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Contemporary Argumentation and Debate is published annually by the Cross Examination Debate Association. The purpose of this Journal is to provide a variety of perspectives on the theory and practice of argumentation and debate. Articles published in this Journal reflect only the opinion of their authors and in no way represent the opinions of the Association, its officers, or the editors of this Journal.
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International Appeal in the Presidential Inaugural: An Update on a Genre and an Expansion of Argument

Elizabeth Dudash
Missouri State University

International elements of inaugurals serve as indicators of the values adhered to by the office of the presidency and set up premises for arguments that justify international action in the four years following the speech.

Menstruation Discrimination: The Menstrual Taboo as a Rhetorical Function of Discourse in the National and International Advancement of Women’s Rights

Erika M. Thomas
Wayne State University

Western institutions have endorsed arguments and campaigns that attempt to end non-Western menstrual taboos and advance women in the public sphere. The “discourses of equality” may reify the modern American menstrual taboo and risks the continued marginalization of Western and non-Western menstruating women in the public sphere.

The Uses of History: Deliberative Analogy and Victor Davis Hanson

Sarah Spring
University of Iowa

A common trope in political discourse is the use of history as legitimation. The classics in particular have been used as a model and bellwether. A unique example of classical analogy is found in the work of Victor Davis Hanson. Hanson garners legitimation from his position of authority as a classical scholar, functionally shutting down debate on his positions.

Book Review


James P. Dimock
University of Minnesota-Mankato

Call for Manuscripts
By definition, debate coaches are contentious and the history of modern debate has been marked by an inter-play of collegiality and competition (Bruschke, 2004, p. 82). However, modern debate has amped up natural levels of antagonism so that it now exists in a clash between one group that employs an argumentative style heavily centered on evidence and speed against another that seeks to criticize the form and style of these debates. Debates between the two factions are frequently conceived as a clash of civilizations (Solt, 2004, p. 44).

Rhetoric from both sides often reaches a fever pitch. Tim O’Donnell of Mary Washington University’s judging philosophy says that, “[r]ight now…there is a war going on…and the very future of policy debate as an educationally and competitively coherent activity hangs in the balance” (2008). The other side of the coin is equally forthright. Asha Cerian offered in her judge philosophy “to vote on Ks [kritiks] and alternative forms of debate. And that’s it” (2007). Similarly, Andy Ellis has posted a series of you-tube videos to e-debate calling for a more radical approach. In one video entitled “Unifying the opposition,” Ellis describes debate as a war and calls for insurgents seeking to overthrow existing debate practices (Ellis, 2008b).

While these views are extreme, long-time observers have noted changes in the tone and tenor of debate discussions. Jeff Parcher observed that the fragmentation of the 2004 National Debate Tournament “seemed viscerally different” than previous disputes (2004, p. 89). These disagreements seem highly
personalized and “wrought with frustrations, anxiety, resistance, and backlash” (Zompetti, 2004, p. 27). One coach noted that the difference between the current era of factionalization and controversies of the past is that, “no one left counter-warrant debates in tears.”

Much of the controversy involves the resolution itself, and whether teams should have to defend the resolution, or whether they can mount a broader criticism of the activity (Snider, 2003). Steve Woods notes that, “Academic debate is now entering a third state, a critical turn in the activity. The identifying element of this change is that abandonment of the role playing that the construct of fiat enabled” (Woods, 2003, p. 87).

This journal previously (2004) addressed issues regarding the growing divide in policy debate. However, the role of the debate resolution in the clash of civilizations was largely ignored. Here, I defend the notion that activist approaches of critical debaters can best flourish if grounded in topical advocacy defined in terms of the resolution. This approach encourages the pedagogical benefits of debates about discourse and representations while preserving the educational advantages of switch-side debate.

