercussions for emotional expression feel as if they can express themselves using dramatic literature because the individuals watching are only hearing and seeing the “script”—not the real experiences of the performer. It is important that individuals not only learn how to release emotions but that they also learn how to contain them so that they can properly communicate them. According to Emunah (1994), “containment does not imply suppression; but rather mastery over one’s emotion, enabling winds really strong feeling through appropriate and acceptable channels” (p. 32). Possessing knowledge of these appropriate channels is also revealed through the different pieces that are performed. Of course, these results are not always guaranteed, but in my experience, students want the ability to test run the possibility.

In combining a comprehensive definition of dramatherapy, Jones (1996) states that therapeutic performances allow individuals to work through specific themes and issues. Dramatherapists know a variety of ways to address these issues and may approach them differently. For instance, Silverman (2006) has her clients pick a performance piece that speaks to them and asks them “to identify one specific moment in the chosen story that has special significance even though the reason for its importance remains obscure...It is the client’s personal and unique relationship to the story that is emphasized and explored” (Silverman, 2006, p. 228-229, emphasis original). By allowing them to choose their own literature and identifying and interpreting key moments in the piece, Silverman claims that the client will begin to use the challenges in the story to connect to their own life. By embodying the character as they deal with their problem, the individual learns to handle their own issues. Emunah (1994) explains this relationship further:

There is a dynamic, interactive relationship between role and self-image: our self-image determines our repertoire of roles, and our repertoire of roles determines our self-image. Many clients have had parental figures in their childhood reacted to them as though they were bad and worthless. Tragically, these clients developed a self-image that match the image others projected onto them. (p. 33)

Repetoire of roles mirrors the thoughts of Mead (1934) when he addressed performing selves, referring to the skills that are associated with our multiple hats or salient identities. In dramatherapy, “repertoire of roles” is thought to help individuals deal with situations in which they were previously not prepared but have now developed an understanding due to their therapeutic performances.
While dramatherapy can occur during a one-on-one session (much like traditional talk therapy), Bailey (2009) explains that performances in front of an audience can also aid in the therapeutic process. She explains that performing a role that closely resembles their own personal struggles allows the story to be “witnessed, honored, and validated by the audience,” confirming the actor’s or actress’s narrative while providing positive feedback and acceptance (p. 378). Many dramatherapists encourage their clients to participate in group sessions as well as individual meetings.

Due to personal experience as both a competitor and coach, I understand that dramatherapy is naturally going to transpire once the student has begun to perform the material in their interpretation events – diving deep into characterization acts as a way to explore the gravity of particular roles. This entails both the coach and student finding a piece of literature that fits with the chosen topic. Finding therapeutic literature may take longer than normal circumstances. Once the proper piece has been found, coaching sessions might be approached differently to include moments of self-reflexivity and moments where parallels are drawn that may help develop a repertoire of roles for the student. This can be done by identifying those moments in the piece where the student has a difficult time understanding how a particular emotion functions or justifying why an emotional reaction should exist in a particular moment. Coaches should be willing to guide the student to those moments and perhaps even inform the students about resources on campus to help them. Since the coach is not a therapist, he or she needs to be prepared for the breakthroughs that happen during performances. Pointing the student in the direction of campus support is a necessity in those moments. Not all students will require this assistance, but both the student and coach being aware that such assistance is available is important.

Limitations

This pedagogical approach is not without its difficulties and limitations. Students will inevitably voice frustration when trying to work through the pieces chosen; it can be difficult to allow ourselves to be perceptually vulnerable in front of an audience (Emunah, 1994). It is a defense mechanism, meant to protect our face; and it does not care about a competition setting. A common comment made on ballots despite the performer’s approach to an event discusses the believability of a particular emotion coming from the performer or the disbelief of the judge that the performer connected with the piece. These comments will still exist when employing CAT but for entirely different reasons than normal performative choices. Dramatherapists understand that individuals may have difficulties connecting with personal material due to how the individual handles emotive expression, and they rely on two different types of techniques for their clients (Emunah, 1994). The intricacies of these two approaches are not important for forensics coaches to know, but they should understand that these two views of dramatherapy will affect student performances. Which perspective the student falls under (Stanislavsky or Brecht) determines how they interpret any piece of literature—too emotionally or emotionally detached.
The first type of technique used by dramatherapists is built upon a Stanislavskian approach to theatre that focuses on emotions; specifically, making sure the performer is in sync with her or his body’s affective response to stimuli during the act (Emunah, 1994). Strategies stemming from this line of thinking are employed by dramatherapists wishing to help those clients who have difficulty connecting with their emotions learn to articulate them. In forensics, this will likely result in comments such as, “that [emotional response] was way over the top,” or “I don’t feel you’re really connecting to the piece because your [emotional response] was too big.” For the performer of this methodological approach, the point of the performance is learning how to perform certain emotions not making sure they are at an appropriate moment that makes for aesthetically pleasing performance.

A Brechtian approach inspires the second type of technique. Brecht wanted his audiences to focus more on the words of his plays rather than rely on emotional appeals. Dramatherapists rely on techniques developed by Brecht as a means of aiding the clients who are too in touch with their emotions to cognitively process situations. Here you may have students who are usually emotional begin to shut down during particular moments of their interpretation. Comments on ballots may sound like, “technically flawless, but there’s no emotion,” or, “where is your internalization?” At this point, students who usually have no problem demonstrating their emotions will learn that there are moments where even they cannot effectively show exactly what they are feeling. This affective epistemological epiphany demonstrates that forensics can act as an important educational tool for its participants.

Aside from the performance frustration, another potential drawback of using CAT modalities to inform forensics pedagogy lies in the competitive nature of the activity. Despite the best intentions of any coach, we take our students to tournaments that end in awards ceremonies where trophies are given to the best performers and top speakers. It is hard for students who make themselves vulnerable every weekend to hear comments such as the ones above and watch other students excel when they are putting in hard work too. Using song lyrics for the basis of a poetry program does not make the most competitive event. That is not the point. The epistemic takeaway is what is important when using forensics in this way. The epistemic function of forensics allows the learning objectives to expand beyond the activity itself into the lives of our students. Sure, the same could be said for the competitive and educational prerogatives; however, as I stated before, not all students can relate to forensics on those levels. Some students participate to find their voice, which is what the epistemic function is trying to create. CAT helps those students find their voice through experimenting with themselves; whether that be their traumatic past, social issues that speak to them, or exploring relationships within specific texts. Students must be prepared to face such difficulties.

Coaching Responsibilities

It is hard for students who make themselves vulnerable every weekend to hear comments such as the ones above and watch other students excel when they are putting in hard work too.
Coaches should play an active part in these techniques because the guidance they provide can function similarly to a therapist, without actually being a therapist. In order to not blur that line, knowledge of CAT modalities can help. It is important to realize that each student is different, so each individual case will be different; some tactics may work for some students but not for others. Either way, it is important for coaches to embrace the epistemic benefits of forensics, as well as provide the support students need during this process. Apart from advocating for the epistemological benefits of forensics, coaches also have the responsibility of being a support for students who choose to employ CAT techniques in their career. This responsibility includes guiding students who wish to perform their own material, preparing students for potentially negative feedback, as well as providing encouragement at the end of the season.

Both lyrical therapy and dramatherapy strategies can be incorporated regardless of whether the coach agrees with the argumentation for performing original literature (Lauth, 2010; Paine, 2005; Reid, 2012), or disagree (Endres, 1988; Germant, 1991; Green, 1998; Rossi & Goodnow, 2006). After experimenting with poetry therapy, the student can use the piece of literature they wrote in their program or just use it as a technique for connecting with literature that is already written by other authors. If students are allowed to use their own story, it is important to realize that dramatherapy literature suggests that original pieces need to speak to some universal theme to contribute to a repertoire of roles (Bailey, 2009; Emunah, 1994). It is best to only allow older or experienced competitors to perform “home writes,” as individuals using this form of therapeutic technique “need to have attained a certain amount of insight and resolution [emphasis added] of the therapeutic issues they are performing in order for there to be emotional safety for both the actors and the audience” (Bailey, 2009, p. 378). There are some students I would never allow to perform their own sensitive material, regardless of their age or experience. If the student relatively strong and are they using this technique to deal with a personal issue, then perhaps they could handle that vulnerability. If the student normally pretty fragile or socially inept, then it is probably best to not allow that student to use their own narrative. Once again, these methods should be considered on an individual basis.

To prepare for this pedagogical choice, coaches need to keep in mind not to judge what may happen during the process. Whether it is the quality of their events, or the information you receive, you must remain supportive. Be prepared to set aside extra time for this student to come and talk with you. Encourage them to choose literature that speaks to them and the topic the two of you have discussed. To combat the vulnerability when it becomes too much, it is important that the coach be familiar with the campus’s therapy services if necessary. Remember: The coach is not a therapist. If ever the event begins to affect schoolwork and personal life, the coach should contact those services or send the student there immediately. Constantly reminding the student that those resources exist is a good strategy. I try to keep my campus’s psychological service number posted in my office for students to see. Because of the amount of time this process takes (and the mental and emotional toll it can take on both coach and student), it is probably best to only set aside one event for this use. The student can continue to learn and
expands their repertoire of roles from their other pieces but only choosing one to focus the majority of their effort on alleviates some of the mental and emotional toll the process can take on both coach and student. Students must lead this process; eager coaches could push for answers or deeper interpretation before the student is ready, potentially jumping into the role of the therapist.

The role of the coach who chooses to use CAT techniques in their coaching pedagogy, then, must prepare students for possible ramifications. Battling vulnerability, negative ballot comments, and the personal realizations are tough to handle, not only for the student performing but also for the coach. Being upfront with students that their competitive goals may not be realized if they decide to do a personal program helps in the moments when students receive negative ballot remarks. Due to the potential negative comments that may show up on ballots, it is necessary to sit down with the students who are doing personal programs and review each ballot so that you may help them discern between which are useful comments and which comments should not be applied to the program. It can be hard for students who are using CAT to hear harsh criticism (as opposed to more constructive directives) while potentially witnessing fellow teammates being very successful (Grace, 2015). Reminding them of their purpose for initially choosing to do this event may be needed.

Once the performance ends, the process is not over, and “extreme stress revolves not only around the prospective dissolution of the new self-image, but more complexly, the feared annihilation of the previous negative self-image” (Emunah, 1994, p. 296). The students may mourn who they once were even though they have developed skills to handle past situations. It is crucial for coaches to help students with the incredibly important fifth and final step of dramatherapy: the debriefing. Coaches should encourage students to continue to develop their role as necessary and to view the performance as more of “a climax, not a finale” (Emunah, 1994, p. 296). In traditional dramatherapy, this is done by an ending ceremony in which clients perform a finalizing ritual, such as hypothetically crossing over a bridge—from trauma to healing (Emunah, 1994; Jones, 1996). Other therapists have their clients write about their experience and how they intend to continue the methods that have been discussing in their sessions. Coaches can have students write about their experience, even posing questions that they can try to answer as they move forward with their new knowledge of self. Self-reflexivity is key. Verbalizing this experience helps them make sense of the event and truly see how the CAT modalities aided their understanding.

Any student wishing to utilize these strategies must be prepared for these potentially negative consequences and ask themselves if it is worth the epistemic gain. Personally, I have seen students get frustrated and upset when they receive negative comments on ballots or do not qualify the event to nationals. Assure your students that their messages have reached
local/regional audiences that otherwise would not have heard it, and point out how they have
grown from the experience. Would they have rather not used this strategy after the season? I
have never asked students specifically, and the framework provided in this paper would
undergird an interesting study in incorporating CAT modalities into forensics pedagogy. Because
this pedagogical approach relies on reflection on both the student and coaching levels, I suggest
having the student and the coach journal before, after, and during the process provides ample text
for an ethnographic study.

Obviously, this entire process can also be very taxing on coaches. Many coaches would
say that they feel this is stressful regardless of employing CAT, but I argue it is an entirely
different beast when you understand the personal undertones of the performances. To counter
this argument, I am reminded of the previously cited Kuyper (2011) sentiment: if we were not
willing to perform the difficult tasks, we would just be public speaking teachers. It would be
foolish of me to say that only the student needs to be strong when CAT modalities are involved.
Being cognizant of the potential issues and self-preparation for this emotional roller coaster can
aid in addressing situations as they arise. The benefits are worth the work and taxing emotions
that can occur. This method seems to be more risks than benefits, but students want to explore
their repertoire of roles via performance. Having knowledge of the epistemic function through
the use of CAT is a way to guide those students through the process.

Forensics, as an activity, risks a dramatic change from incorporating this type of
pedagogy. As a coach whose students often decide to use interpretation as a way to work through
issues in their life, I have found that I am gentler on ballots when a student falls into the non-
competitive/non-education crack in the event. I do not adjust my ranking system, but I do take
their role in the activity into consideration in my comments. If I hear a program that is more
personal to the student, I make it a point to go up after the performance and say something to the
student. Usually, it is just a simple thanks for sharing that part of themselves with the audience
and with me. I also commend their bravery for being so vulnerable. It is tough, and so are they.
Perhaps if more coaches understood this aspect, we would not have the competitive tension, or
the cut-throat approach to every event, that many coaches demonstrate currently. Yes, there is
still room to be competitive, but what is the cost to be more gentle on ballots for those who are
not here for that purpose? Focusing on just one of the three roles (competitive, educational,
epistemic) has the potential to ostracize a sect of our students and perceptively place more value
on a particular type of student. Some students will not benefit from this brand of epistemic self-
discovery and that is okay. It is important to keep those three roles in balance so that the
diversity of the activity is maintained.

Combining CAT modalities with forensics pedagogy helps coaches see the embodied
results of forensics participation. Since some competitors will inevitably utilize forensics as a
tool to explore themselves and learn new coping mechanisms, those who serve at mentors (be
they coaches, volunteers, or judges) can turn to CAT modalities to help support and offer
resources to those students. The few modalities I have mentioned here are the ones that I see
being the most relevant, but I urge anyone who is interested in this pedagogical change to research CAT further. In the end, pedagogical papers attempt to put a particular practice in conversation so that the ideas within them can either be adopted or can be argued and perfected through discussion. My hope is that the ideas within this article have allowed coaches and judges to rethink their own pedagogical approaches to events and ballot writing.
References


Motivated Reasoning and Viewers’ Reactions to the First 2012 Presidential Debate

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Motivated Reasoning and Viewers’ Reactions to the First 2012 Presidential Debate

Jeffrey W. Jarman, PhD

General election presidential debates are highly argumentative encounters filled with evidence, argument, and refutation. While the candidates come to the debates armed with evidence and arguments in support of their positions, it is unclear how the audience interprets the information. This paper reports the findings from a study of the first presidential debate in 2012. Participants evaluated the strength of arguments made by Obama and Romney, as well as which candidate won each segment of the debate. The study confirms that viewers do not dispassionately evaluate the debate, but instead are driven by partisan interests that lead them to find their candidate made stronger arguments and won the debate. Partisan motivations overwhelmed the structural changes in the 2012 debate format designed to encourage more in-depth discussion of the topic.

KEYWORDS: presidential debates, motivated reasoning, political information, political affiliation, Obama, Romney

Presidential debates are now a regularized part of the election process. Among their many benefits, debates offer the public an opportunity to compare the candidates and their positions, side by side. While presidential debates may not swing the outcome of an election, candidates engage in lengthy and time-consuming preparation to insure they are well-versed on the issues facing the country. The campaigns compile extensive amounts of information in order to prepare their candidate on the issues. “Nowadays, staffers assemble thick briefing books months in advance” (Shapiro, 2012). By some accounts, the material is “voluminous” (Baker & Parker, 2012). Candidates study the material to learn both their best points as well as how to respond to the arguments put forward by their opponents. “The goal is to exhaust every possible question and rehearse the perfect answer for each one, so by the time you get to the debate itself, there are no surprises” (Shapiro, 2012). Most candidates practice answers for days and follow-up the sessions with several mock debates in venues that recreate the actual conditions of the event. While image and style play an important role in the practice, evidence and refutation play a substantial part in the process.
The 2012 debates between Obama and Romney followed the same ritual. The result was a debate filled with evidence, argument, and refutation. Political commentators noted the abundance of argument. Cass (2012), for instance, suggested the debate contained “a detailed discussion of the issues,” while Gleckman (2012) reported that those who “have been arguing for a substantive debate” got what they wanted. Others offered a more sardonic assessment. Baker (2012) argued the debate was “a wonky blizzard of facts.” Similarly, Seib (2012) declared, “President Barack Obama and Republican nominee Mitt Romney engaged in a debate on economic issues that was detailed, serious and seriously wonky.” Cillizza (2012) commented, “the first 45 minutes of the debate felt like a conversation between the heads of two opposing think tanks. Obama cited a study, Romney responded with a study of his own.” In addition, Roy (2012) suggested, “the first presidential debate between Mitt Romney and President Obama was easily the wonkiest such debate I can recall in my lifetime.” But, it wasn’t just political pundits who noted the use of evidence by the candidates. Rowland (2013) analyzed the arguments made by Obama and Romney and reached a similar conclusion:

The debate was quite substantive with over 70 effective arguments made by the two candidates, 120 instances in which evidence was cited and more than 70 examples of effective refutation. After subtracting time talking by the moderator, this means that there were more than three instances of effective argument, evidence citation, or refutation in each minute of the debate. (p. 533)

The significant use of argument in the debate by the candidates raises an important question: when faced with two well-supported and defended positions reaching opposite conclusions, how did viewers of the debate evaluate the arguments made by the candidates and did it affect their impression of which candidate won the debate? To address these questions, this paper will first explore the relevant literature on debate effects, second, explain a survey conducted during the first presidential debate of 2012, third, explore the results of the survey, and finally, draw conclusions based on the findings.