Debaters’ increased reliance on speech act and performativity theory in debates generates a need to step back and re-conceptualize the false dilemma of the “policy only” or “kritik only” perspective. Policy debate’s theoretical foundations should find root in an overarching theory of debate that incorporates both policy and critical exchanges. Here, I will seek to conceptualize debate as a dialogue, following the theoretical foundations of Mikhail Bakhtin (1990) and Star Muir (1993) that connects the benefits of dialogical modes of argument to competitive debate. Ideally, the resolution should function to negotiate traditional and activist approaches.

Taking the resolution as an invitation to a dialogue about a particular set of ideas would preserve the affirmative team’s obligation to uphold the debate resolution. At the same time, this approach licenses debaters to argue both discursive and performative advantages. While this view is
broader than many policy teams would like, and certainly more limited than many critical teams would prefer, this approach captures the advantages of both modes of debate while maintaining the stable axis point of argumentation for a full clash of ideas around these values.

Here, I begin with an introduction to the dialogic model, which I will relate to the history of switch-side debate and the current controversy. Then, I will defend my conception of debate as a dialogical exchange. Finally, I will answer potential criticisms to the debate as a dialogue construct.

Setting the Argumentative Table: Conceptualizing Debate as a Dialogue

Conceiving debate as a dialogue exposes a means of bridging the divide between the policy community and the kritik community. Here I will distinguish between formal argument and dialogue.

While formal argument centers on the demands of informal and formal logic as a mechanism of mediation, dialogue tends to focus on the relational aspects of an interaction. As such, it emphasizes the give-and-take process of negotiation. Consequently, dialogue emphasizes outcomes related to agreement or consensus rather than propositional correctness (Mendelson & Lindeman, 2000).

As dialogue, the affirmative case constitutes a discursive act that anticipates a discursive response. The consequent interplay does not seek to establish a propositional truth, but seeks to initiate an in-depth dialogue between the debate participants. Such an approach would have little use for rigid rules of logic or argument, such as stock issues or fallacy theory, except to the point where the participants agreed that these were functional approaches. Instead, a dialogic approach encourages evaluations of affirmative cases relative to their performative benefits, or whether or not the case is a valuable speech act. The move away from formal logic structure toward a dialogical conversation model allows for a broader perspective regarding the ontological status of debate.
At the same time, a dialogical approach challenges the ways that many teams argue speech act and performance theory in debates. Because there are a range of ways that performative oriented teams argue their cases, there is little consensus regarding the status of topicality. While some take topicality as a central challenge to creating performance-based debates, many argue that topicality is wholly irrelevant to the debate, contending that the requirement that a critical affirmative be topical silences creativity and oppositional approaches. However, if we move beyond viewing debate as an ontologically independent monologue—but as an invitation to dialogue, our attention must move from the ontology of the affirmative case to a consideration of the case in light of exigent opposition (Farrell, 1985). Thus, the initial speech act of the affirmative team sets the stage for an emergent response. While most responses deal directly with the affirmative case, Farrell notes that they may also deal with metacommunication regarding the process of negotiation. In this way, we may conceptualize the affirmative’s goal in creating a “germ of a response” (Bakhtin, 1990) whose completeness bears on the possibility of all subsequent utterances.

Conceived as a dialogue, the affirmative speech act anticipates the negative response. A failure to adequately encourage, or anticipate a response deprives the negative speech act and the emergent dialogue of the capacity for a complete inquiry. Such violations short circuit the dialogue and undermine the potential for an emerging dialogue to gain significance (either within the debate community or as translated to forums outside of the activity). Here, the dialogical model performs as a fairness model, contending that the affirmative speech act, be it policy oriented, critical, or performative in nature, must adhere to normative restrictions to achieve its maximum competitive and ontological potential.

This is not new. The notion of affirmative restrictions harkens back to the old controversies over switch-side debate, when proponents argued that debaters be required to argue against their own personal convictions in favor of topics they personally opposed, while opponents contended that debaters should never
betray their personal convictions. Darin Hicks and Ronald Greene (2000) call this stance “rhetoric of commitment.” Initially, formats that require debaters to speak against their own personal convictions were considered unethical by opponents of switch-side debate. Defenders countered with an Aristotelian ethic that asked debaters to learn their positions from all sides.

Current controversies replay elements of debates regarding switching sides. The primary addition to the discussion regards the role of speech acts and performance. Affirmative teams often defend their advocacy in the context of a larger critical project, often claiming that the benefits of their project supersede localized fairness norms so that topicality and other procedurals are outweighed. This approach powerfully challenges requirements that affirmatives be topical.

**Defending Debate as a Dialogue**

After having examined the current state of debate and the impetus for a change to a dialogical model, this section will defend three benefits to re-conceptualizing debate in a dialogic manner. First, unfettered affirmative options deny argumentative space to negative teams who become unable to meaningfully present a counter speech act to the affirmative speech act. Second, by placing a single immutable claim at the center of all debates on both sides of the topic as part of a greater project, debaters deny themselves, their opponents, and the judges the benefits of understanding the unique dynamics of contingent claims. Third, maintaining stable advocacy through both sides and on all topics, regardless of the resolution, prevents students from seriously engaging their perspective from any other position. This essay argues that re-conceptualizing fairness norms like topicality into a dialogue model will help to void these problems while licensing critical styles and modes of argumentation.

**Setting a Table: Fairness Norms as a Pre-Requisite for Argumentation**

Debate as a dialogue sets an argumentative table, where all parties receive a relatively fair opportunity to voice their
position. Anything that fails to allow participants to have their position articulated denies one side of the argumentative table a fair hearing. The affirmative side is set by the topic and fairness requirements. While affirmative teams have recently resisted affirming the topic, in fact, the topic selection process is rigorous, taking the relative ground of each topic as its central point of departure.

Setting the affirmative reciprocally sets the negative. The negative crafts approaches to the topic consistent with affirmative demands. The negative crafts disadvantages, counter-plans, and critical arguments premised on the arguments that the topic allows for the affirmative team. According to fairness norms, each side sits at a relatively balanced argumentative table.

When one side takes more than its share, competitive equity suffers. However, it also undermines the respect due to the other involved in the dialogue. When one side excludes the other, it fundamentally denies the personhood of the other participant (Ehninger, 1970, p. 110). A pedagogy of debate as dialogue takes this respect as a fundamental component. A desire to be fair is a fundamental condition of a dialogue that takes the form of a demand for equality of voice. Far from being a banal request for links to a disadvantage, fairness is a demand for respect, a demand to be heard, a demand that a voice backed by literally months upon months of preparation, research, and critical thinking not be silenced.

Affirmative cases that suspend basic fairness norms operate to exclude particular negative strategies. Unprepared, one side comes to the argumentative table unable to meaningfully participate in a dialogue. They are unable to “understand what ‘went on…’” and are left to the whims of time and power (Farrell, 1985, p. 114). Hugh Duncan furthers this line of reasoning:

Opponents not only tolerate but honor and respect each other because in doing so they enhance their own chances of thinking better and reaching sound decisions. Opposition is necessary because it sharpens thought in action. We assume that argument, discussion, and talk, among free an informed people who subordinate
themselves to rules of discussion, are the best ways to decisions of any kind, because it is only through such discussion that we reach agreement which binds us to a common cause...If we are to be equal...relationships among equals must find expression in many formal and informal institutions (Duncan, 1993, p. 196-197).

Debate compensates for the exigencies of the world by offering a framework that maintains equality for the sake of the conversation (Farrell, 1985, p. 114).

For example, an affirmative case on the 2007-2008 college topic might defend neither state nor international action in the Middle East, and yet claim to be germane to the topic in some way. The case essentially denies the arguments that state action is oppressive or that actions in the international arena are philosophically or pragmatically suspect. Instead of allowing for the dialogue to be modified by the interchange of the affirmative case and the negative response, the affirmative subverts any meaningful role to the negative team, preventing them from offering effective “counter-word” and undermining the value of a meaningful exchange of speech acts. Germaneness and other substitutes for topical action do not accrue the dialogical benefits of topical advocacy.