**Literature Review**

Given the considerable preparation that precedes a presidential debate, it is not surprising that one of the most well-documented effects of watching a debate is increased political knowledge. As McKinney and Carlin (2004) explain, televised presidential debates “are an ‘information-rich’ source of campaign communication facilitating viewers’ acquisition of issue knowledge” (p. 211). Similarly, the Racine Group (2002)
found “there is strong empirical support for the contribution of televised debates to viewer learning” (p. 207). While not universal (see Graber & Kim, 1978; Weaver & Drew, 1995), a substantial number of studies spanning nearly 40 years have confirmed that viewers learn information when they watch a presidential debate (Abramowitz, 1978; Becker, Sobowale, Cobkey, & Eyal, 1978; Benoit & Hansen, 2004; Benoit, Hansen, & Verser, 2003; Benoit, McKinney, & Stephenson, 2002; Benoit, Webber, & Berman, 1998; Drew & Weaver, 2006; Holbrook, 1999; Jacoby, Troutman, & Whittler, 1986; Jamieson & Adasiewicz, 2000; Kenski & Jamieson, 2006; Lemert, 1993; Maurer & Reinemann, 2006; Pfau & Eveland, 1994; Turcotte & Goidel, 2014; Zhu, Milvasky, & Biswas, 1994). This is not surprising. Watching a 90-minute debate between the major candidates for president ought to increase the viewers’ knowledge of the issues. The sheer volume of information makes this likely. In other words, there is an information outcome associated with watching a presidential debate.

While the educational benefit derived from watching a presidential debate is important, the extent of the benefit must be tempered by several important factors. First, almost all of the studies are limited to investigations of viewer learning of candidate issue positions. The typical study compared debate watchers and non-watchers on their ability to correctly identify which candidate held which position. Not surprisingly, exposure to a debate increased the likelihood that a voter would learn which candidate held which position. While it is important for voters to know which positions are supported by which candidates, that is the most basic level of knowledge and provides little encouragement that debates can help viewers select from competing proposals. As Jamieson (2015) noted, “often overlooked in summaries stating that voters learn from debates is the question, what exactly did they learn that was worth knowing?” (p. 89). Ideally, debates allow viewers to compare the strength of competing policy options (as explained by the candidates). Knowing (or remembering) which candidate took which position is a necessary, but not sufficient outcome of a vibrant democratic process.

Second, a related challenge to the information outcome comes from the theory of motivated reasoning. Motivated reasoning suggests “people sometimes look for reasons to justify an opinion they are eager to uphold” (Mercier & Sperber, 2011, p. 66). Described variously as a prior attitude effect (Taber & Lodge, 2006), an attitude congruency bias (Taber, Cann, & Kucsova, 2009), biased assimilation (Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979), and belief perseverance (Bullock, 2006), the point is the same: “people who feel strongly about an issue…will evaluate supportive arguments as stronger and more compelling than opposing arguments” (Taber & Lodge, 2006, p. 757). Biased processing of information influences interpretations of both proattitudinal and counterattitudinal arguments. Individuals will “judge confirming evidence as relevant and reliable but disconfirming evidence as irrelevant and unreliable” and will “accept confirming evidence at face value while scrutinizing disconfirming evidence hypercritically” (Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979, p. 2099). Research in political science and
social psychology has documented the role of motivated reasoning in processing political information (Bullock, 2006; Edwards & Smith, 1996; Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979; Nyhan & Reifler, 2010; Taber, Cann, & Kucsova, 2009; Taber & Lodge, 2006). In particular, political affiliation provides a strong source of motivation when evaluating information (Allen, Stevens, & Sullivan, 2009; Bullock, 2006; Gaines, Kuklinksi, Quirk, Peyton, & Verkuilen, 2007; Nyhan & Reifler, 2010). “Political beliefs about controversial factual questions in politics are often closely linked with one’s ideological preferences or partisan beliefs” (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010, p. 307). Even when Democrats and Republicans agree on the facts, they can reach different conclusions because they interpret the information differently (Gaines, Kuklinksi, Quirk, Peyton, & Verkuilen, 2007).

The theory of motivated reasoning has received scant attention in research on political debates. The premise of motivated reasoning justifies the widely documented conclusion that pre-debate opinion of the candidates influenced the judgment of which candidate was perceived to have won the debate (Abramowitz, 1978; Benoit, Webber, & Berman, 1998; Bothwell & Brigham, 1983; Jarman, 2005; Jarman, 2010; McKinnon, Tedesco, & Kaid, 1993; Mullinix, 2011; Munro et al., 2002; Richardson, Huddy, & Morgan, 2008; Sigelman & Sigelman, 1984). Unfortunately, the theory of motivated reasoning was rarely utilized to justify the conclusion. Most studies reported the influence of pre-debate attitudes on the judgment of the debate without utilizing any theory to explain the relationship (with the exception of Munro et al. (2002) who did explicitly reference the theory).

The tension between the information outcome and motivated reasoning raises new and important questions in the context of a presidential debate: we know that viewers gain information from watching a debate, but what do they do with that information, especially when they are exposed to competing positions? How do viewers evaluate competing evidence, arguments, and refutation? As Warner and McKinney (2013) noted, “debates, then, provide a unique opportunity to test…whether biased processing will diminish the value of exposure to balanced messages” (p. 511). This project advances the prior work done on debate effects, and the information outcome, to investigate not simply whether viewers learned new information, but more importantly, how did they evaluate the information they received. Presidential debates represent unique argumentative encounters, with skilled arguers presenting strong arguments on each side of a controversial topic. Do viewers of a presidential debate accept equally the information they learn or are they biased in their evaluation of the information? To investigate this topic, this project was guided by the following research questions:
**RQ1.** Will evaluation of the strength of the arguments made by each candidate vary based on prior attitudes, including pre-debate feeling thermometer toward the candidates, attitudes regarding relevant political issues, pre-debate vote choice, and political affiliation?

**RQ2.** Will perception of the winner of each segment of the debate be associated with pre-debate vote choice and political affiliation?

The first presidential debate in 2012 provides an excellent opportunity to investigate this topic. The format used in 2012, first used in 2008, allowed for an extended debate on a narrow range of topics. Historically, the format for presidential debates restricted the amount of time that could be devoted to a topic. “During the 1996 CPD-sponsored debates, the candidates were collectively allotted a mere three minutes per question sequence: ninety seconds for Candidate ‘A,’ followed by a one-minute rebuttal for Candidate ‘B,’ followed by a thirty-second surrebuttal for Candidate ‘A’ (Farah, 2004, pp. 87-88). In contrast, in 2012, the Commission on Presidential Debates structured the non-town hall debates into six segments of 15 minutes. The intuitive appeal of the format change is understandable: instead of limiting answer time to barely more than a sound bite, the extended time gave the candidates the time needed to fully explain their positions on a few of the most pressing issues facing the country. In addition, for the first time ever, moderator Jim Lehrer released the general topics for each of the debates in advance (Flock, 2012). Going in to the debate, the candidates knew the six topics that would be discussed and could focus their debate preparation on those issues. The extended time and advanced notice of the topics meant that the candidates could focus their pre-debate preparations to insure the debate could be detailed and specific (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2007). The question remains: given the extended discussion to allow a vigorous exchange of information, were viewers able to set aside their partisan motivations and evaluate the arguments in an unbiased manner? Or, will their prior attitudes serve to influence their interpretation of the debate such that their prior positions were merely reinforced?

**Method**

**Participants**

The participants in this study included 175 undergraduate students (70 men, 104 women, and 1 person who did not report their sex) enrolled in lower-division communication classes at a Midwestern university who received extra-credit for participating. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 63 ($M=21.46$, $SD=6.58$). Some participants were international students ($n=22$). Even with a convenience sample, there was a good mix of political affiliations: a plurality of the participants reported no affiliation or some other affiliation ($n=44$), followed by Republican ($n=43$), Independent
(n=31) and Democrat (n=30). A few participants, including all of the international students, left the political affiliation question blank (n=27).

Procedure

Participants arrived on the evening of October 3, 2012 to watch the debate live (to eliminate the influence of news and commentary on their opinion). Participants completed a battery of questions prior to the start of the debate. These included basic demographics such as age, sex, political affiliation, and status (domestic student or international student). In addition, participants identified their pre-debate vote choice (international students were asked to report which candidate they wanted to win the election instead of who they intended to vote for) and attitude toward Obamacare, the economic stimulus, and tax cuts for the wealthy. Participants also completed a feeling thermometer for both Obama and Romney. Finally, prior to the start of the debate, participants were briefed on how to complete a semantic differential scale.

Participants watched the debate live, except that the video feed was paused after each 15-minute segment to allow the participants to answer questions regarding the debate. After each 15-minute segment, participants identified which candidate made the better arguments during the segment (Obama, Romney, Both/Neither/Tie/Unsure). In addition, participants rated the strength of the arguments made by both Obama and Romney (scale information below). Participants also completed a thought-listing exercise regarding the segment (not reported in this paper). The video feed was resumed when all participants were ready. The same process was repeated for segment 2 and 3. To minimize fatigue and maintain attention on the debate, only the first 3 segments of the debate were analyzed. After the third segment responses were recorded, participants also completed several post-debate questions including an assessment of which candidate won the debate, their post-debate vote choice, a feeling thermometer for each candidate, and a rating of the performance in the debate of both Obama and Romney.

Measures

Participants rated the strength of the arguments made by Obama and Romney during each of the first three time blocks. Strength of argument was measured using a 7-point semantic differential scale adapted from LaFrance and Boster (2001). The scale used the following pairs: informative/not informative, correct/incorrect, worthless/valuable, unsound/sound, well-reasoned/poorly reasoned, logical/illogical, reasonable/unreasonable. Items were recoded so that lower numbers indicated weak arguments. Scores for the seven items were averaged and ranged from 1 to 7. The scale showed strong internal consistency: Obama segment 1 (α=.95), Romney segment 1 (α=.91), Obama segment 2 (α=.94), Romney segment 2 (α=.92), Obama segment 3 (α=.94), and Romney segment 3 (α=.90). Finally, an overall argument strength score was created for each candidate by averaging the three segment scores.
Attitude toward Obama and Romney was measured before and after the debate using a standard 0-100 feeling thermometer (ANES, 2008). Pre-test results identify the audience as having a more favorable attitude toward Obama ($M=56.26$, $SD=27.95$) than Romney ($M=39.01$, $SD=24.90$).

Because moderator Jim Lehrer released the topics for the first debate in advance, several scales were used to measure prior attitudes toward issues that were likely to be topics of the debate. A 7-point semantic differential measured attitude toward Obamacare. The pairs were: good/bad, wise/foolish, harmful/beneficial. Items were recoded and averaged so that lower numbers indicate opposition to Obamacare ($M=4.09$, $SD=1.57$). The scale was reliable ($\alpha=.91$). A 7-point semantic differential measured attitude toward the economic stimulus. The items were recoded and averaged so that lower numbers indicate opposition to the stimulus ($M=4.26$, $SD=1.35$). The pairs were: good/bad, worthless/valuable, unsound/sound. The scale was reliable ($\alpha=.89$). Finally, a 7-point semantic differential measured attitude toward tax cuts for the wealthy. The items were recoded and averaged so that lower numbers indicate opposition to tax cuts for the wealthy ($M=3.34$, $SD=1.74$). The pairs were: good/bad, worthless/valuable, unsound/sound. The scale was reliable ($\alpha=.89$).

Finally, two other pre-debate measures of prior attitude were collected. Participants recorded their current vote preference (Obama, Romney, other/undecided) and their political affiliation (Democrat, Republican, Other/no affiliation). After the debate, participants again were asked their vote preference (Obama, Romney, other/undecided).

**Results**

RQ1 asked if evaluations of the strength of the arguments made by Obama and Romney would vary by based on prior attitudes. There was overwhelming evidence to conclude that prior attitudes influenced the evaluation of the strength of the arguments made by the candidates. First, correlation was used to compare the pre-debate thermometer rating for each candidate and the argument strength evaluation for each candidate during each segment of the debate and for the composite argument strength score for each candidate. Table 1 shows the strong correlations between prior attitudes and evaluations of the debate. There were strong positive correlations between the pre-debate feeling thermometer for Obama and evaluation of his arguments. Similarly, there were strong positive correlations between the pre-debate feeling thermometer for Romney and evaluation of his arguments. In other words, as the rating for a candidate increased, so too did the evaluation of his arguments. The opposite pattern emerged when evaluating the opposing candidate. As predicted by motivated reasoning, there were strong negative evaluations related to the opposing candidate’s arguments. There were strong negative correlations between the pre-debate feeling thermometer for Obama and the evaluation
of the arguments by Romney. Similarly, there were strong negative correlations between
the pre-debate feeling thermometer for Romney and evaluation of the arguments by
Obama.

Initial attitude toward the topic also strongly influenced the evaluation of the
strength of the arguments made by both Romney and Obama. Correlation was used to
compare the attitude toward Obamacare, the economic stimulus, and tax cuts for the
wealthy with the argument strength evaluation for each candidate during each segment of
the debate and the composite argument strength score for each candidate (see Table 1).
Higher levels of support for Obamacare and the economic stimulus were strongly
associated with higher evaluations of the strength of the arguments made by Obama and
lower evaluations of the arguments made by Romney. The relationships were statistically
significant in every segment of the debate and for the overall argument strength score for
both candidates. Increasing support for tax cuts for the wealthy was related to higher
evaluations of the strength of the arguments made by Romney and lower evaluations of
the arguments made by Obama. The relationship between tax cuts and argument strength
was weaker (compared to Obamacare and the stimulus) and held in 5 of the 6 segments of
the debate as well as the overall scores for both Obama and Romney. In addition, two
mixed ANOVAs were used to address RQ1. A repeated measures ANOVA with political
affiliation (Democrat, Republican, Other) as a between subject factor and evaluation of
the candidates (Obama, Romney) as the within-subjects factor was used. There was a
statistically significant interaction between political affiliation and candidate on the
overall evaluation of the strength of their arguments, F(2, 144)=24.58, p<.001, partial η² = .26.
The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 2. Figure 1 shows the
divergent reactions to the candidates based on their political affiliation. There was a
statistically significant difference in ratings of Obama and Romney by both Democrats, \( t(29)=6.878, p<.001, d=2.18 \), and Republicans, \( t(42)=3.234, p=.002, d=1.02 \), but not for others, \( t(74)=1.709, \) n.s. The same pattern also existed regarding pre-debate vote choice.

A repeated measures ANOVA with pre-debate vote choice (Obama, Romney, Other) as a between subject factor and evaluation of the candidates (Obama, Romney) as the within-subjects factor was used. There was a statistically significant interaction between pre-debate vote choice and candidate on the overall evaluation of the strength of
their arguments, $F(2, 171)=81.201, p<.001$, partial $\eta^2 = .40$. The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 3. As with political affiliation, there was a statistically significant difference in ratings of Obama and Romney for those who supported Obama prior to the debate, $t(72)=8.358$, $p<.001$, $d=1.78$, and for those who supported Romney before the debate, $t(30)=34.897$, $p<.001$, $d=1.85$, but not for others, $t(70)=.815$, n.s.

Analyzing the interactions provides additional information to address RQ1. A one-way ANOVA found significant differences between groups based on political affiliation in the overall assessment of the strength of the arguments made by Obama, $F(2,144)=22.892$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2 = .24$. Post hoc comparisons using Dunnett’s test showed statistically significant differences not only between Democrats and Republicans, but also between Democrats and others. In addition, a one-way ANOVA found significant differences between groups based on political affiliation in the overall assessment of the strength of the arguments made by Romney, $F(2,144)=14.733$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2 = .17$. Post hoc comparisons using Dunnett’s test again showed a statistically significant difference between Republicans and Democrats as well as between Republicans and others. The same pattern was present in the interaction based on pre-debate vote choice. A one-way ANOVA found significant differences between groups based on pre-debate vote choice in the overall assessment of the strength of the arguments made by Obama, $F(2, 171)=55.684$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2 = .39$. Post hoc comparisons using Dunnett’s test showed statistically significant differences not only between Obama supporters and Romney supporters, but also between Obama supporters and those who supported some other candidate. In addition, a one-way ANOVA found significant differences between groups based on pre-debate vote choice in the overall assessment of the strength of the arguments made by Romney, $F(2, 171)=25.716$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2 = .23$. Post hoc comparisons using Dunnett’s test again showed a statistically significant difference between Romney supporters and Obama supporters as well as between Romney supporters and those who supported some other candidate.

RQ2 asked if perception of the winner of each segment of the debate would be associated with pre-debate vote choice and/or political affiliation. There is strong evidence to confirm that prior attitudes were associated with the perception of the winner.
of the debate. Chi-square was used to compare pre-debate vote choice and political affiliation with the assessment of which candidate won each segment of the debate. Pre-debate vote choice was associated with the perception of the winner of segment 1, $\chi^2 (9, N=167)=79.928$, $p<.001$, $V=.40$, winner of segment 2, $\chi^2 (9, N=163)=49.772$, $p<.001$, $V=.32$, and the winner of segment 3, $\chi^2 (9, N=148)=41.822$, $p<.001$, $V=.31$. Those who supported Obama before the debate were very likely to identify Obama as the winner of each segment of the debate. Similarly, pre-debate Romney supporters were very likely to identify him as the winner of each segment and the overall debate.

A similar pattern emerged between political affiliation and the winner of the debate. Political affiliation was associated with the perception of the winner of segment 1, $\chi^2 (9, N=140)=45.440$, $p<.001$, $V=.33$, the winner of segment 2, $\chi^2 (9, N=125)=16.736$, $p=.047$, $V=.21$, and the winner of segment 3, $\chi^2 (9, N=167)=79.928$, $p<.001$, $V=.40$. Democrats were very likely to identify Obama as the winner of each segment of the debate. Similarly, Republicans were very likely to identify Romney as the winner of each segment of the debate.

**Discussion**

General election political debates should serve as an exemplar for argumentation. Strong candidates, usually well-spoken and well-prepared, with experience gained from prior elections and the primary season, are given time not only to make their best points, but refute those of their opponent in an unfiltered forum. For viewers, debates represent the best opportunity to compare not only the candidates, but also their positions on the issues. In the 2012 presidential debates, the candidates were given the topics in advance and were given an extended period of time to argue their points in depth. But, while the candidates made great efforts to come the debates armed with evidence and reasoning in support of their positions, it is unclear if viewers were able to process the information they receive in an unbiased manner. In an ideal world, “citizens must then use these facts to inform their preferences. They must absorb and apply the facts to overcome areas of ignorance or to correct mistaken conceptions” (Kuklinski, Quirk, Jerit, Schwieder, & Rich, 2000, p. 791).

However, as this research shows, most viewers of presidential debates interpreted the competing information provided in a political debate through a partisan lens. The results from this study suggest that viewers of a presidential debate were motivated reasoners when they evaluated the arguments in the debate. While both candidates marshaled evidence in support of their arguments, the audience regularly and reliably found only one candidate made strong arguments: their own... viewers overwhelmingly were more likely to judge their candidate’s arguments as stronger and their opponent’s arguments as weaker.
made strong arguments: their own. For each segment of the debate, where each candidate was given the opportunity to develop their points in detail, viewers overwhelmingly were more likely to judge their candidate’s arguments as stronger and their opponent’s arguments as weaker. In addition, in assessing the winner of the debate, partisans were more likely to believe that their favored candidate won each major exchange. Rather than watching debates to learn new information and potentially update their opinions, viewers were guided by their prior opinions when assessing the contest. The first 2012 presidential debate provided the audience with extensive evidence, argument and refutation, and, in the face of competing arguments, the audience’s assessment was overwhelmingly tied to their prior disposition.

Several important conclusions can be drawn from this research. First, the results confirm the importance of motivated reasoning when viewing a presidential debate. Argumentation scholars should heed the call by Holbert, LaMarre and Landreville (2009) that “debate viewing effects must also be placed within the context of citizens’ proclivity for biased processing of political information” (p. 158). Very little prior research explicitly linked the theory of motivated reasoning to evaluation of presidential debates. Yet, there is strong evidence to believe that motivated reasoning explains viewers’ reactions to the debates. In particular, the role of political affiliation, prior vote choice, pre-debate attitude toward the candidates and prior attitudes on key issues strongly influence viewers’ perceptions of the debate. This is especially important as researchers investigate other cognitive and behavioral effects of watching a political debate. In some cases, researchers may fail to find any differences in a particular outcome because they were obscured by divergent partisan reactions. As Bullock (2006) explains, “we see no overall effect because the treatment caused two effects—one for Republicans, another for Democrats—in opposite directions. Averaged together, they cancel each other out” (p. 12). This is a concern for scholars of debates, but it could easily extend to many other contexts of argumentation studies, too. Careful attention to the role of prior attitudes, especially on topics that might encourage biased processing of information, could lead to additional insights.

Second, from a practical standpoint, recent format changes have not produced significantly different outcomes. The move to debating fewer topics for an extended period of time has intuitive appeal, however, the results from this study suggest that partisan viewers (by far the largest portion of those tuning in) are not likely to update their prior opinions based on an in-depth exchange between the candidates, but rather are more likely to be guided by their prior opinions. As a result, at least for the traditional debate format in presidential elections, candidates and their campaigns should focus on
crafting messages that will resonate with viewers who desire to see their favored candidate succeed. While many commentators thought Obama lost the first debate (e.g., Halperin, 2012), our survey documented that Obama supporters thought he made stronger arguments and won each exchange in the debate. Candidates should embrace the power of debates to reinforce their supporters and center their preparations on this focus. This is not to suggest that major gaffes will not affect the trajectory of the campaign. Campaigns are complex and the debates are but one source of influence on vote choice. But, candidates should embrace the fact that their supporters want them to succeed in the debates and their initial reactions, prior to news reports and commentary, generally are that their candidate won.

Third, this project expands the role of argument strength as a topic in argumentation studies. Most prior research treated the concept as an independent variable: researchers would create “strong” and “weak” arguments and test for differences. In most cases, weak arguments are designed to lack strong evidence and/or reasoning to justify the conclusion. Such an approach assumes people can easily set aside their partisan interest on the topic and evaluate the claims based solely on accuracy goals. As this study makes clear, that is not easily accomplished. As such, argument strength also needs to be analyzed as a dependent variable. Well-meaning individuals naturally will hold divergent opinions on a wide range of topics. Researchers must begin to account for the audience’s prior attitudes when evaluating the effect of particular messages. In addition, researchers themselves are not immune to the influence of motivated reasoning and must be careful to make sure their own political biases do not cloud their judgment of the weak and strong arguments used in their studies.

While these findings are important, several limitations do exist. First, this study exclusively used a student population. While student participants are common and not altogether unreliable, future research should actively investigate this topic with non-students and those most likely to watch presidential debates. Second, this study was focused on a general election presidential debate. Future research should investigate a broader set of political debates, including primary presidential debates, gubernatorial debates, and other down-ballot races. It is possible that partisan motivations are stronger when the race is well known and well publicized and that other races might be less subject to biased processing of information. Or, conversely, races that are less publicized and less well known may invoke a stronger influence of biased processing since the viewers may lack the knowledge and interest to pursue an accuracy-related goal. Future research should investigate the topic. Third, this project drew on reactions to a presidential debate using a standard format. Future research should investigate the influence of motivated reasoning in other debate formats, especially the town hall, to determine if the type of debate influences viewers’ reactions. Finally, the role of undecided voters should be explored in greater depth. While they do not comprise a large segment of potential voters when the debates occur, they can influence the election in
swing states that are close. Future research should investigate the influence of motivated reasoning on undecided voters, both partisans and non-partisans, to determine its influence in political contexts. For instance, are undecided voters immune from motivated reasoning? Or, are they undecided because they have conflicting motivations regarding the candidates? Future research should attempt to understand how undecided voters make sense of the information in political debates.

Televised presidential debates now are a regular and expected part of a presidential campaign. They provide a range of benefits to the millions of viewers who take time to watch. But, as this research has shown, outcomes related to political information must be qualified: rather than serving as a source of new information and an opportunity to update prior opinions, the information provided in a presidential debate is judged first on how well it matches prior opinions. As prior research has shown, the perception of all political candidates improves when they participate in a political debate (McKinney & Warner, 2013), but that benefit is not equal insofar as the ingroup candidate receives a larger improvement than their opponent (Warner & McKinney, 2013). This study provides one explanation of how attitude polarization occurs: ingroup candidates are judged to make stronger arguments, win each exchange, and generally outperform their opponent. In the absence of a major gaffe, debates provide an opportunity for candidates to bolster their position with their supporters, even if they are unlikely win converts from the other side.
References


Coverage of the 2008 Presidential Primary Campaign by Males, Females, and Mixed Journalist Groups

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Coverage of the 2008 Presidential Primary Campaign by Males, Females, and Mixed Journalist Groups
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This study examines the trait, issue and tone coverage of Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and John Edwards during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign by male, female and groups of male and female journalists in newspapers, newsmagazines and Sunday morning political television shows. Results indicate that the media focused more on traits than issues during the campaign. However, female and groups of male and female newspaper journalists focused more on issues than traits. All three journalist groups gave Hillary Clinton more negative than positive coverage and Barack Obama more positive than negative coverage. Female and groups of male and female journalists gave John Edwards more positive than negative coverage while coverage by male journalists was more negative than positive.

Keywords: tone, trait, issue, primary, coverage, newspapers, newsmagazines, television, male, female, candidate

Average polling throughout December 2007 found Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton with 45 percent of the Democratic vote while Senator Barack Obama trailed by 20 points with 24.6 percent and former 2004 Democratic vice-presidential nominee, John Edwards, garnered 13 percent of the vote (Real Clear Politics, 2008). This marked the beginning of what would prove to be an unprecedented 2008 presidential primary campaign for the Democratic Party featuring a formidable female candidate campaigning against two male candidates for the highest office in the land. The eventual winner of this primary contest, of course, would then go on to serve as the nation’s first African American president.

The media play a significant role in the presidential primary process by serving as the public’s window into the campaign and providing information that shapes voters’ perceptions of the candidates which, in turn, impacts polling numbers. Ridout (1991) explains that presidential nominations are vulnerable to the influence of early media coverage and that the media play a role in labeling who the “serious” candidates will be and may help candidates gain or lose momentum when they determine who is the “favorite” in the race (Trent & Friedenberg, 2000).

Traditional media such as national newspapers, newsmagazines, and political television talk shows are believed to contribute to a healthy democracy by offering voters differing perspectives on issues. They are thought to feature discordant or competing views that are necessary for healthy political discourse (Calhoun, 1988; Habermas, 1989; Mill, 1859). Pfau et
al. (2007) argue that “traditional communication forms are more likely to provide a common pool of information” (p.41) necessary for political discourse.

The media window was shaping perceptions of the candidates early in the campaign through descriptions such as, “She stands in her hardy brown ankle boots planted firmly center stage—the indomitable image of a seasoned, capable 60-year-old woman, handsomely groomed as always in her imperturbable (blue, this time) pantsuit, belting out bread and butter positions on health care, No Child Left Behind and college loans” (Brown, 2008, p. 30). And, “As a snow squall whirled outside, Sen. Barack Obama, in a black suit, told more than 500 people gathered at a downtown hotel here last week that he is running for president to ‘tell the corporate lobbyists that their days of setting the agenda are over’ and, in his rousing baritone, urged the crowd to ‘stand up.’ An hour later, at a theater a few blocks away, John Edwards, clad in jeans and a windbreaker, declared in a hoarse shout that the country is being done in by ‘corporate power and greed,’ then exhorted his audience to ‘rise up’” (MacGillis, 2007, p. A04).

These candidate portraits can be presented to the public in many different ways; all dependent upon how journalists choose to frame candidates in their stories. Such stories can highlight issue stands, character traits, horserace information, and the family life of a candidate. Journalists can also create perceptions of candidates that are mostly negative, positive or neutral during a campaign. Research suggests that male and female candidates are portrayed in the media according to gender stereotypes known as NewsStyle (Bystrom, Banwart, Kaid, & Robertson, 2004) and that male and female journalists report male and female candidates’ character traits and issue stands differently in the news (Aday & Devitt, 2001).

Newsmagazines, political television talk shows and journalist groups consisting of male and female reporters have been greatly understudied in media research.

Traditional media are believed to contribute to a healthy democracy by promoting substantive political discourse but does the sex of the journalist play a role in its success? The historic 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign provides a unique opportunity to compare how male, female and teams of male and female journalists working in traditional media portrayed male and female candidates through character trait, policy issue and tone coverage. Newsmagazines, political television talk shows and journalist groups consisting of male and female reporters have been greatly understudied in media research.

Research suggests that the sex of the journalist impacts the type of media coverage male and female candidates receive during a campaign. Did male and female reporters cover the male and female candidates of 2008 similarly to candidates in the past? It is unknown how male and female journalist groups cover male and female candidates. This study seeks to determine how these groups of reporters portray candidates and whether they help traditional media promote healthy substantive political discourse during a campaign. First, this study compares the
character trait and policy issue coverage among male, female and mixed male and female journalist groups to determine which group contributes most to substantive political discourse. Second, it compares the character trait and policy issue coverage of the three journalist groups according to media type to determine which media type contributes most to substantive political discourse. Third, it compares the tone coverage of male and female candidates by male, female and mixed male and female journalist groups.

**Issues**

Candidates need the media to inform the electorate about their stances on various policy issues. However, the media may not always communicate these issues to the public. Previous research has shown that the media seem to focus more on horserace coverage rather than issue positions (Graber, 1989; Patterson, 1980). In addition, the media have the ability to alter candidate images according to policy issue coverage. Wright and Berkman (1986) argue that the media can influence a voter’s perceptions of a candidate by the way the media report or frame a candidate’s issue stance.

A debate still exists over whether male or female candidates receive more policy issue coverage during a campaign. Earlier studies on election coverage showed that female candidates received less issue attention than male candidates overall (Kahn, 1994; Powers, Serini & Johnson, 1996; Serini, Powers & Johnson, 1998). Kahn’s (1994) study of newspaper coverage of female U.S. Senate and gubernatorial candidates from 1982-1988 found that women received less issue coverage than their male counterparts overall, even after examining the candidate’s own campaign communication. The author found that even though females discussed policy (65%) more than males (58%) in their televised advertisements during these campaigns they found that issues covered in the news corresponded with the issues presented in political advertisements of male candidates more often than those issues found in political advertisements of female candidates. In a series of studies examining issue coverage for Elizabeth Dole’s campaign in 1999, Dole received significantly less issue coverage than George Bush, as well as Steve Forbes and John McCain who both trailed Dole in the polls (Aday & Devitt, 2001; Bystrom, 1999; Heldman et al., 2005).

However, other studies show that male and female candidates receive similar amounts of issue attention from the media. For example, Bystrom et al. (2001) found a greater lack of issue coverage for both male and female candidates in primary races for governor and U.S. Senator in 2000. Furthermore, Smith (1997) and Jalalzai’s (2006) long term study of newspaper coverage of male and female gubernatorial and senatorial candidates from 1992 to 2000 found that, overall, women running for the U.S. Senate and governor did not have a significant advantage in number of paragraphs about issues over men.

**Image**

The media also play an important role in their reporting of races between male and female candidates in the way they cover a candidate’s image. Political scientists argue that
candidate image evaluations have become more important during the media age (Alger, 1994) and that perceptions of candidate character traits influence voter attitudes and behavior. A politician or candidate’s character can influence voters’ decisions in elections (Benoit & McHale, 2003). Heldman, Carroll, & Olson (2005) found that three fifths of the stories in their study referenced a candidate’s personality trait at least once. Aday and Devitt (2001) also found in their study of newspaper coverage of the 2000 U.S. presidential election that Elizabeth Dole received less coverage of her issue positions than her personality and character traits.

Other studies, however, have found that male and female candidates receive similar amounts of character trait coverage, but these studies are primarily of U.S. Senate candidates rather than gubernatorial candidates. For example, Kahn and Goldenberg (1981) found that personality traits were covered with equal frequency for female and male U.S. Senate candidates. The media have also been found to alter their trait coverage according to level of office. Kahn and Goldenberg (1981) found that the media mentioned fewer personality traits for senate candidates than they did for male and female gubernatorial candidates and newspapers mentioned personality traits more in their coverage of female gubernatorial candidates than in the coverage of their male counterparts (21% to 15%). However, the greater amount of trait coverage of female candidates may have occurred because they talked about these matters more than male candidates (Kahn, 1994).

**Tone**

Some research has shown that the media cast their coverage of male and female candidates differently using negative, positive and neutral tones during a campaign. Scharrer (2002) found that the media coverage of Hillary Rodham Clinton’s bid for U.S. Senator from New York was much more negative than the media’s coverage of Rudy Giuliani. This coverage attacked Clinton’s character, image, and personality as well as her position on issues, and strategies used in her campaign.

Some of the negative media coverage of female politicians is also due, in part, to reports that emphasize conflict and aggression. Gidengil and Everitt (2003) found that the media used more negative and aggressive language to describe female candidates’ speech than they did for male candidates’ speech. Conflictual behavior is believed to be especially newsworthy and unexpected from women who are running for office (Everitt, 2005). Everitt (2005) notes “combativeness, a quality that is considered important for politics, is not viewed as a positive quality when possessed by women” (pp. 388-389).

Female politicians receive negative media coverage when described as combative but they also receive as much neutral coverage as their male counterparts. Bystrom et al. (2004) found that male and female candidates for U.S. Senate and governor’s races were both treated in a neutral manner by newspapers in 1998 (Males treated positively 20% and females 15% of the articles; males treated negatively 5% and female candidates treated negatively 6% of the time). In 2002, the coverage was even more neutral for both groups of candidates (positive coverage 23% for males and 24% for females; and negative 8% for males and 9% for female candidates).
Smith (1997) concluded that there is parity in news coverage of male and female candidates and Robertson et al. (2002) also found that female candidates received more neutral coverage than male candidates.

Research also shows that female politicians receive positive coverage from the media (Kropf & Boiney, 2001). Robertson et al. (2002) found that female candidates received more favorable coverage than their male counterparts during the 2000 U.S. Senate and gubernatorial campaigns. Bystrom et al (2004) found that in 2000, women were treated more favorably in articles than men (21% to 12%), and that men received more negative coverage than women (11% to 7%). Carroll and Schreiber (1997) found the dominant themes that were covered during the 1992 election were images of women as agents of change, actors bringing new perspectives to politics, and as team players working together on issues where they had common interests. Coverage of Nancy Pelosi as House Minority Leader in 2002 was relatively positive and balanced in tone (Dolan et al., 2007) and Kahn (1994) found that press coverage of female gubernatorial candidates was more favorable than press coverage of female U.S. Senate candidates.