A Siren’s Call: Falsely Presuming Epistemic Benefits

In addition to the basic equity norm, dismissing the idea that debaters defend the affirmative side of the topic encourages advocates to falsely value affirmative speech acts in the absence of a negative response. There may be several detrimental consequences that go unrealized in a debate where the affirmative case and plan are not topical. Without ground, debaters may fall prey to a siren’s call, a belief that certain critical ideals and concepts are axiological, existing beyond doubt without scrutiny.

Bakhtin contends that in dialogical exchanges “the greater the number and weight” of counter-words, the deeper and more substantial our understanding will be (Bakhtin, 1990). The matching of the word to the counter-word should be embraced by proponents of critical activism in the activity, because these
dialogical exchanges allow for improvements and modifications in critical arguments.

Muir argues that “debate puts students into greater contact with the real world by forcing them to read a great deal of information” (1993, p. 285). He continues, “[t]he constant consumption of material…is significantly constitutive. The information grounds the issues under discussion, and the process shapes the relationship of the citizen to the public arena” (p. 285). Through the process of comprehensive understanding, debate serves both as a laboratory and a constitutive arena. Ideas find and lose adherents. Ideas that were once considered beneficial are modified, changed, researched again, and sometimes discarded altogether.

A central argument for open deliberation is that it encourages a superior consensus to situations where one side is silenced. Christopher Peters contends, “The theory holds that antithesis ultimately produces a better consensus, that the clash of differing, even opposing interests and ideas in the process of decision making…creates decisions that are better for having been subjected to this trial by fire” (1997, p. 336).

The combination of a competitive format and the necessity to take points of view that one does not already agree with combines to create a unique educational experience for all participants. Those that eschew the value of such experience by an axiological position short-circuit the benefits of the educational exchange for themselves, their opponents, as well as the judges and observers of such debates.

The Devil’s Advocate: Advancing Activism by Learning Potential Weaknesses

Willingness to argue against what one believes helps the advocate understand the strengths and weaknesses of their own position. It opens the potential for a new synthesis of material that is superior to the first (Dybvig & Iverson, 2000). Serving as a devil’s advocate encourages an appreciation for middle ground and nuance (Dell, 1958). Failure to see both sides can lead to high levels of ego involvement and dogmatism (Hicks & Greene, 2000).
Survey data confirms these conclusions. Star Muir found that debaters become more tolerant after learning to debate both sides of an issue (Muir, 1993).

Such tolerance is predictable since debate is firmly grounded in respect for the other through the creation of a fair dialogue. Ironically, opponents of a debate as dialogue risk falling prey to dogmatism and the requisite failure to respect potential middle grounds. Perceiving the world through the lens of contingency and probability can be beneficial to real-world activism when its goal is creating consensus out of competing interests. The anti-oppression messages of critical teams would benefit from a thorough investigation of such claims, and not merely an untested axiological assumption.

**Answering Criticisms to the Debate as Dialogue Model**

There are several well-worn answers to the argument that affirmatives should defend the topic. First, requiring debaters to defend the topic would require debaters to say something they do not believe, which is unfair to the debater and unethical as a practice. Second, advocates argue that there is “other ground” available to the negative team, and thus the requirement that the affirmative team defend the topic is ultimately unnecessary. Finally, they argue that the topic process produces topics that are not meaningful or accessible to a diverse set of debaters.

**Falsely Comparing Debate with Public Speaking**

The argument that debaters should not argue in favor of ideas that they do not believe treats debate as with a normal public speaking event. This controversy was discussed thoroughly in various speech journals throughout the 1950s and 1960s, with most authors coming to the conclusion that debate is a unique public speaking event, where participants and observers disassociate the debater from their role.