In general, research has found that male and female candidates receive mostly neutral coverage and female candidates receive more positive coverage than male candidates, especially when running for governor. However, more recent research shows that females receive more negative coverage than male candidates in debate articles which focus on conflict and trivialize female candidates by using gender specific terms.

**Journalists and Gender Bias**

Much of the previous literature on quantity, substance and tone of media coverage of male and female candidates can be interpreted through the lens of gender bias including constructs such as NewsStyle (Bystrom et al., 2004). However, gender bias may also be influenced by the sex of the journalist writing the story.

There have been varying perspectives on the benefits of having more female journalists cover female politicians. Some scholars suggest that increasing the number of female journalists will help bring about better coverage of female candidates by focusing on substantive issues thus helping them to be taken more seriously (Dolan et al., 2007). Other scholars believe that female reporters may try to fight stereotypes of weakness by not favoring and being more critical of female politicians when writing about them (Braden, 1996). Ross (2002) argues that, “Women in the media have to compete in a man’s world, and they often have to play by the big boys rules if they are going to survive. This inevitably means adopting the male-oriented ethos of the
Journalist Groups

newsroom and taking on a determinedly masculine gaze when writing about women” (p. 109). Female politicians argue that the sex of reporters is of little consequence because they believe reporters oversimplify issues in general (Braden, 1996). Gallagher (2001) believes that institutional constraints and professional socialization negatively impact a female journalist’s ability to offer a different and more equitable style of coverage.

There is debate over whether female journalists are allies of female politicians when covering them, however, research indicates that female journalists cover candidate personality traits less than male journalists. For example, Aday and Devitt (2001) found that female journalists were more likely to cover Dole’s issue position (25%) in their articles than male journalists (14%). In addition, of the articles written by men, 39% were devoted to personality traits while 27% of the articles written by female journalists contained discussion of personality traits.

Female candidates seem to benefit from the coverage of female journalists because they tend to focus on issue discussion as much, or more, in their reporting and focus less on candidates’ personal aspects than do male journalists in their stories. Female journalists also seem to provide substantive coverage for male candidates running for office. For example, Aday and Devitt (2001) found that female reporters gave a similar amount of issue coverage to both male and female candidates. Similarly, Devitt (2002) found that male reporters wrote significantly fewer articles that focused on issues when reporting for female candidates (28%) than they did for male candidates (34%). Also in this study, male reporters were found to cover significantly more personal aspects (18%) of the female candidates than those of the male candidates (10%).

Although female candidates seem to benefit more from stories written by female journalists than male journalists, male reporters do offer female candidates an advantage by having their stories placed prominently in the news. For example, Carroll and Schreiber (1997) found that male journalists are more likely to have their articles about women in Congress published on the front page or news section (61%) of the newspaper, versus female journalists’ front page or news section articles (47%). Also, female journalists’ stories about women in Congress were found on the style page of the newspaper more often (20%) than the stories written by male journalists (8%). Although male journalists may offer female candidates news coverage advantages through story placement, those advantages may be minimized if male reporters focus more on character traits than policy issues.

In general, female journalists seem to offer many more advantages than male journalists when covering political candidates during a campaign. Female journalists avoid candidate personality traits and focus on issues more when covering female candidates and also seem to provide similar amounts of substantive coverage to male candidates. The historic 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign provides a unique opportunity to investigate how male and female journalists as well as teams of male and female journalist may impact the coverage of a candidate.
Hypotheses and Research Questions

Based on the literature discussed, the following hypotheses and research questions are proposed. Past research has found that female journalists are more likely than male journalists to cover candidates’ issue position rather than report on personality traits (Aday & Devitt, 2001). Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Female journalists will report more candidates’ policy issues than male journalists during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.

H2: Female journalists will report more policy issue topics than character trait topics in their coverage of the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign.

H3: Male journalists will report more character trait topics than policy issue topics during their coverage of the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign.

There is scant research on candidate coverage by male and female co-authors. Articles written by male and female co-authors are included to find out if journalists working together offer candidates balanced coverage on policy issues, character traits and tone during a campaign. Therefore the following research questions are asked.

RQ1: What is the distribution of candidate character traits and policy issues in newsmagazines, newspapers and Sunday morning political television shows during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?"

RQ2: What is the frequency of candidate policy issue and character trait references in articles featuring male, female and mixed male and female journalist groups during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?

RQ3: What is the frequency of candidate issue and character trait references in articles featuring male, female and mixed male and female journalist groups in newsmagazines, newspapers and Sunday morning political television shows during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?

RQ4: What is the frequency of positive, negative, and neutral reports about Senator Hillary Clinton, Senator Barack Obama, and former Senator John Edwards in articles written by male and female co-authors during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?

RQ5: What is the frequency of positive, negative, and neutral reports about Senator Hillary Clinton, Senator Barack Obama, and former Senator John Edwards in articles written by male journalists?

RQ6: What is the frequency of positive, negative, and neutral reports about Senator Hillary Clinton, Senator Barack Obama, and former Senator John Edwards in articles written by female journalists during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?
Design and Procedures

Sample

The study’s sample was drawn from three elite U.S. newspapers, including the *New York Times*, the *LA Times* and *Washington Post* (326 articles). Also included are the three main U.S. newsmagazines, including *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report* (185 articles). The sample also includes the three main television network Sunday morning political television shows, including NBC’s *Meet the Press with Tim Russert* with 3.8 million viewers, ABC’s *This Week with George Stephanopolous* with 2.5 million viewers, and CBS’s *Face the Nation with Bob Schieffer* with 2.8 million viewers (Journalism.org, 2007) (42 programs). The sampling unit drawn from the population of content is an entire story or news program and includes news articles, commentaries, feature articles, interviews or editorials that mentions or quotes Hillary Rodham Clinton, Barack Obama and John Edwards during the 2008 primary campaign.

Time Period

This study analyzes the 2008 presidential primary campaign coverage of U.S. Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama, and former Senator John Edwards during the preprimary and the early primary phase as captured in newsmagazines, newspapers and Sunday morning political television shows. Content analysis was performed on stories and transcripts about the Democratic candidates for a three-month period, including two weeks during the preprimary phase and two and a half months during the primary phase from December 17, 2007 until March 17, 2008. Articles from the newsmagazines and transcripts from the Sunday morning political television shows were retrieved weekly. Articles from the daily newspapers were obtained using a constructed-week method. The constructed-week sampling approach allows sample dates to be stratified by day of the week over the three-month period therefore allowing for systematic news variation due to the day of the week (Stempel, 1989).

Variables

*Issues.* Such reporting includes mentions of domestic and international policies or candidates’ positions on such policies during the campaign. These issues include taxes, Social Security, military, defense, international activities, crime, education, health care, the elderly, child care, poverty, immigration, energy policy, transportation, and reproductive concerns.

*Tone.* For this evaluation, each sentence that references a candidate’s name is coded as either positive, negative or neutral. Based on Budd, Thorp and Donohew’s (1974) coding, a positive sign is given to a sentence when the news source statement put the candidate, party or campaign in a favorable light or showed that the news source agreed with the issue it was reporting.
Statements, for example, that portray the candidate and his or her campaign as strong, organized, focused, and relaxed are considered favorable. A negative sign is given for news source statements that put the candidate or campaign in an unfavorable light or show that the news source disagrees with the issue it is reporting. Statements, for example, which portray the candidate or campaign as weak, disorganized, confused, unfocused, or tense are considered unfavorable. A neutral sign is given for statements which are neither favorable nor unfavorable, such as statements of fact or those that provide background for a given issue or news story. Statements that listed polling results showing candidates ahead or behind were coded as neutral factual statements.

Tone was also determined by counting instances of attributional bias to investigate subtler forms of negative tone in media coverage. Attributional bias occurs when a journalist substitutes the word “said” with more aggressive verbs such as “lash out”, “snapped”, “attacked”, “blast”, “accuse”, “fire at”, “ridicule”, “slam”, “hammer away”, “shoot back”. These words tend to portray candidates in a negative light.

All coding materials were copied from newsmagazines, newspaper articles and television show transcripts printed out from the Lexis Nexis database. The researcher used words Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and John Edwards to search for relevant newspaper and newsmagazine articles and transcripts. Statements that referred to one, two or all three candidates were coded in newspaper and newsmagazine articles. Statements were coded if they were spoken/quoted by candidates (Senator Obama said), were direct references to candidates (Senator Clinton), or alluded to them (She said). If the reporter used one candidate to describe or attack another candidate on a theme, the theme was recorded for both candidates unless they were character trait themes. Character traits were only recorded for the candidate being described.

In transcripts, only statements made by media personnel about the candidates were coded. This included questions and statements made by the anchor as well as comments made by other journalists and pundits in roundtable discussions about the campaign. Interviews with candidates, their surrogates and those guests who publicly stated their partisanship were excluded from the analysis. One of the concerns of this study is to examine how media personnel, who also serve as pundits, and journalists portrayed the candidates in their coverage. Although editors act as gatekeepers for news content, the assumption for this study is that journalists exert the most control over content by initially choosing the way they want to portray candidates in a story. Journalists relinquish much of that control when they interview candidates and their surrogates on news programs except when they ask questions or are part of a discussion. Including candidates and surrogates may also skew tone results as they highlight the positive aspects of their campaign and criticize the actions of their opponents.

Next coders identified character traits written or uttered by male, female or groups of authors/speakers/journalists. After looking at the name (s) associated with an article or transcript, an Internet search for the name and picture of the person was conducted to determine the sex of the journalist/speaker. Articles that did not contain a name or contained a name that could not be
found were excluded from the analysis. Tone was recorded for every sentence in an article or transcript that contained candidate names or alluded to one or all of the candidates.

In newsmagazines, 105 (57%) articles were written by men, 31 (17%) by women, and 49 (26%) by mixed sex journalist groups. In newspapers, 190 (58%) articles were written by men, 69 (21%) by women, and 67 (21%) by mixed sex journalist groups. In television, 17 (40%) of the shows contained comments only made by men, 0 (0%) only made by women, and 25 (60%) by mixed sex journalist groups.

Two coders were recruited and trained to code the 89 articles and transcripts from a sample of 598 (15% of the total sample) using the written codebook and code sheet. A subset of 76 (26 male, 25 female, 25 mixed sex journalist groups) newsmagazine articles, 125 (43 male, 42 female, 41 mixed sex journalist groups) newspaper articles and 25 shows (58 female journalists/pundits, and 58 male journalists/pundits) were used for the analysis. The subset provided a similar number of male and female journalists in order to determine media coverage differences according to sex. Television shows with male only journalists were excluded from the analysis due to the small number of issue and trait mentions within shows. Intercoder reliability was calculated using Cohen’s Kappa. Cohen’s kappa was 0.64 for character traits, 0.76 for issues, and .81 for tone. These results suggest fair to excellent reliability as Fleiss (1981) suggests a kappa of 0.75 or higher as excellent reliability.

**Analysis of Data**

The coded data was analyzed by using the VassarStats website for statistical computation. The data in this analysis is presented as descriptive statistics to report the frequency of categories. To examine the differences in categories reported by the media, crosstabs were

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<td><strong>Male, Female and Mixed Sex Journalist Issue and Character Mentions</strong></td>
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χ² [2, N = 1092] = .89, P = .028

P < .05*, p < .001**, p < .001***
used. Chi Square statistics were used to test the differences in category reports by the media. The differences in reported categories (e.g. positive, negative, neutral tone, character traits, issue,) were tested among media type and among the three candidates. For significant findings or findings approaching significance, Marasculio or pairwise comparisons (post-hoc test for chi-square analysis) were completed wherever necessary to determine significant differences between analyzed groups.

**Results**

The first hypothesis was, “Female journalists will report more candidates’ policy issues than male journalists during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.” This hypothesis was not supported. Table 1 shows that issue mentions accounted for 39% (145 mentions) and character traits accounted for 61% (230 mentions) of candidate media coverage by male journalists during the 2008 Democratic presidential primaries. Issue mentions accounted for 41% (123 mentions) and character traits accounted for 59% (176 mentions) of the candidate media coverage by female journalists during the 2008 primaries. In running a two-way chi square test between issue categories those differences are not significant $\chi^2 [1, N = 674] = .33, p = .56$.

The second hypothesis was, “Female journalists will report more policy issue topics than character trait topics in their coverage of the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign.” This hypothesis was not supported. Table 1 shows that issues accounted for 41% (123 mentions) and character traits accounted for 59% (176 mentions) of the media coverage during the 2008 primary campaign. In running a one-way chi square test between the categories, those differences were significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 299) = 9.04, p = .0026$.

**Table 2**

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<tr>
<th>Frequency of Trait and Issue Coverage by Male Journalist, Female Journalist, and Mixed Sex Journalists by Media Type</th>
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*P < .05*, $p < .001^{**}$, $p < .0001^{***}$ Coding unit: Articles and Transcripts
The third hypothesis was, “Male journalists will report more character trait topics than policy issue topics in their coverage of the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign.” This hypothesis was supported. Table 1 shows that issues accounted for 39% (145 mentions) and character traits accounted for 61% (230 mentions) of the media coverage during the 2008 primary campaign. In running a one-way chi square test between the categories, those differences were significant, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 375) = 18.82, p < .0001 \).

The study’s first research question was, “What is the distribution of candidate character traits and issue stands in newsmagazines, newspapers and Sunday morning political television shows during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?” Table 1 shows that character traits accounted for 59% (649 themes within mentions) and candidate issue accounted for 41% (443 themes within mentions) of the media coverage during the 2008 primaries. In running a one-way chi square test between the categories, this difference was significant, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 1092) = 38.48, p < .0001 \).

Table 2 shows that 30% (145 themes within mentions) of issue reports in newsmagazines were policy issues and 70% (334 themes within mentions) were character traits. In running a one-way chi square test between the categories, those differences were significant, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 1092) = 38.48, p < .0001 \). Newsmagazines reported more character traits than policy issues.

Table 2 shows that 56% (234 themes within mentions) of issue reports in newspapers were policy issues and 44% (187 themes within mentions) were character traits. In running a one-way chi square test between the categories, those differences were significant, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 421) = 5.02, p = .025 \). Newspapers reported more policy issues than character traits.

Table 2 shows that 33% (64 themes within mentions) of issue reports in Sunday political talk shows were policy issues and 67% (128 themes within mentions) were character traits. In running a one-way chi square test between the categories, those differences were significant, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 192) = 20.68, p < .0001 \). Sunday political talk shows reported more character traits than policy issues.

The second research question was, “What is the frequency of candidate issue and character trait references in articles featuring male, female and mixed male and female journalist groups during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season? Table 1 shows that issue mentions accounted for 33% (145 mentions) of candidate media coverage by male journalists, 27% (123 mentions) of the candidate media coverage by female journalists, and 40% (175 mentions) of candidate media coverage featuring articles with male and female co-authors during the 2008 Democratic presidential primaries. In running a one-way chi square test between the issue categories those differences are significant, \( \chi^2 (2, N = 443) = 9.23, p = .0099 \). Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences for issues in two of three journalist
pairs. There was no statistically significant difference in issue coverage between female (146 mentions) and mixed male and female co-authored article (176 mentions) pairs.

Character trait coverage accounted for 35% (230 mentions) of the candidate media coverage by male journalists, 27% (176 mentions) of the candidate media coverage by female journalists and 38% (243 mentions) of candidate media coverage featuring articles with mixed male and female co-authors during the 2008 Democratic presidential primaries. In running a one-way chi square test between the character trait categories those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (2, N = 649) = 11.67$, $p = .0029$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences for character traits in two of three media pairs. There was no statistically significant difference in character trait coverage between female authored (224 mentions) and mixed male and female co-authored article (223 mentions) pairs.

The third research question was, “What is the frequency of candidate issue and character trait references in articles featuring male, female and mixed male and female journalist groups in news magazines, newspapers and Sunday morning political television shows during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?

Table 2 shows that issue mentions accounted for 38% (50 mentions) and character trait mentions accounted for 62% (82 mentions) of candidate media coverage in newsmagazines, by male journalists. In running a one-way chi square test between the issue and character trait categories those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 132) = 7.28$, $p = .007$. Male journalists covered more character traits than issues in news magazines during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.

Table 2 shows that issue mentions accounted for 44% (58 mentions) and character trait mentions accounted for 56% (73 mentions) of candidate media coverage in newspapers, by male journalists. In running a one-way chi square test between the issue and character trait categories those differences are not significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 131) = 1.5$, $p = .22$. Male journalists covered character traits and issues equally in newspapers during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.

Table 2 shows that issue mentions accounted for 33% (37 mentions) and character trait mentions accounted for 67% (75 mentions) of candidate media coverage in Sunday morning political talk shows by male journalists. In running a one-way chi square test between the issue and character trait categories those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 112) = 12.22$, $p = .0005$. Male journalists covered more character traits than issues in television shows during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.

Table 2 shows that issue mentions accounted for 24% (26 mentions) and character trait mentions accounted for 76% (81 mentions) of candidate media coverage in news magazines, by female journalists. In running a one-way chi square test between the issue and character trait categories those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 132) = 7.28$, $p = .007$. Female journalists
covered more character traits than issues in news magazines during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.

Table 2 shows that issue mentions accounted for 62% (70 mentions) and character trait mentions accounted for 38% (42 mentions) of candidate media coverage in newspapers, by female journalists. In running a one-way chi square test between the issue and character trait categories those differences are significant, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 112) = 6.5, p = .013 \). Female journalists covered more issues than character traits in newspapers during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.

Table 2 shows that issue mentions accounted for 34% (27 mentions) and character trait mentions accounted for 66% (53 mentions) of candidate media coverage in Sunday morning political talk shows by female journalists. In running a one-way chi square test between the issue and character trait categories those differences are significant, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 80) = 7.82, p = .005 \). Female journalists covered more character traits than issues in television shows during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.

Table 2 shows that issue mentions accounted for 29% (69 mentions) and character trait mentions accounted for 71% (171 mentions) of candidate media coverage in news magazines, by mixed male and female journalist groups. In running a one-way chi square test between the issue and character trait categories those differences are significant, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 240) = 42.5, p < .0001 \). Mixed male and female journalist groups covered more character traits than issues in news magazines during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.

Table 2 shows that issue mentions accounted for 60% (106 mentions) and character trait mentions accounted for 40% (72 mentions) of candidate media coverage in newspapers, by mixed male and female journalist groups. In running a one-way chi square test between the issue and character trait categories those differences are significant, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 178) = 6.12, p = .013 \). Mixed male and female journalist groups covered more issues than character traits in newspapers during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.

Table 2 shows that issue mentions accounted for 14% (128 mentions), negative reports accounted for 32% (277 mentions), and neutral reports accounted for 54% (469 mentions) of the coverage for Senator Hillary Clinton in articles written by mixed male and female co-authors. In running a one-way chi square between the categories, those differences are significant, \( \chi^2 (2, N = 874) = 173.01, p < .0001 \). Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between tone pairs.

Positive reports accounted for 39% (281 mentions), negative reports accounted for 24% (175 mentions), and neutral reports accounted for 37% (269 mentions) of the coverage for
Senator Barack Obama in articles featuring mixed male and female co-authors. In running a one-way chi square between the categories, those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (2, N = 725) = 173.12, p < .0001$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between two of three tone pairs. There was no significant difference between positive and neutral tone coverage.

Positive reports accounted for 31% (58 mentions), negative reports accounted for 16% (31 mentions), and neutral reports accounted for 53% (101 mentions) of the coverage for former Senator John Edwards in articles featuring mixed male and female co-authors. In running a one-way chi square between the categories, those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (2, N = 190) = 27.49, p < .0001$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between tone pairs.

The fifth research question was, “What is the frequency of positive, negative, and neutral reports about Senator Hillary Clinton, Senator Barack Obama and former Senator John Edwards
in articles written by male journalists during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?"

Table 3 shows that positive reports accounted for 23% (200 mentions), negative reports accounted for 31% (271 mentions), and neutral reports accounted for 46% (406 mentions) of the coverage for Senator Hillary Clinton in articles and television shows featuring male journalists. In running a one-way chi square between the categories, those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (2, N = 877) = 421.6$, $p < .0001$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between tone pairs.

Positive reports accounted for 34% (270 mentions), negative reports accounted for 15% (121 mentions), and neutral reports accounted for 51% (397 mentions) of the coverage for Senator Barack Obama in articles and television shows featuring male journalists. In running a one-way chi square between the categories, those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (2, N = 788) = 584.69$, $p < .0001$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between tone pairs.

Positive reports accounted for 16% (24 mentions), negative reports accounted for 22% (113 mentions), and neutral reports accounted for 62% (33 mentions) of the coverage for former Senator John Edwards in articles and television shows featuring male journalists. In running a one-way chi square between the categories, those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (2, N = 150) = 165.71$, $p < .0001$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between two of the three tone pairs. There was no statistically significant difference between positive (24 mentions) and negative (33 mentions) tone references.

The sixth research question was, “What is the frequency of positive, negative, and neutral reports about Senator Hillary Clinton, Senator Barack Obama and former Senator John Edwards in articles written by female journalists during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?”

Table 3 shows that positive reports accounted for 22% (192 mentions), negative reports accounted for 31% (270 mentions), and neutral reports accounted for 47% (412 mentions) of the coverage for Senator Hillary Clinton in articles and television shows featuring female journalists. In running a one-way chi square between the categories, those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (2, N = 874) = 69.94$, $p < .0001$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between tone pairs.

Positive reports accounted for 36% (272 mentions), negative reports accounted for 19% (142 mentions), and neutral reports accounted for 45% (338 mentions) of the coverage for Senator Barack Obama in articles and television shows featuring female journalists. In running a one-way chi square between the categories, those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (2, N = 752) = 295.3$, $p < .0001$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between tone pairs.

Positive reports accounted for 35% (34 mentions), negative reports accounted for 20% (19 mentions), and neutral reports accounted for 45% (44 mentions) of the coverage for former
Senator John Edwards in articles and television shows featuring female journalists. In running a one-way chi square between the categories, those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (2, N = 97) = 25.66, p < .0001$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between two of the three tone pairs. There was no statistically significant difference between positive (41 mentions) and negative (26 mentions) tone references.

**Discussion**

**Media and Journalist Types and Issue and Character Traits**

According to this study, overall the national media did not contribute to substantive political discourse during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign. Fifty-nine percent of the media coverage focused on character traits while forty-one percent focused on policy issues. Newsmagazines (70%) and Sunday morning political television shows (67%) focused on character traits while newspapers provided the most substantive coverage during the campaign by reporting issues (56%) more than character traits.

The importance of character trait topics (63%) in newsmagazines over issues (37%) may be a function of the frequent feature and editorial articles found in these news sources. Newsmagazines follow a narrative style of reporting (Kruse, 2001), permitted by the delayed news timeline of weekly magazines. These articles contain extensive amounts of background information which is used to tie events together and offer a more in depth understanding of topics for readers.

Furthermore, research has shown that although newsmagazines provide a large amount of hard news they have shifted their reporting to incorporate more soft news. For example, “*Time* and *Newsweek* have shifted their attention toward entertainment, health and lifestyle concerns, business and other sorts of soft news” (Fried, 2005, p. 126). The results of this study perhaps reflect the transition of newsmagazine reporting from a hard news to soft news format and narrative style of news coverage which includes more elaborate stories about a candidate’s personality. In addition, Sunday morning political television shows in this study reflect the results of previous research showing a high level of candidate image information in television coverage (Just, Crigler, & Buhr, 1999). Similarities in newsmagazines and Sunday morning political television shows may be a function of the delayed timeline in covering the campaign as compared to the daily timeline found in newspaper reporting. Both of these media types publish content or air programs once a week and have the luxury of probing and investigating the campaign in more depth by reporting more personal information, which includes character traits.

The results of this study support previous research showing newspapers focusing on issue topics (57%) over character traits (43%). Newspapers are believed to be more effective in providing information about candidates and their policy positions than television news (Gunter,
The focus on issues in newspapers illustrates the non-narrative style of reporting found in this media type as compared to newsmagazines. Newsmagazines offer the lengthier description of “why” and “how” of a story rather than the “who,” “what,” “when” and “where,” of a story found in newspapers (Buckman, 1993).

Media format may impact the type of coverage candidates receive but may not be the only factor to consider when assessing media influence in a campaign. Gender may impact a campaign through the writing styles of male and female journalists. Gender is believed to impact news content because of the alternative viewpoints and diversity that it promotes which, in turn, affects the way news is written (Kim & Yoon, 2009). Specific gender perspectives are believed to offer certain advantages and disadvantages to candidates during a campaign.

The results of this study support and contradict the previous research on the differences in candidate coverage between male and female news reporters and may also offer new insights into the campaign through the perspectives of teams of male and female journalists. In some instances, gender may not be a significant contributing factor influencing candidate coverage. Even though female journalists are believed to offer more advantages to candidates than male journalists by covering more of their issues than their character traits, they did not provide candidates with these benefits overall during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign. Neither did male journalists nor teams of journalists made up of male and female reporters offer issue coverage advantages to candidates during the campaign. In addition, as has been previously stated, both newsmagazine and televised political talk show formats focus on character traits. All three journalist groups within these media types focused on character traits significantly more than issue topics suggesting media format guides candidate character trait coverage rather than reporting decisions based on the sex of the journalist.

However, the sex of the journalist may influence coverage in certain media types. The distribution of character traits and issues according to the sex of the reporter in this study revealed that female reporters (62%) and teams of male and female reporters (60%) offered more media coverage advantages over male reporters (44%) in newspapers by focusing on issues significantly more than character traits. Male newspaper journalists were found to cover character traits and issues equally during the campaign. When comparing issue coverage between journalist groups, male and female journalists covered issues similarly while mixed sex journalist groups covered issues significantly more than male or female journalists.

Female newspaper reporters offered candidates the same amount of issue coverage as their male counterparts and in some instances, even more. Some scholars suggest that these similarities are the consequence of biased organizational and professional norms in news organizations which cause female reporters to internalize patriarchal newsroom norms in order to succeed in a male-dominated environment (Elmore, 2007). This includes adopting a masculine gaze (Ross, 2002) such as focusing on issues rather than character traits during a campaign. Other external organizational factors may also contribute to similar reporting styles between men.
and women. Elmore (2007) suggests that men and women at large papers source and frame stories the same way.

So, is a male-dominated newsroom culture the reason why female newspaper journalists focus on issues? The notion of adopting a male-centered approach may only partially explain why female reporters focused on candidate issues more than character traits in newspapers while their male counterparts focused on these topics equally during the campaign. Why did female newspaper journalists focus on issues in their coverage more than male reporters in their coverage? Did female journalists adopt a “hyper masculine gaze” during the presidential primary campaign by focusing on issues more than male journalists? If they did, did it impact the significant issue coverage made by mixed male and female sex journalist groups over male-only and female-only reporters during the campaign?

Elmore (2007) suggests that female journalists are “under strong pressure to implement the traditional norms and values to persevere and succeed” (p. 115). Perhaps this pressure is heightened when female journalists work with male journalists on an article together during a campaign.

The potential influence of female reporters on candidate coverage in mixed sex reporter groups may also depend on the ratio of male to female journalists within these groups. Although the ratio of male to female reporters was not accounted for in mixed sex journalist groups, it is believed that 30% or 3 or more women on an executive board, for example, are needed for any meaningful or consistent change to be seen within an organization or profession (Elmore, 2007). Perhaps a significant number of female newspaper reporters within mixed sex journalist groups can account for the difference in issue coverage from male journalists covering the campaign.

It is also possible that the significant difference in issue coverage by female newspaper reporters may not be a reflection of a professional standard based on a male-centric perspective but rather a reflection of personal beliefs about one’s professional role. For example, Cassidy (2008) found that although female and male reporters believed investigating official claims, analyzing complex problems and discussing national policy were significant aspects of their jobs, female journalists also saw themselves as disseminators of information who needed to get information to the public quickly and avoid unverifiable facts more than male journalists. Data about female newspaper reporters in this study seems to support the conception of this professional role.

Cassidy’s (2008) finding of an intensity of commitment among female newspaper journalists to at least one of the professional role conceptions over male reporters may provide some insight into the more focused attention on issue coverage by female reporters than male reporters found in this study. The greater commitment among female newspaper reporters to at least one of the professional role conceptions may offer some diversity in candidate coverage.
Journalist Groups

through an increased commitment to their profession. This intensity could represent a heightened desire to succeed in response to a male dominated news culture or it could reflect a different and valuable gender-based approach to media coverage perhaps explained by Melin-Higgins (2004) who found that female journalists believed their jobs to be a mission for them rather than just an occupation to be performed. Their commitment to the role of disseminating information to the public may have contributed to the more focused attention to issue coverage by mixed male and female journalists over male journalists found in this study as well.

Female newspaper journalists seem to offer candidates some advantages over male newspaper journalists by covering as many or more issues than traits during a campaign. This advantage may not be the result of adopting a male-centric perspective alone but may also be enhanced by a personal commitment to the profession as a whole. In addition, the influence of female reporters’ role concepts within mixed sex journalist groups may further enhance substantive candidate coverage during a campaign.

Journalist Type, Tone and Candidate

This study shows that the coverage of the candidates in the 2008 Democratic presidential primary was primarily neutral among all journalist groups with the exception of mixed male and female journalist groups for Barack Obama. As has been previously stated, past research suggests that female journalists are assets to female candidates by giving them more positive coverage than male journalists (Craft & Wanta, 2004). The results from this study contradict this research as Senator Clinton was covered more negatively than positively by female journalists (31% to 22%) as well as male journalists (31% to 23%) and mixed male and female journalist groups (32% to 14%) during the primary campaign.

Hillary Clinton’s overwhelming negative coverage may have been a function of her extensive national political history as compared to Barack Obama’s relatively short political history. Journalists “knew” Hillary Clinton quite well and could gather much more information and reference both positive and negative actions from her political past. Her “political present” represented by this study also included negative references made about her husband Bill Clinton who created controversy when he was accused of introducing race into the campaign in states such as South Carolina. This also contributed to the personal and public fodder from which journalists could draw to write their stories.

It is true that Senator Hillary Clinton represents an anomaly in gender research studies due to her well-known political past and family connections. Some scholars suggest that her inclusion in gender research in political campaigns does not provide conclusions that can be applied to studies that involve lesser known female candidates. However, media coverage of Senator Clinton still has value. At the very least, this study acknowledges the severe discrepancy in tone coverage between Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and John Edwards and provides evidence that she was disadvantaged and covered differently during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign. The evidence suggests journalists need to approach their campaign coverage with caution and increased vigilance towards standards of objectivity. Also,
until more formidable female contenders besides Senator Clinton run for president, it is unknown whether results from this study are indicative of the challenges female candidates will face or the advantages they will be afforded in future campaign coverage.

How were the male candidates covered by these journalist groups? The coverage of Senator Obama by female journalists (36% to 19%), male journalists (34% to 15%) and mixed male and female journalist groups (39% to 24%) was significantly more positive than negative. Most of the coverage for Senator Obama from female (45%), and male (51%) journalists was neutral while there was no significant difference between the neutral (37% and positive (39%) coverage of Barack Obama among mixed male and female journalist groups.

Why did all types of reporters cover Senator Obama so positively? He was seen by many voters and party officials as a face of hope and a leader who could revitalize the nation. U. S. Democratic senator Joseph Biden said that “Barack Obama is probably the most exciting candidate the Democratic or Republican Party had produced at least since I’ve been around. And he’s fresh. He’s new. He’s smart. He’s insightful” (Thai & Barrett, 2007). Although other African Americans have run for president, no other African American candidate possessed as much broad based appeal as Senator Obama did. Even though Barack Obama highlighted his African American heritage at times, he was seen as a multi-racial or biracial candidate rather than an African American one (Winborne, 2009; Daniel, 2009). The significant difference in positive and negative coverage from all journalist groups may be explained, in part, through stories that reflected the country’s common positive sentiment about the appealing new candidate.

Overall Senator Edwards (190 mentions) was not covered as much as Senators Clinton (1055 mentions) and Obama (725 mentions) during the campaign. The coverage of Edwards by female journalists (35% to 20%) and teams of male and female journalists (31% to 16%) was significantly more positive than negative while male journalists gave Edwards significantly more negative (22%) than positive (16%) coverage. John Edwards’ public support of his wife, Elizabeth Edwards, during her fight with breast cancer in 2007 may have resonated well with female-only and mixed male and female journalist groups and contributed to the positive coverage he received during the campaign. The significant negative coverage among male journalist may be due to the male-dominated commentary in Sunday morning political television shows. Although women participated in these discussions, they seemed to speak less often and for shorter periods of time than their male counterparts. Senator Edwards may have received most of his coverage from televised Sunday morning political talk shows as these shows contain weekly discussions about candidate campaigns. It is likely discussions about Senator Edwards’ would have focused on his failing campaign due to limited resources, his second place positon in the Iowa Caucus and his third place positions in the New Hampshire and South Carolina primaries.

In addition to examining differences in reporting among male and female reporters, this study adds to gender and journalist research by examining articles written by male and female
co-authors to find out if journalists working together offered a balanced tone in coverage. Results showed that mixed sex journalist groups covered the candidates similarly to male-only and female-only reporters by covering the female candidate more negatively than positively and covering the male candidates more positively than negatively during the campaign. It supports previous claims that Hillary Clinton received more negative media coverage than her male counterparts during the presidential primary season. It is encouraging, however, to find that a substantial amount of the coverage for each candidate was written in a neutral tone by all author types.

The results of this study seem to contradict past research about the benefits of having female journalists cover candidates during a campaign. Even though the data in this study shows that female journalists, as well as male journalists and mixed male and female journalist groups, do not offer significant media coverage advantages to candidates in a campaign by focusing on traits overall, female reporters, as well as mixed male and female journalist groups, seem to offer issue focused advantages in newspapers. Female newspaper journalists may be an influential force in maintaining substantive policy issue coverage during a campaign and newspapers strengthen this focus even more by incorporating male and female journalist groups to cover candidates.

The emphasis on traits in overall campaign coverage may be explained by including newsmagazines and Sunday morning political television shows, media genres that have been shown to highlight candidate character traits over issues because of their emphasis on soft news. The issue emphasis in candidate coverage by female and mixed male and female journalist groups may be influenced by a heightened response to a male-centric professional culture or a heightened sense of commitment to the profession.

**Future Research**

The media offer the public a window into the campaign and provide information that shapes voters’ perceptions of candidates. However, candidates may not look like themselves all of the time depending on the angle of the voter’s gaze or the sex of the reporter. This study provides information on how male and female journalists cover male and female candidates as well as the advantages and disadvantages that exist in their coverage of them. It investigates whether teams of male and female journalists support or detract from a journalist’s professional goal to uphold the standard of objectivity or if they aid in eliminating some of the bias found in male-only or female-only written articles through character trait, policy issue and tone coverage.