Richard Murphy lays out the case that students should not be forced to say something they do not believe, a concept quite similar to modern-day advocates of the notion that affirmatives should not have to defend the topic (1957; 1963). Murphy
contends, “The argument against debating both sides is very simple and consistent. Debate...is a form of public speaking. A public statement is a public commitment” (1957, p. 2). Murphy believed students should discuss and research an issue until they understood their position on the issue and then take the stand and defend only that side of the proposition. Murphy’s fear was that students risk becoming a “weather vane,” having “character only when the wind is not blowing” (1963, p. 246).

In contrast, Nicholas Cripe distinguished between speaking and debating (1957, p. 210). Cripe contended that, unlike a public speaker, a debater is “not trying to convince the judges, or his opponents” of the argument but merely to illustrate that their team has done the superior debating (p. 211). Debating in this sense exists with an obligation to give each position its best defense, in much the way an attorney does for a client. Here, the process of defending a position for the purposes of debate is distinct from their advocacy for a cause in a larger sense. As such, they are like Socrates in the Phaedrus, speaking with their heads covered so as not to anger the gods (Murphy 1957, p. 3).

Additionally, debate is unlike public speaking since it happens almost always in a private setting. There are several distinctions. First, very few people watch individual contest rounds. The vast majority of such rounds take place with five people in the room—the four debaters, and the lone judge. Even elimination rounds with the largest audiences have no more than approximately one hundred observers, almost all of whom are debaters. Rarely do people outside the community watch debates. Also, debate has developed a set of norms and procedures quite unlike public speaking. While some indict these norms (Warner 2003), the rapid rate of speed and heavy reliance on evidence distinguishes debate from public speaking. Our activity is more like the closed debating society that Murphy admits can be judged by “pedagogical, rather than ethical, standards” (1957, p. 7).

When debates do occur that target the general public (public debates on campus for example), moderators are careful to explain that debaters may be playing devil’s advocate. Such statements prevent confusion regarding whether or not a debater
speaks in a role or from personal conviction. While speaking from conviction is a political act, speaking in accordance with a role is a pedagogical one (Klopf & McCroskey, 1964, p. 37).

However, this does not mean that debaters are victims. The sophistication of modern argument and the range of strategic choices available to modern debaters allow them to choose positions that are consistent with their belief structures. The rise of plan-inclusive counterplans, kritiks, and other strategies allow negative teams to largely align themselves with agreeable affirmative cases while distinguishing away narrow slivers of arguments that allow debaters to rarely argue completely against their convictions. While some contend that this undermines the value of switch-side debate (Ellis, 2008b; Shanahan, 2004), in fact, the notion that debaters employ nuanced answers to debate topics illustrates the complexity of modern debate resolutions.

Those who worry that competitive academic debate will cause debaters to lose their convictions, as Greene and Hicks do in their 2005 article, confuse the cart with the horse. Conviction is not a priori to discussion, it flows from it. A. Craig Baird argued, “Sound conviction depends upon a thorough understanding of the controversial problem under consideration (1955, p. 5). Debate encourages rigorous training and scrutiny of arguments before debaters declare themselves an advocate for a given cause. Debate creates an ethical obligation to interrogate ideas from a neutral position so that they may be freely chosen subsequently.

A second reason to reject the topic has to do with its exclusivity. Many teams argue that because topicality and other fairness constraints prevent particular speech acts, debaters are denied a meaningful voice in the debate process. Advocates argue that because the negative excludes a particular affirmative performance that they have also precluded the affirmative team.

The problem with this line of reasoning is that it views exclusion as a unitary act of definitional power. However, a dialogical perspective allows us to see power flowing both ways. A large range of affirmative cases necessitates fewer negative strategies that are relevant to the range of such cases. If the affirmative can present any case it desires, the benefits of the
research, preparation, and in-depth thinking that go into the creation of negative strategies are diminished, if not eviscerated entirely. The affirmative case is obliged to invite a negative response.