Coverage of other campaign issues such as family, horserace, and race among these journalist groups could also provide a more complete understanding of how the sex of the
journalist may have impacted the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign. Comparing male-only and female-only candidate races according to journalist group may also provide further insight into how mixed male and female journalist groups contribute to healthy political discourse. Although candidates do not control much of their media coverage, teams of journalists may offer candidates important alternatives to male-only or female-only written articles as they strategize to disseminate messages during a campaign. The 2016 presidential campaign offers another opportunity to investigate how journalist groups cover male and female candidates as well as male-only and female-only candidates.

Discrepancies in past and present research in the way female and male journalists cover candidates, especially Senator Hillary Clinton, may also be linked to decisions made by others about news content within media organizations. The prevalence of male journalists in leadership positions within the media organization may have contributed to the significant amount of negative coverage over positive coverage for the female candidate by male, female, and a team of reporters. Craft and Wanta (2004) found that newspapers with male editors reported more negative news than newspapers with a high percentage of female editors. If the editorial staff in charge of the female reporters consisted primarily of males in leadership positions, the tendency of female reporters to offer more positive coverage to female candidates in the past may have been hampered by decisions made by male editors. Comparisons of articles that have male and female editors for male-only, female-only, and teams of male and female may contribute to the understanding of the type of media coverage Senator Hillary Clinton received as well as the type of media coverage female and male candidates receive in the future.

In addition, comparisons among male journalist groups, female journalist groups and mixed male and female journalist groups may offer additional insight into the professional and gender dynamics associated with candidate coverage during a campaign. Investigating the number of female reporters within male and female journalist groups covering candidates as well as more qualitative studies interviewing mixed sex journalist groups among media types may help researchers to better understand the role gender plays in the coverage of political candidates.
References


Alumni Challenge

Foamcore and the Future of Speech

Dan Hungerman

Miami University Alumni (1996-2000)

Dan Hungerman graduated from Miami University in 2000. That year, he took first place in pentathlon at NFA. His favorite event was extemporaneous speaking. He has many favorite memories from speech, such as meeting his future wife, Laura Batt. He is now an economics professor at the University of Notre Dame. He credits much of his professional success with what he learned in speech.

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Daniel Hungerman

**Alumni Challenge:** Forensic alumni can be a tremendous to individual programs and the activity as a whole. While we commonly ask alums to judge at tournaments or maybe even speak at a year-end banquet they don’t get many opportunities to address the entire forensics community. Through our “Alumni Challenges” Speaker & Gavel offers our alumni an opportunity to speak to the forensic community. We encourage them to challenge us to re-examine, re-envision, and possibly re-invent they way we operate as a community.

**Keywords:** forensics, visual aids, PowerPoint, foamcore, alumni challenge

We live in an era where public speaking is a valued skill. Recent scholarship (e.g., Deming, 2015) has shown the continued and growing relevance of social skills for earnings. Further, high-profile events such as the now-ubiquitous TED Talks have shown that public speaking remains a vital forum for sharing ideas. It may be boilerplate to say that public speaking is important, but it is a boilerplate that continues to be true.

It was thus with sadness that I learned of the demise of my alma-mater’s speech and debate team. I graduated from Miami University in 2000, and I was very active on Miami’s Forensics Team. I view my participation in speech as a highlight of my undergraduate education.

What caused the death of speech at Miami? As mentioned above, it does not appear that public speaking is any less important or otherwise less relevant than it used to be. But Miami’s team apparently struggled to capitalize on the continued relevance of public speaking. This is a struggle that teams at other institutions face as well. Figure 1 shows Google trend searches for two terms: “American Forensics Association” and “TED Talks.”

The first panel shows the relative change over time in searches for *American Forensic Association*; the second panel shows the change over time in searches for *TED Talks* (these are not changes in the visitations to any particular sites, but changes in the number of times these terms were used in a web search). Of course, TED Talks and the AFA serve different audiences. The point of the figure is not to compare the overall popularity of one search to another, Google trends would not do that well. The figures do not show the levels of popularity, but, as their names suggest, the trends. But the story told by the trends is not good for the forensic community, and it fits with the sad story on Miami’s campus.

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1 I thank the editor and two anonymous reviewers for greatly improving this text. Of course, all remaining errors are my own.
Figure 1: Searches for “American Forensic Association”

Figure 2: Searches for “TED Talks”
Note: Numbers in each panel represent search interest relative to the highest point on the panel. The month/week where the searched-for term makes up the highest fraction of all searches done on Google is given a score of 100. Thus the lines do not convey absolute search volume. The peak time in Panel A was in 2007 and in Panel B in 2015; extending the picture into these ranges does not qualitatively change the pictures (although TED Talks searches are close to zero before 2009 and AFA searches are close to zero for much of 2015).
Is it too Late to Change this Story?

Reviving Miami’s team appears to be a daunting task. It has proven difficult for me to find someone at the university who can be persuaded that the benefits of speech warrant saving (now, reviving) the team. This is not because the leadership at Miami does not value public speaking, but because it is hard for me to convince Miami’s leaders that traditional forensics prepares students appropriately for public speaking. In the past year I had the fortune of meeting with two deans at Miami. On both occasions I planned to bring up my concerns about the speech team with them. In both cases, I quickly had to shelve that idea. These deans understand the power of public speaking, but they are focused on preparing students for the future of public speaking. It would be something of an understatement to say that they would be more interested in talking about PowerPoint™, Prezi™, or Beamer™ than foamcore. Indeed, if these deans had gone to watch the speech team practice and had seen foamcore visual aids, well, that would have been the end of things right there. They would have thought it ridiculous and I would not blame them.

The Road Ahead

Competitive speech would do well to consider how to modernize. As a starting point, I suggest the elimination of foamcore VAs. Below I discuss why foamcore should be eliminated; hopefully readers will understand these comments (a) as constructive and reflecting my continued love of forensics and (b) as part of the broader topic of saving competitive speech in an era when it is in danger. Competitive speech could likely take several different paths toward renewed health and relevance, but it is likely any such path would involve eliminating the very visible, outdated, and embarrassing idiosyncrasy that is foamcore.

At one time, foamcore made sense. Personally, I loved foamcore as a competitor and I credit it with some of my speech success. I once broke an ADS at nationals that was not entirely coherent but had one surefire joke: a gag that used foamcore to show that the name Spiro Agnew could be rearranged to read “Grow A Penis” (this really works). The joke wouldn’t have been as funny with PowerPoint. Thus, I owe one of my first breaks at nationals to foamcore.

Speech could take several different paths toward renewed health and relevance, but any such path would involve eliminating the very visible, outdated, and embarrassing idiosyncrasy that is foamcore.

I can also see why foamcore persists. It is portable, cheap, wireless, and it can be used outside. It is easy and it gets the job done. When I was a student and modern public speaking technology like projectors were a rare luxury not found in many campus classrooms, foamcore was more affordable and feasible. I have also heard the argument that the main benefits of competitive speech do not involve learning the latest technology fads but rather learning more substantive skills.
As an outside observer who loves speech, I have come to view these as inadequate reasons to continue using foamcore. Modern VA systems like PowerPoint™ are not a fad, they have been around for a quarter century and do not appear to be going anywhere. The main concern from my days as a student—the scarcity of projectors and expense of modern VA technology—is a relic of the past. In fact, the economic arguments now run the other way; foamcore is more expensive than flashdrives. You don’t have to pay an airline $50 to carry on a flashdrive, either. The expenses of foamcore increases even more when one takes into account the possibility of it being damaged during the year; even usable foamcore VAs can look like trash by the spring. Speaking of trash, foamcore is also less environmentally friendly than flashdrives.

**The Real World**

It is true that there will be technical problems, where projectors fail, a PowerPoint™ presentation loads wrong, a flashdrive gets lost. But so what? Those are real world problems. I was once a visiting professor in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and I went to see a high-profile talk in the economics department at Harvard. A faculty job position was potentially at stake. First, I ask you to guess what sort of VAs are typically used in talks like this: PowerPoint™ or foamcore? You get zero points for guessing correctly. But on this particular day the speaker’s PowerPoint™ presentation didn’t work. If you want to be prepared to get the job at Harvard some fine day, then you need to practice PowerPoint™ talks and you need to know what to do when they fail. Speech competition is obviously a place where both skills could be mastered if students were using PowerPoint™ in competition. The threat of technological snafus is not a defect, it is a selling point.

Some people find PowerPoint™ talks less engaging than talks using other visual aids. I agree. I almost never use PowerPoint™ when teaching. (Do I use foamcore? Of course not. I don’t use anything.) Again, the fact that PowerPoint™ can be boring is a real world problem. Further, we should be willing to bet on the speech community to save the day here. If anyone can find a way to make modern VAs captivating, it will be the speech community.

A trickier thing is that a fundamental change to speech would likely threaten the insularity of the speech community. The coaches who are coaching speech now are good at it. Why should they walk away from their hard-earned expertise doing speech the old way? Current competitors may also have mixed feelings about the decline of forensics. If I were at a nationally competitive program, and I heard that Miami’s team had disappeared, a small part of me might think, “Well, at least breaking at nationals might be a teensy bit easier.”

Frankly, I am sympathetic to concerns and thoughts like these. I’m not necessarily advocating a total overhaul of competitive speech or a dramatic increase in the size of the speech community. But the persistence of foamcore (along with the overall inability of the speech community to reflect the modern public speaking environment) is a threat to competitive speech’s survival. Let me re-raise that idea of a dean walking in to see a PA event with foamcore. What coach wouldn’t cringe at that thought? Doesn’t that give you pause, full stop?
What should take foamcore’s place? Anything, including nothing, would be better. Just eliminating it would be an improvement. Or how about this: each year, the national championship tournament could designate a particular PA event to be done in the style of TED Talks (including its use of VAs). Or just make a new PA category using TED Talks as a theme. Then, the national champion would be invited to give their talk as an actual TED Talk. Obviously TED Talks would have to agree. But the quality of competitive speech can prove itself here—if you were to show TED Talks people a national-championship caliber speech, they would want it. The students would love it. It would add a nice edge to the national finals and be a great marketing device, both for future competitors and for administrators. This would not be hard or expensive to do. Everyone is winning with this idea.

Despite the debt I owe to foamcore personally, I now oppose it. I oppose foamcore because it is a disservice to tell students you are preparing them for modern public speaking while handing them foamcore visual aids. It is no longer the 1990s when nobody could afford modern visual aid technology (indeed, it is no longer the 19-anythings). If the current forensics community does not adapt to modern public speaking they will be replaced by something that does.

In several months I will return to Miami’s campus, and there is a good chance I will meet with Miami’s leadership once again. I have not given up on reviving Miami’s team and their once proud tradition. I am still a firm believer in the excellence of competitive speech. But I fear that, unless the speech community takes action to become a leader, rather than a laggard, in the era of modern public speaking, the story at Miami will prove to be both unalterable and indicative of things to come. The need for change is existential. Let it begin with dropping foamcore.
References

Renita Jablonski

Renita is a Senior Editor for NPR’s All Things Considered. She previously served as an editor for Morning Edition and the network’s Newscast Unit. Before coming to NPR, she was a producer and fill-in host for American Public Media’s Marketplace Morning Report. Renita competed for Ohio University, 1998-2000. Taking first in Duo at DSR-TKA nationals was one of her proudest accomplishments. It meant a lot because she and her duo partner had taken a risk by running a new piece. Her favorite memory is of her first competition -- the Novice State Tournament. She recalls that even picking up the chalk to sign into her first round was exhilarating. When she took first in Informative Speaking, a fellow novice leaned over and whispered, “this means you’re going to nationals.” She was hooked.
Renita Jablonski: What Forensics Did for Me

Renita Jablonski
Senior Editor for NPR’s All Things Considered
Washington, DC

ALUMNI CORNER: The forensic community is filled with alumni who will tout the benefits they received through their participation in intercollegiate speech and debate activities. As directors of forensics programs face battles for budgets and sometimes for their program’s very existence, having a collection of published testimonies about the positive influence of forensics can be a tremendous help. To that end, Speaker & Gavel is setting aside space in each issue for our alumni to talk about how forensics has helped them in their professional life. These are our alumni’s stories.

Keywords: forensics, benefits of forensics, Alumni Corner

I talk to myself all the time. I get paid for it. In the open-office layout of NPR’s newsroom, I write copy and read it out loud at my desk. I am constantly listening to myself and others read words from a page or computer screen. I have to ask whether that copy makes sense, if it is engaging, and whether listeners will be able to follow it without prior knowledge of the subject matter. I check and re-check the dates, figures, and sources cited in copy. I run a stopwatch. If a story or interview does not fit into the designated segment time it cannot air. This frequently makes me think of my forensics coaches and the stopwatches in their hands. I would try to decipher the looks on their faces as I rehearsed an event because I knew if I went too long, I would not be allowed to run it.

Forensics empowered me to take on deadlines in a new way. Competing on a team is so much more than submitting a paper by a requested due date. It means putting in whatever time is necessary to make your events unique and compelling. If you care about your performance, your audience will care as well. If you are not invested in what you are saying, your audience will not be either. Think about what happens when you are listening to a radio program or podcast. You can hear when a host, reporter, or guest is really into a particular subject and inevitably that draws you in and makes the listening experience more enjoyable. The moment you sense the person on the air or in that podcast is not engaged, it will impact your own interest. Forensics also showed me that sometimes -- despite laboring on a project for hours -- it is better to walk away from it or start all over if it is not working. Put another way, forensics taught me that good enough is not good enough.

The way forensics parallels my work today is striking. What I hold onto most -- beyond the invaluable practice of writing and finding my voice -- is how forensics taught me to listen. Listening to your teammates is key to supporting your
What Forensics did for Me

Jablonski

You learn to be emotionally invested in the success of others. You applaud their achievements and support them through their stumbles.

teammates -- to sit, undistracted, and take in each word they say as they work out their material is important to a team’s success. I learned to listen analytically, critically, and productively. This is the foundation of being a peer coach to your teammates or future colleagues. Forensics also requires learning to give feedback in a thoughtful and respectful way. It is not unusual, in a classroom setting, to be called on to make assessments of your peers’ work. But then you walk out the door at the end of a class or move onto the next assignment. The investment is deeper in forensics. You watch your teammates take their work in front of judges and competitors. You watch their speeches, debate arguments, and interpretive performances evolve. You also watch them evolve as competitors -- nervous ticks turn into confident gestures, the eye contact clicks, and voices stop shaking. You learn to be emotionally invested in the success of others. You applaud their achievements and support them through their stumbles. In my professional setting, I may not be sitting in a van with my coworkers for hours and hours, but the feeling is not far off. I spend more waking hours with them than I do my family. My job is to make stories and interviews sound their best. That means letting producers, hosts, and other editors know that I have their back. They trust me to tell them when a segment sings and when it falls flat. They expect me to make specific suggestions for what to do differently. It is my job to help them succeed. It also does not hurt to occasionally make them laugh. That is certainly something that hours upon hours in a van with your peers will teach you: the value of a good sense of humor.

To this day, I try to make my forensics teammates laugh. I have not stopped applauding their successes or showing my support through life’s trials. I think this goes back to that capacity to truly listen. We did not just sit through each other’s events. We wanted to know about the person giving them. I suppose being dedicated to forensics meant we had to be dedicated to each other. A decade after I stopped competing, I looked out at many of those teammates as I said my wedding vows. When my husband and I were expecting our daughter, they were among the first with whom we shared the news. 15 years on, we still have an annual holiday gathering of the old team. I looked at the faces at this year’s party through FaceTime on my laptop and marveled at our years of friendship. If I need a shoulder to lean on, an honest opinion, or someone to simply listen, I know who I can call.

Renita’s Advice

“Do something that scares you. Can’t imagine doing extemp? You’ve got an entire half an hour to prep, you’ll be fine! DO IT. You say you’re not an interpreter? Oh, I bet you...”
Kevin Keatley, JD

Kevin Keatley, JD, is a Senior Assistant District Attorney at the Shawnee County District Attorney’s Office. From 2003-2007 he competed for Kansas State University. His favorite event was extemporaneous speaking and his favorite comment on a ballot was on an extemp ballot: “Jessy gave the speech you wanted to give.” This was a good reminder that you can always do better. His greatest accomplishment was getting to write “DE” on the chalk board in quarterfinals of AFA national tournament since he was double entered in Extemporaneous and Persuasion.
Kevin Keatley: What Forensics Did for Me

Kevin Keatley, JD
Senior Assistant District Attorney
Shawnee County KS District Attorney’s Office

Alumni Corner: The forensic community is filled with alumni who will tout the benefits they received through their participation in intercollegiate speech and debate activities. As directors of forensics programs face battles for budgets and sometimes for their program’s very existence, having a collection of published testimonies about the positive influence of forensics can be a tremendous help. To that end, Speaker & Gavel is setting aside space in each issue for our alumni to talk about how forensics has helped them in their professional life. These are our alumni’s stories.

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“It says here on your resume that you did forensics. Is that like the CSI show on TV?” I have answered that question more than once when applying for internships and jobs since leaving collegiate forensics in 2007. However, that entry on my resume is one of the most important accomplishments I have. It told law schools that my research and writing abilities were excellent. It also tells employers that public speaking, one of people’s biggest fears, is something that is not a problem for me.

I do not think I truly appreciated the skills, knowledge, and friendships forensics gave me until I was no longer a part of the activity. It felt funny reading a New York Times without filing the articles in the extemp tubs. The weekends seemed long and boring without rushing between rounds and making sure my visual aids were in the correct room. Mostly, it felt strange not seeing people from all across the country who had become my friends. Sure, forensics is competitive and you want to do better than the competition, but you still wanted to see others do well too. It took about a year to get used to this change, but the lasting benefits of forensics were just about to start for me.

It did not take long for my forensics skills to come in handy. I was sitting in one of my first practices on the Mock Trial team at Washburn Law School, when I taught the team the triangle pattern of movement during opening statements and closing arguments. I remember telling them, “Move with a purpose. You do not want the jury to be distracted by your movement, but you want them to realize that you are taking them in a new direction by this visual change.” I competed on the Mock Trial team for two years and our final year we made it...
to the semi-final round of a national tournament. Our ballots consistently said our presentation was strong.

After graduating from law school, I wanted a job where I could be in the courtroom and continue using my public speaking skills. I was fortunate enough to get a full-time job with the Shawnee County District Attorney’s Office. This jurisdiction has a yearly caseload of 2,500 criminal cases. It was fast-paced and it was not uncommon to get a case file in the morning and be expected to go to trial on the case later that day. This meant I had to take good notes, quickly organize my trial strategy, and be able to figure out which important facts were needed for the trial. In some ways, it was just like putting together an extemporaneous speech.

I am currently in my fifth year with the District Attorney’s Office and I am now a Senior Assistant District Attorney. I am in my third supervisory position and now oversee the Warrants Unit (responsible for reviewing all of the cases referred to our office for charging). I have spent a good portion of my time here training intern classes on how to be prosecutors. That training is more than just how to practice law, it also includes how to present your case to the jury. I train people to think on their feet and how to make themselves as prepared as possible in the limited time they have for each case; skills I learned competing in forensics.

I give a lot of credit to my success in the courtroom to forensics. To this day I still use the skills learned from practice sessions in Nichols Hall with my coaches: Craig Brown and Bobby Imbody. The foundation they gave me in forensics provided me with the skills to approach every public speaking situation calmly and taught me to always look for ways to improve. Whether it is a direct examination that could have been organized a little better or a closing argument that did not have the punch I wanted; I see the problem, make changes, and improve the next time.

In an age where courtroom drama is all over weeknight television, juries consistently want to see a polished (to the point it is nearly scripted) trial every time they get in the jury box. Often, the general public does not understand that the prosecutor’s witnesses may not be cooperative, that DNA evidence is not collected on every case, or that there was not a video tape of a crime. Rarely do the slam dunk cases go to trial like you see on television. Courthouses were built to decide the close cases; the cases where the evidence is not the strongest. As a result, the presentation of this evidence is very important. Juries can be distracted by an attorney who paces, overuses filler words, has poorly organized thoughts, or gestures awkwardly. I have an advantage because these distracting mannerisms are not part of my presentation because of what I learned in forensics.

I often start my voir dire of prospective jurors asking them if they can sit in judgment on a case where there is not a confession by the defendant, the defendant’s fingerprints or DNA were not collected, or that the victim no longer wants the case to be prosecuted. In a perfect world none of these things should be a problem for a juror, but every trial I have at least one person who would not find the defendant guilty unless there was forensic evidence, a confession, or a cooperative victim. This means the presentation of the evidence has to be appealing and cannot distract from the case. That is where forensics has put me ahead of many of my counterparts.
Aside from the public speaking portion of forensics, the research skills I learned have greatly benefited me as well. I am often asked to research legal issues because I am able to do so quickly and efficiently. I have also tracked office performance and cost savings by utilizing the skills learned in forensics. Forensics gave me the skills to look at all the variables to ensure that the analysis was thorough and complete. The ability to write a concise memo for senior staff is similar to writing an informative speech trying to explain a complex topic in an understandable way. It is truly an activity that taught me way more than I thought I would ever get out of it.

So, what did forensics do for me? It started out as a neat activity with a bunch of cool people that I got to travel with to fun places on the weekends. It slowly turned into a weekly competition that I worked hard at and had decent success in while continuing to travel to fun places with friends on the weekends. Finally, it became one of my most marketable job skills that has served me well over the past eight years. Now when I’m asked, “You did Forensics, is that like CSI?” I quickly respond with, “No, it is even better than that.”

Forensics also introduced me to my future wife. Sarah was a debater and our team room was next to the debate team room. We were both out of college before we started dating, but I would not have known her had it not been for forensics. Now the real argument between us is which activity is better: debate or forensics?

From going to Kansas State University and first learning they had a forensics program in the summer of 2003 to being a national semi-finalist at AFA, this activity has given me way more than I could ever hope to give back. While the memories of the activity may fade over time, the skills learned are as strong as ever. I still remind myself before going into a jury trial of what we often told each other before going into a final round, “Speak pretty and don’t suck!” And so far, that pep talk has always worked!

Kevin’s Advice

“Always work to improve yourself a little bit each day by learning from your mistakes.”

Now when I’m asked, “You did Forensics, is that like CSI?” I quickly respond with, “No, it is even better than that.”
Issue Debates:

Notecards in Extemporaneous Speaking

Aff: Joseph Kennedy
Neg: Jonathan Carter

Joseph Kennedy

Joseph Kennedy earned his B.S. in Mathematics from George Mason University, where he also competed on the forensics team, earning a place in limited preparation event final rounds six times at the AFA-NIET. After teaching high school mathematics for sixteen years, and earning his National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification, he became the Instructional Designer and Assistant Speech Coach at Concordia College. He has coached forensics at both the high school and college levels for eighteen years.

Jonathan Carter

Jonathan is a doctoral candidate and Asst. Director of Forensics at the Univ. of Nebraska-Lincoln. He has coached forensics for 11 years, including positions at Illinois State Univ. and Western Kentucky Univ. His research interests include networked rhetoric, critical theory, and Kenneth Burke. As part of his interest in how networked technologies foster new political subjectivities, he has taught courses including Rhetoric, Media, & Civic Life; Persuasive Public Communication; and Communication and Social Issues.

Proper APA citation for this article is:
RESOLVED: The event description for extemporaneous speaking should require the use of limited notes.

The Affirmative: Joseph Kennedy, Concordia College, Moorhead MN

The Negative: Jonathan Carter, University of Nebraska – Lincoln

In 1994, a master’s candidate at North Dakota State University finished his thesis, which focused upon the AFA-NIET Extemporaneous final round from the previous year. Essentially, this author alleged that more than half of the evidence used in that final round was inappropriately used, and probably violated the AFA-NIET code of ethics (Markstrom, 1994). As someone who knew the competitors in that round, I am absolutely confident that no one was attempting to fabricate evidence, and I’m reasonably confident that no one was deliberately trying to misrepresent evidence. However, I’m also completely confident that every competitor felt pressure to be “off notecard,” which means they had to memorize seven to twelve sources and dates. In thirty minutes, this is less realistic than most understand, and that lack of realism causes me to firmly support the resolution:

The event description for extemporaneous speaking should require the use of limited notes.

The sad reality of the current state of extemporaneous speaking is that competitors are forced to choose between one behavior which is more likely to provide competitive success, and another behavior, which is more likely to provide ethical behaviors. To understand why requiring notecards removes this forced binary choice, let us briefly examine the nature of information processing, explore competitive norms in extemporaneous speaking, and remind ourselves of the ethical and pedagogical foundations of forensics competition.

Contention 1: Human beings can only remember a finite number of information “chunks” in working memory.

The seminal psychological theory known as Miller’s Law holds that human beings can only retain approximately seven “chunks” of information in working memory. A chunk of
information is contextual, so while seven digits of a phone number might be seven different chunks of data, so too can seven date-source pairs. Thus, many competitors can memorize five to nine sources in order, and five to nine pieces of cited information in order, and recite them with no error. Memorizing more than this is all but impossible for most human beings, however. Thus, competitors who cite more than nine sources either spend their preparation time utilizing time-consuming memorization techniques rather than developing argumentation, or they are likely to inaccurately present information during their speech.

To reward competitors for not referencing a notecard during their speech means that memorization in a short amount of time becomes a de facto primary judging criterion. Forget logical argumentation, forget effective delivery techniques, we are saying, “let’s judge students on whether or not they can memorize complex pieces of information along with dates and sources.” If we want to have a contest in memorization, why not follow the lead of the Virginia High School League and make Spelling a speech event? Of course, even that organization realized that memorization is not a skill that should be rewarded in the same vein as constructing effective orations or advocating through oral interpretation; it removed the event in 2003.

Contestion 2: Extemporaneous speaking norms dictate that competitors are both “off notecard” and use at least ten sources.

Examine the final round of any large, competitive tournament, such as the Norton Invitational, Hell Froze Over, or a national organization’s championship tournament, and you’ll find that very few competitors use a notecard, and most have at least ten sources in their extemporaneous speech. I was lucky enough to compete in an era where seven sources was considered an acceptable amount of evidence, but the students I coach now routinely receive comments that they need more sources when they already reference six to eight. Others also present anecdotal evidence that more sources are needed to impress judges (Wehler, 2009) and analyses of ballots indicate that judges attribute high value to the number of sources (Cronn-Mills & Croucher, 2001), but I believe each of us actively involved in forensics already has a sense that judges believe more sources are better than fewer.

I also find myself in conflict with my students regarding the use of a notecard; I prefer they use a notecard but they argue that all the best competitors don’t. Arguments such as this highlight the importance of norms in competition. Perhaps not every judge writes a comment indicating a student should not use a notecard, but most students perceive that they are at a competitive disadvantage if they do. As more competitors push themselves to be “off card,” more judges begin to attribute negative value to using a notecard. The same holds true for the number of sources referenced; as more students become convinced they should cite ten to a dozen sources, more judges expect such numbers.

Contestion 3: The pedagogical and ethical foundations of competitive forensics require us to provide mechanisms that our students can use to win ethically.
It is not enough to agree that our practices should be grounded in ethical behavior. Every coach worthy of being called a coach holds that evidence should be cited, and cited properly. Every educator involved in this activity believes that sources should be properly represented; evidence should not be taken out of context, for example. National titles have been revoked when it was determined that the champion had used material that belonged to someone else, the community has demonstrated backlash against competitors who were believed to be engaged in “canning” their speeches, and papers have been published demonstrating how evidence was used incorrectly. We don’t suffer academic dishonestly lightly.

We are, however, placing our students into situations where their ability to win rounds depends upon their conformance to norms which violate the bounds of human cognition. By not requiring every student to use notes, we tacitly perpetuate the perception that a student without notes is better than a student with notes. Students, who are competitively motivated, thus learn the lesson that potentially violating ethics is acceptable to the community.

Therefore, it is an ethical imperative that we require students to use limited notes when presenting their extemporaneous speeches. To do otherwise is to pretend either than competitive norms don’t matter, or that our students are superhuman in the way they think.

References


Neg: What do you mean by "use"?

Notes must be referenced during the speech, in a manner similar to scripts being referenced during oral interpretation events.

Aff: How would we enforce a lack of use?

In whatever manner a lack of a script in an interp event would be enforced. (In the spirit of Parli debate, I would defer this to the appropriate national governing body. If you
mean, “What is the ideal enforcement,” then a student who refuses to use limited notes would receive a rank of 5 in that round).

Above all, forensics is about developing students. Consequently, pedagogical concerns carry profound ethical implications. Having worked with students who both use and decline notes it is apparent that the status quo does not present the ethical conundrum that the affirmative claims. We must reject the resolution because the possibility of mistaken citation does not outweigh the ethical costs of limiting students’ critical judgement and teaching incomplete rhetorical skills. My argument proceeds in three parts. First, I refute the claims that the current system is unrealistic and inequitable. Next, I articulate the ethical costs of mandatory notes. Finally, my counter-proposal addresses concerns of accuracy without incurring the disadvantages of the resolution.

Refutation of Affirmative Assertions

Initially, the affirmative relies on the assumption that students must sacrifice delivery or memory because of “Miller’s law.” However, Miller’s (1956) research does not support this claim. First, Miller advocates “seven plus or minus two,” suggesting 8-10 sources would not strain human memory. More importantly, the study examined the ability to recall random digits immediately after hearing them. Miller has gone to great lengths to clarify that While 7-ish numbers may be the limit of instant recall, the number does not apply if there is time to process (Miller, n.d.). Individuals can train memory to handle complexity. Children have memorized up to 2970 binary numbers in 30 minutes and the record for memorizing fictitious dates and events is 132 in five minutes (World Memory Sports Council, 2015) – suggesting 10 sources in 30 minutes is not a complex feat. Extempers, on or off notes, already memorize well over seven clumps by memorizing transitions, jokes, name pronunciations, tags, context, statistics, impacts, arguments, etc. Moreover, most high school competition prohibits notes, yet students memorize 7-10 sources. High schoolers compete competently and ethically without notes, we should believe college students can do the same.

Second, while the affirmative documents the perception that notes limit competitiveness, empirics do not support this perception. Over the past fifteen years I have judged, watched, and coached students in a variety of national out rounds. Yes, a majority of students were off notes, however, many students excelled in these rounds using notes. Techniques included held
notecards, a source list on a table, or keywords jotted on their question slip. More than one national champion has used notes. Simply, being on notes does not prevent success.

While judges may punitively judge students for using notes, judges also penalize students who did not. Only the later penalties were more severe as they asserted these students were acting unethically. Consequently, I have had students vary note use based on judge and even tournament. There will always be different standards in judging, students will adapt. Over the long run, the best students will continue to do well regardless of their use of notes.

Disadvantages of Mandatory Notes

First, Winifred Horner notes, “there is no complete rhetoric without consideration of all five if its canons” (1993, p. xi). However, prohibiting notes marginalizes the canon of memory promoting an incomplete understanding of communication. While contemporary rhetoric has ignored the canon of memory as “simple memorization,” Reynolds (1993) asserts that memory is a trainable skill that not only improves delivery, but the quality of argument, critical thinking, and cultural connections. When individuals memorize, short or long term, they make judgements about what is useful. Memorizing sources also helps students retain information and arguments tied to the source because the process enhances the neural pathways containing the information. If this activity is about conveying knowledge, developing critical thinking, promoting the communicative arts, and/or encouraging civic discourse, discouraging the development of memory creates ethical concerns far greater that the potential harm of saying the October tenth when you meant the sixth.

Second, forcing students to make performative choices limits the development of critical decision-making. Some students deliver better speeches using notes, others flourish without them. Students should have the option to make choices that let them maximize their potential. Moreover, the status quo forces students to evaluate every round critically. Will this judge demand a notecard, reward delivery, etc.? While they may choose to use notes, or not, currently a student can decide if that is the best decision. The level of situational awareness, adaptability, and critical judgement this decision demands fosters educational opportunities impossible under the resolution.

Further, mandatory notes may directly disadvantage students with conditions that alter the capacity to read or write. Will blind students be required to bring notes they cannot read? If not, at what standard of vision do notes become required? What if a student has difficulty quickly typing or writing notes? The rules should not require students to spend their time meeting a rule, when it may not help develop their performance.

Avoiding Misattribution – Counterplan
After evaluation, the only potential cost of the status quo is the possibility of misinformation. The affirmative grants that this is likely incidental. If a student wanted to fabricate information intentionally, a notecard provides no assurance. My counterproposal addresses these concerns and offers a litany of pedagogic advantages. I propose that students should be required to make a cited material available to judges and the audience by request after the performance.

This proposal’s advantages include:

- It does not abandon the canon of memory.
- Students get to make critical decisions regarding their performances. If they believe judges will check their memory, they have to make the critical judgement to work on memorization or use a card.
- With citations available, incidental misattribution has no detriment.
- It allows audiences to gain more depth of information by having easy access to cited sources.
- Increased depth and interaction promotes civic deliberation.
- Potential crosschecking discourages deliberate falsification.

**Conclusion**

In sum, the status quo does not demand students be “superhuman” nor create competitive inequities. However, the ethical costs of limiting student judgment and truncating the canons outweigh any benefits of requiring notes, particularly because there are more pedagogically sound ways to ensure that information is not only accurate, but also used by students to improve their world and themselves.

**References**


Let us begin by acknowledging the points of agreement between both sides of this debate: forensics should be a pedagogical experience, competitors should act ethically and be held accountable for acting ethically, the potential to fabricate sources exists in the status quo, and memory is one of the canons of rhetoric. After agreeing upon these claims, however, there are some key questions which must be answered, in order to come to a resolution regarding the proposed mandate that extempore speakers use limited notes while competing. The first of these questions regards the norms of competition, namely, is the current system unrealistic? The second question deals with the role of Memory as part of the canon’s pentad: does requiring notecards truly abandon the canon of Memory? The final question seeks to determine, is there a better way to help students compete ethically?

The affirmative continues to maintain that the current system places unrealistic expectations upon competitors. Competitors are expected to use Invention to determine the best analysis of the prompt, Arrange their arguments in the most effective manner, determine (with appropriate Style) effective transitions, and introduction, and a conclusion, commit to Memory all of the preceding elements along with a list of source citations and material, and then practice good Delivery. Other than Delivery, all of this must be accomplished within 30 minutes. Each of these tasks takes time, and time spent committing sources to memory takes away from time spent constructing analysis, which can lead to “canned arguments,” or organization, which can lead to static structures which don’t truly adapt to the prompt, or style, which leads to uninteresting speeches. These harms are not insubstantial; although none of them creates ethical problems in the speech itself, by the same argument the Negative makes regarding the “truncation of Memory,” we could argue that encouraging any of these behaviors is unethical for us as educators.

The Negative would have us believe that, since high school students who aren’t permitted to use notes routinely cite seven to ten sources ethically, then so can college students. This statement requires us to assume that such students are indeed getting their source citations
correct, and we’ve unfortunately seen through Markstrom’s (1994) research that this assumption must be challenged. Either students are choosing to miscite information, or they simply lack the ability to memorize the sources correctly.