In addition, even when the negative strategy is not entirely excluded, any strategy that diminishes argumentative depth and quality diminishes the quality of in-round dialogue. An affirmative speech act that flagrantly violates debate fairness norms and claims that the benefits of the affirmative act supersede the need for such guidelines has the potential of excluding a meaningful negative response, and undermines the pedagogical benefits of the in-round dialogue. The “germ of a response” (Bakhtin, 1990) is stunted.

While affirmative teams often accuse the negative of using a juridical rule to exclude them, the affirmative also relies upon an unstated rule to exclude the negative response. This unstated but understood rule is that the negative speech act must serve to negate the affirmative act. Thus, affirmative teams often exclude an entire range of negative arguments, including arguments designed to challenge the hegemony, domination, and oppression inherent in topical approaches to the resolution. Becoming more than just a ritualistic tag-line of “fairness, education, time skew, voting issue,” fairness exists in the implicit right to be heard in a meaningful way. Ground is just that—a ground to stand on, a ground to speak from, a ground by which to meaningfully contribute to an ongoing conversation.

Conversely, in a dialogical exchange, debaters come to realize the positions other than their own have value, and that reasonable minds can disagree on controversial issues. This respect encourages debaters to modify and adapt their own positions on critical issues without the threat of being labeled a hypocrite. The conceptualization of debate as a dialogue allows challenges to take place from a wide variety of perspectives. By offering a stable referent the affirmative must uphold, the negative can choose to engage the affirmative on the widest possible array of “counter-words,” enhancing the pedagogical process produced by debate.
Additionally, debate benefits activism by exposing the participants to a wide range of points of view on topics of public importance. A debater starting their career in the fall of 2005 would have debated about China, landmark Supreme Court decisions, Middle East policy, and agricultural policy. It is unsurprising that many debaters contend that debate is one of the most educationally valuable experiences of their lives.

Thus, the unique distinctions between debate and public speaking allow debaters the opportunity to learn about a wide range of issues from multiple perspectives. This allows debaters to formulate their own opinions about controversial subjects through an in-depth process of research and testing of ideas. Putting the cart before the horse by assuming that one knows that the resolution is oppressive and cannot be meaningfully affirmed denies debaters the ability to craft a nuanced answer to the question posed by the resolution.

“Some Ground” is Not Resolutinal Ground

The central claim to this essay is that debate works best when it is dialogic and the topic is an invitation to participate. There are three pedagogical benefits to conceptualizing the resolution as an invitation. First, all teams have equal access to the resolution. Second, teams spend the entire year preparing approaches for and against the resolution. Finally, the resolution represents a community consensus of worthwhile and equitably debatable topics rooted in a collective history and experience of debate.

First, teams have equal access to the resolution. The problem with relying upon prior disclosure, case lists, and word of mouth is that access is often tied to opportunity and resources. While it is true that there has been a phenomenal upsurge in the availability of case list access through technology, it is still the case that the resolution provides the most equal and fair access for all teams concerned. Each school in the community knows the wording of the resolution, even if they are not aware of the modifications made to any particular case.
The notion that the negative team can rely upon the benevolence of the affirmative to provide strategic options radically tilts the argumentative table in favor of the affirmative. Providing the resolution as a baseline test operates as a demand for the negative’s approach to the topic to be heard. Instead of leaving the affirmative in complete control of what approaches to the topic the negative is allowed to argue, debate as a dialogue uses the resolution as a centerpiece of a demand to be heard.

Second, teams spend the entire year preparing approaches for and against the resolution. The best debates often come from in-depth clash over a core area of the topic. It is not uncommon for debaters to spend between forty and sixty hours a week on debate, carefully refining their approaches to the topic.

A common rejoinder is that debaters should think on their feet, and be prepared to debate against unusual affirmative cases and plans. While thinking on one’s feet is certainly valuable, allowing one side to think on their feet with the benefit of research, prior preparation, coaching, and thinking through arguments in advance, while depriving the other side of all such benefits hardly seems like a strategy that will result in a productive dialogue. Thinking on one’s feet is always framed by one’s past thoughts, arguments, and research base.

Instead, debates are best when both sides have the opportunity to think ahead to the range of choices that the affirmative team can provide to the resolution. While there may always be some ground for the negative to respond to the affirmative team, that ground should stem from the resolution in order to maximize the benefits of the dialogical exchange which competitive debate allows.

Finally, there has been a concerted community effort to ensure that the resolution provides subjects of controversy that are controversial, balanced, and anticipate a nuanced approach. Ross Smith notes, “Affirmative teams try to find what they think might be a slam dunk case, but in crafting resolutions the idea is to find a controversial area with ground for both sides” (2000).

The resolution is the result of a painstaking process; it is thoroughly discussed, debated, and ultimately submitted to the
debate community for a vote. It is framed, ultimately, as an issue about which reasonable minds could differ. Reliance upon alternative systems, such as germaneness, lists of ground provided by the other side in the debate, or the fact that a team has run a case in the past, betrays the central point of having a dialogue about the resolution and undermines the consensus upon which the whole enterprise depends.

And while there are obviously some valid complaints about individual topics, as a whole, resolutions allow for a wide range of approaches to issues of the day. It is striking on the 2008-2009 resolution that conservative groups like the Heritage Foundation and the CATO Institute as well as Oxfam and the Sierra Club oppose agricultural subsidies, if for very different reasons. Teams could easily find evidence that subsidies go down a rat-hole, are counter-productive to free market economics, as well as arguing that subsidies entrench racism both domestically and globally, and prevent an ethic of care toward the global environment. Those that argue that the topic does not access issues relevant to a wide variety of special interests and minority groups may simply be asking for too much.

Establishing the resolution as the bright line standard for evaluation of equity at the argumentative table allows all sides to the controversy access to formulating their approach to both sides of the topic question.

**Topics are Carefully Worded and Vetted**

Several argue that contemporary topics focus on subject matter of limited interest to minority students. Ede Warner contends that topics which “directly affect” the lives of those interested in social justice struggles are more likely to find acceptance than topics “of lesser direct relevance to their lives” (2003, p. 71). The consequence of these topics, as Beth Skinner alleges, is to leave minority students likely to “opt out of the topic altogether” (Skinner, 2008).

At the same time, allowing for an “opt out” clause any time anyone is unhappy with the topic undoes the benefits of learning about a wide variety of subject matter and the benefits of
being a devil’s advocate. It also undermines the benefits of engaging in dialogue. Debaters obviously have individual preferences and variations in what they enjoy researching, and not every topic will be to their liking. They also have multiple years in the activity to learn about a wide variety of subjects. The topics one debates throughout their time in the activity serve as an academic curriculum, creating a broad base of knowledge by the time one graduates.

Furthermore, students are actively encouraged to write topic papers and advocate for particular causes. Both the 2006-2007 resolution on Middle East policy and the 2007-2008 resolution on agricultural support policy were co-written by students. The choice of agricultural subsidies over topics like Russia and arms control may give hope to individuals who feel that topics are too uni-dimensional.

Finally, study of records at national tournaments indicates that the topic committee has done a pretty good job balancing ground. According to Jon Bruschke’s statistical compilations at debateresults, over the last several years, affirmative and negative win percentages have been very close to comparable. Whether this is because debate tends to reward the team that does the better debating, or because the topics are fairly evenly balanced, the notion that topics are so bad that affirmative teams have no choice but to flee from the discussion is not supported by the competitive data.