The Negative also cites examples of humans who can memorize information quickly. The brain can indeed be trained to memorize but that requires considerable effort, which takes away from the critical thinking in which we wish students to engage. In the absence of recent studies regarding the number of sources, or use / non-use of a notecard at the highest levels of competition, perception becomes the critical factor regarding norms; as extempers perceive that judges penalize notecard users, or those who use too few sources (as Wehler (2009) argues), then their behaviors adapt to this perceived reality. Certainly there are regions of the country where the “no notecard norm” holds sway, regardless of whether or not it should. Again, my colleague will argue that this argument relies upon an observation that notecards are discouraged at the highest levels of competition, which is a true observation. Although some individuals are talented enough to engage in counter-normative practices and do well, that does not change the reality of the norm for the vast majority of competitors, which discourages notes (Shafer 2005).

The Negative also believes that requiring notecards means abandoning Memory. This, however, is not true, and the lessened emphasis on memory is both made up for in other forensics events and creates the opportunity for competitors to engage in more inventive analysis, organization, and style, which at worst creates a neutral benefit, and at best, allows extemproaneous speakers to excel at adapting all aspects of their presentation to the given prompt, which is what this particular event is supposed to teach.

Requiring notecards does not mean that there is a discouragement of the development of memory; it merely places memory into the proper context of part of the speech rather than a primary focus. Students must remember the arguments they made, the rhetorical devices they chose to employ, the in-depth analysis they created from the references they consulted, any clever word play they came up with, and so forth. Memory is not merely about memorizing specific words and phrases, but is also about being able to recall analogies or historical facts to support an argument, and about being able to relate experiences and ideas to the current situation, and thus is related to Kairos. Requiring notecards thus does NOT truncate memory from the experience of extemproaneous speaking, but shifts the focus on memory from the memorization of discrete facts, probably useful only in a particular situation, and toward the recall of broader themes, theories, and situations into which a particular prompt falls.

The question then becomes, “should we as coaches be using a rule change as a counter-normative device?” McCann (2002) establishes that competitive norms definitely prevent competitors from “being all they can be,” so something must be done to counter norms. While he does not argue for a rule change, he does argue that coaches use the mechanism of the prompt to allow competitors a chance to challenge the norms of the event. In other words, it is certainly
appropriate for coaches to take steps to counter norms. While the Negative claims that requiring notecards restricts students’ performative choices, we routinely force students to make performative choices by requiring the use of script in oral interpretation events, because we believe that the nature of oral interpretation requires such a paradigm. If we believe that some form of notes is necessary for students to ethically cite sources, then it is certainly appropriate to restrict performative choices.

If we believe, as the Affirmative firmly does, that competitive norms privilege those who do not use notes, and we accept that a lack of notes is more likely to lead to accidental misattribution then the presence of notes, we must conclude that requiring limited notes is beneficial for our students. The Negative responds with a counter-proposal, which by itself does not solve the problem of accidental misattribution, and which can be implemented in conjunction with the Affirmative’s stance, and thus does not provide direct clash with the resolution. We could, after all, require students to use notes while speaking and then leave the notecard in the rooms for audience member perusal.

Ultimately, we as forensics educators must choose which aspects of communication we emphasize in each event. In every event, we should choose to stress ethical communication. In the event of extemporaneous speaking, we should be emphasizing those elements which best fit the role of the event, which does not include the rote memorization of facts or entire speech segments. Requiring all students to use notes provides them with a tool to engage in ethical, well-constructed communication without forcing them to choose to use such a tool at the expense of competitiveness.


**Neg:** May I have a copy of the unpublished Master’s Thesis to review?
It is available in print form from NDSU’s library. I do not have a copy of it. I read excerpts from it two decades ago, as I was one of the people referenced in it, and references to it can be found in the following scholarly articles, which jogged my memory of it. (http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED447556.pdf Shafer’s article in http://www.mnsu.edu/cmst/dsr-tka/vol%2042_2005.pdf)

Plato (1997) was famously wary of the written word. He feared that locking ideas in text would sacrifice the development of rhetorical skills – particularly memory. While the affirmative asserts that notes would not lead to Plato’s fears, they themselves argue, “the lessened emphasis on memory … creates the opportunity for competitors to engage in more inventive analysis, organization, and style” (Aff, 2016, p. XX). Privileging some cannons above others – particularly invention/analysis – is a profoundly unethical move, diminishing our students’ capacities to develop as advocates, scholars of rhetoric, and humans. Before my defense of memory against mandatory notes, I first refute the central arguments of the second affirmative constructive.

**Extemp is not Broken and the Affirmative Cannot Fix it**

Towards the end of second constructive, the affirmative collapses their advocacy to two harms – competitive inequity and misattribution. The first is unproven and notes cannot solve the second.

Initially, the affirmative maintains that current system is unrealistic and breeds competitive inequity. It is unrefuted that for the last 15 years, students have consistently done well using notes. Without actual inequity, the question turns to perception. I agree the perception of competitive advantage exists, but that onto itself does not warrant changing rules. Instead, we must evaluate the non-competitive costs of not requiring notes.

Here, the affirmative provides one harm, predicated on two premises. (1) Memory forces tradeoffs and (2) this leads to misattribution. Recalling my argument that a trained memory could handle ten data points in a matter of seconds, the tradeoff is minimal at best. Now the affirmative contends that these are highly trained minds, but any student could develop these skills outside prep time. Attribution errors do not happen because of tradeoffs, but because there is no disincentive to limit errors. If we demand more of our students, they will live up to our expectations – overcoming these tradeoffs.
Further, notes cannot solve misattribution. Two examples highlight this. First, studies such as Cronn-Mills and Schnoor’s (2003) demonstrate that misattribution is ubiquitous in the prepared events. If these students misattribute despite functionally limitless prep-time, limited time is not the issue. This means there is no reason to believe that notes will notably decrease misattribution.

Second, I turn to this debate as an example. The affirmative relies heavily on Markstrom’s thesis to prove misattribution. This document is not available online and could not arrive via interlibrary loan within the debate’s timeframe. Therefore, I requested a copy from the affirmative. During this exchange, the affirmative revealed they had not directly referenced it. Instead, they recalled the information from “[reading] excerpts from it two decades ago” (aff, 2016 p. xx) and from Schafer (2005) and Wheler (2009). Because the source was not directly referenced, its uses in both constructives are misattributions. The affirmative should have cited the Markstrom as presented in Schafer as one his cited authors did (Wehler, 2009).

This misattribution was not malicious, nor do I doubt the accuracy of the affirmative’s recollection. However, if a professional coach, with multiple degrees, and over a week of prep time can make such an error, misattribution will continue in extemp regardless of notes. Further, this misattribution did not limit the flow or depth of the debate. As long as the ideas are good, there is little cost to an accidental error.

This demonstrates that only the counterplan can solve any potential harm of misattribution. Asking the affirmative to provide sources revealed the mistaken attribution. If provided, it would have added to the educational experience by adding deeper context. Moreover, I am sure the affirmative will be more careful with citation in the future, creating an incentive for accuracy lacking in the affirmative proposal.

**Rhetoric is Five Cannons, Not Three**

Considering there is no competitive imbalance and that the affirmative cannot solve misattribution, the only argument the affirmative retains is the tradeoff between memory and analysis. The affirmative’s logic – quoted in my intro – creates a double bind. Either they do not limit memory (which they claim) or notes create a tradeoff under which invention/organization/arrangement (argument) are privileged over memory/delivery (performance). Let us evaluate each half in turn.

Initially, the affirmative claims that memory is far more than discrete facts. I agree, however this means that potential tradeoff will happen regardless of the need to memorize sources. Moreover, the affirmative argues the memorization of sources has little worth. However, source memorization offers two unique advantages. First, my argument that memorizing sources improves information use is unrefuted. Notes are read then discarded, but memorized sources are linked not only with the larger speech, but global issues, and personal identity. Beardsworth
argues that the copy paste attitude enabled by simple memory technologies prevents the internalization that connects individuals to society in a way that facilitates political action.

Second, quickly memorizing specific data is a useful skill required for jobs, good relationships, and social awareness. Nowhere else in forensics can students develop this skill, so we must keep extemp as its training ground.

Second, the affirmative’s valuation of argument over performance is dangerous. The affirmative only explicitly identifies the tradeoff between memory and argument. However, not only do they exclude delivery from the cannons they defend, but it is undeniable that notes distract from delivery. Regardless of the other events, the affirmative’s proposal would enhance the attitude that argument should be privileged above delivery/memory. Further, the cannons can and should not be separated in any event. Performance helps make arguments and makes arguments onto itself (e.g. establishing ethos). The affirmative mindset would transform extemp from an exercise in rhetoric, the foundation of forensics (Rosenthal, 1985), to an exercise in argument independent of performance. Such privileging of reason promotes a rationalist worldview that silences those who communicate outside Eurocentric definitions of argumentation – notably women and minorities (Fraser, 1989). We should do our best to promote all cannons in order to ensure that all types of students and communication styles can exist within the event.

Unrefuted Concerns

Beyond memory, the disadvantages to the proposal go largely conceded. The affirmative’s only response to the denial of choice is that other events – primarily interp – also do this. First, that does not intrinsically make it a good idea. Second, the book has deep roots in disciplinary identity and performance theory – the affirmative has failed to provide similar proof that prioritizing notes justifies limiting critical decision-making. The status quo and the counterplan develop students who do not just give accurate speeches, but who critically evaluate and adapt to every round.

Second, mandatory notes disadvantage physically and neurologically atypical students. Near infinite preparation in other events allows for developing performance, however time restriction in extemp increases the burden on these students while providing no clear advantage.

Conclusion

Aristotle famously defined rhetoric as “the available means of persuasion” (Aristotle, 1991, I.ii.1). Yet the affirmative redefines that to “some means of persuasion available some people.” They advocate this change while demonstrating neither clear harms nor the propensity to solve those issues. Only the negative offers a vision of rhetorical education that is compressive, inclusive and ethical.
References


Negative Rebuttal: Jon Carter

Pontificating on the importance of memory for constructing better arguments and developing masterful rhetors, Cicero (1942) tells the story of Simonides of Čeos. Simonides, a famous poet, was renowned for using the method of loci to develop a strong memory. One day Scopas, a wealthy merchant, invited Simonides to a dinner party. During the dinner, a messenger called Simonides outside, at which point the roof collapsed. Because Simonides recalled where everyone was sitting, officials were able to identify bodies and arrange proper funerals. Cicero uses this story to illustrate memory’s importance to orderly and informed arguments which enable the search for truth.

This narrative highlights key themes in this debate. Our students can learn memory, the accuracy of memory is in people not notes, and this skill is important in the development of well-rounded students. Developing memory is not some feat of outstanding or exceptional individuals, but rather an ordinary average capacity that all students can develop (Cicero, 1942, 2.74.299). Considering the educational, argumentative, and ethical advantages of encouraging this ordinary skill, we must encourage students’ cultivation of these critical faculties. Moreover, forcing students to use notes is not does not prevent misattribution, but is potentially discriminatory. For these reasons, we must reject the affirmative’s call for mandatory notes. In
this final essay, I will focus on two themes, the failure of the affirmative to develop a substantial case for required notes and the significant harms of such a mandate.

**A Deficit of Significance and Solvency**

Initially, the affirmative has not established a significant harm to the *status quo*, nor shown the propensity of notes to solve either incidental or intentional misattribution. Competitively, there is no inequity due to note usage. Additionally, the prevalence of misattribution in memorized speeches, as well as the incidental citational error by the affirmative (an instructor and speech coach) proves that student notes use will not prevent misattribution. Moreover, as this debate testifies, incidental misattribution has no significant pedagogical cost.

Second, memorization need not come at the cost of analysis. Not only can this skill be learned to minimize prep time used, but both Cicero (1942) and Beardsworth (2013) remind us that memorization fosters learning, rhetorical skill, and socially nuanced arguments. Only the negative counter-proposal offers any incentive to avoid misattribution while fostering increased engagement with source material. In the face of no significant harm, nor a propensity to solve stated problems, there is no reason to affirm the resolution.

**Memory, Judgment, Equality**

However, making notecards mandatory also incurs great costs. Memory is a central part of the rhetorical tradition, and is imperative to the development of quality orators, scholars, and citizens. As a community dedicated to these goals, we would be remiss if we adopted any proposal that actually or symbolically discouraged the use, development, and study of this canon.

Additionally, the *status quo* creates better conditions for developing students’ critical judgment. It demands students make choices about how much time to dedicate to memorization, as well as how to adapt to different judges and their varied opinions on note use. Without mandatory notes, students must make critical judgments and weigh costs and benefits in a way unmatched by the affirmative proposal. As educators, it is our ethical responsibility to maximize the situations that require students to evaluate self and situation to make informed decisions.

Finally, as a community that prides itself on inclusion, we cannot ignore the exclusionary pressures created by mandating notes. In the *status quo*, students can prepare in whatever manner best suits their learning style. Beyond pedagogical benefits, this ensures extemp does not exclude students for whom the production or use of notes may be difficult, time consuming, or impossible. As such, mandating notes would be ethically disastrous. It punishes students simply because they are neurologically, psychologically, or physically atypical.

**A Return to the Rhetorical Tradition**

Cicero (1942) concludes his musings on Simonides by asserting, “nor yet is anybody so dull-witted that habitual practice in [memory] will not give him [sic] some assistance” (2.87.357). While aggressive in tone and archaic in language, he reminds us that memory is a tool that all have the capacity to develop. To demand our students use notes is either to sell them and their potential short or to accuse them of deliberate falsification. As educators, we must not
allow our students to strive for less than their greatest potential. Only the negative provides the opportunity for our students to become the rhetors, scholars, and humans they have the capacity to be.


The Negative reveals a fundamental flaw in 2NC. By calling for us to not privilege one canon, they imply all canons must be treated equally, in each event. Obviously, this is not what the forensics community believes, or there would only be one competitive event. We cannot treat all canons as exactly equal. That’s unrealistic. To call any prioritization of criteria “profoundly unethical” insults judges who have identified one element of a performance as the deciding criterion. Arguing that all canons are equal puts our students in a terrible predicament if they use a notecard in either the status quo or the counter-proposal. They would privilege accuracy over delivery.

The simple fact is norms privilege students without a notecard. We must conclude requiring notecard use is a good policy.

First, widespread norms privilege students without notecards. The Negative argues that Extemp is not broken because some students have done well using notecards. Affirmative’s argument that the no-notecard-norm holds sway in many areas goes unrefuted. Clearly there is “actual inequity.”

Negative, argues that privileging memory by rewarding students who don’t use a notecard creates a minimal tradeoff. The tradeoff is only minimal if the competitor has the innate predisposition to benefit from memory training. Again, this means coaches choose to make memory a litmus test of good extemporaneous speaking and disadvantage students without this talent. By agreeing that a tradeoff exists, the Negative is privileging one part of the canon over another, something they describe as “profoundly unethical.” If tradeoffs exist, someone is privileging one thing above another.

The Negative argues that using simple memory techniques prevents students from making broader connections. However, all the techniques used by excellent memorizers prevent making broader connections! From years of teaching mathematics, I argue that students who quickly
memorize a myriad of discrete facts for a test quickly forget those facts and often do not understand the deeper meaning behind those facts.

The Negative urges us to promote all canons. Under the Affirmative plan, Memory is promoted, a point the Negative has not refuted (students remember their argument and how everything ties together). Furthermore, the Negative does not explain why using notes detracts more from delivery than spending prep-time memorizing rather than practicing delivery. A student who doesn’t memorize a dozen sources has more time to analyze a question, arrange arguments, and include stylistic devices. Finally, the Affirmative’s proposal allows a student to privilege Memory by memorizing everything and glancing at the notecard occasionally, as many Interpers do. The Affirmative’s plan allows for greater agency by students.

Misattribution: The Negative claims notes won’t solve the problem, and points out what they believe to be an Affirmative misattribution. I argue first, that there is no reason to believe that notes will not notably decrease misattribution. Furthermore, coaches can now focus on the other causes of misattribution, such as ignorance of procedure; rather than coaching memory techniques.

Regarding the supposed misattribution on the Affirmative’s side, I must disagree. Reading other articles prompted me to remember reading the original article, and I remembered more than just what was in Schafer or Wheler’s article. Thus, citing “Markstrom as presented in xxxx” would have been worse than misattribution; it would have been factually incorrect. If notes are required but misattribution occurs, we know it wasn’t because of Memory, but was some other misunderstanding. Thus we are in a better position to teach concepts of research and citation. In this case, both sides know the source attribution was not subject to the vagaries of Memory, and could discuss that issue.

Finally, the Negative says the Affirmative’s proposal uniquely disadvantages some students. Affirmative grants that some students would find preparing a notecard difficult for biological reasons, but some students would also struggle under the counterplan. Thus, the Negative’s argument is nonunique, and does not need unique refutation. In fact, under the Affirmative’s plan, students who struggle to write notes only need to write notes for themselves; under the counterplan, the student must write notes someone else can read.

If students wish to develop their memory in a competitive way they should compete in the World Memory Championships. In forensics, we teach a roughly balanced set of rhetorical skills. As we have failed to alter competitive norms regarding speaking from notes in extemp, we must alter the rules so students have a more level playing field – one that does not force them to choose between competitive norms and proper citation. Requiring students to use notecards in extemporaneous speeches provides the level playing field.
In the end the ballot is cast by the readers of the Issue Debate. Whether you find yourself casting siding with the Affirmative or the Negative our goal is that your position is more informed as a result of reading this debate. Our thanks to both the Affirmative and the Negative for their contributions.