**Conclusion**

Conceiving debate as a dialogue instead of a more rigid and formalistic dialectical mode of argument offers a means of incorporating a discursive exchange of ideas on both policy and critical concepts. Certain limits to debate are necessary. The debate as dialogue model rejects a policy only model while providing for the opportunity for a thorough exchange of ideas over emerging rhetorical and performative styles. While hardly a panacea, the notion of debate as a dialogue allows for argumentative clash over emerging academic controversies.
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*Dr. Ryan Galloway is an Assistant Professor and the Director of Debate at Samford University.*
A FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN MAYORAL DEBATES

William L. Benoit, Jayne R. Henson, and Sheila Maltos

University of Missouri

Introduction

Political campaign debates have a long history in the United States. Perhaps the best known political debates from America’s past are the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Although these two politicians would subsequently contest for the presidency, their famous debates occurred in the campaign to be the U.S. Senator from Illinois. The earliest presidential debate on record is a radio debate in 1948 between Dewey and Stassen in the Oregon primary campaign (Kane, 1987). The earliest televised non-presidential debate featured Lucia Cormier and Margaret Chase Smith in a 1960 contest for a U.S. Senate seat (Sarkela, 2005). In recent years, presidential primary debates have proliferated, with 22 debates in 2000 (9 Democratic and 13 Republican; Benoit et al., 2003), 21 Democratic debates in 2004 (Benoit et al., 2007). As of April of 2008, 47 presidential primary debates had been held, with 3 presidential and 1 vice presidential debate scheduled. However, debates for other political offices have also become a staple of campaigns in recent years.

Debates by definition address propositions, so it can be argued that political campaign debates resemble press conferences more than traditional debates (Auer, 1962; Jamieson & Birdsell, 1988; Zarefsky, 1992). Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that these messages are important for several reasons. First, campaign debates usually include leading candidates addressing the same topics simultaneously on the same stage, helping potential voters learn about the candidates before they make their vote choice. Furthermore, political campaign debates are as long as 90 minutes,
offering viewers an opportunity to compare the candidates and their position in some depth, particularly in contrast to TV spots (which are usually 30 seconds long) and news stories. Third, candidates typically prepare for their debates; still, that they are relatively unscripted requires that candidates be spontaneous. They may face unexpected questions or be the target of unanticipated attacks from opponents. Accordingly, debates provide a relatively more candid view of the candidates than other message forms. Fourth, the face-to-face confrontation which occurs in political debates gives candidates a chance to challenge the accidental or intentional misstatements of their opponents. This clash has the potential to provide citizens greater insights into the issues at play in an election.

Yet another reason to study political debates is the potential for influence. Louden (2005) observed that “the occurrence of presidential to non-presidential debates is overwhelmingly in favor of state and local debates. Virtually every U.S. senate contest and governor’s race, in addition to many congressional elections, will feature political debates” (p. 41). Furthermore, Ornstein (1987) noted “the impact of debates is heightened because they are frequently televised on both commercial and public channels. . . Nearly 50% of the stations actually aired political debates” (p. 58). The Racine Group (2002) observed that “while journalists and scholars display varying degrees of cynicism about the debates, few deny that viewers find them useful and almost no one doubts that they play an important role in national campaigns” (p. 201), concluding that “There is strong empirical support for the contribution of televised debates to viewer learning” (p. 207) and that “debates do influence viewer perceptions and, as a consequence, influence voting disposition” (p. 209). Meta-analysis reveals that presidential debates have important effects on voters, creating issue knowledge, influencing perceptions of the candidates’ character, and at times altering vote choice (Benoit, Hansen, & Verser, 2003). These encounters provide an opportunity for interested voters to learn about the candidates (both directly and via press reports); they also provide a
chance for candidates to present and clarify their platforms—as well as to alter the direction of their campaign if needed.

Research on the effects of non-presidential campaign debates is much less common than studies of presidential debate effects. Still, some studies indicate that these encounters also have the potential to influence viewers. Philport and Balon (1975) looked at the 1974 Democratic Ohio Senate primary contest between John Glenn and Howard Metzenbaum, reporting that Glenn’s image had been influenced by the debate. Lichtenstein (1982) found that “local debates were perceived as considerably more informative and influential to the viewers than the presidential debates” (p. 294). Just, Crigler, and Wallach (1990) argued that those who watched a Connecticut House debate in 1984 learned about candidate issue positions. Bystrom, Roper, Gobetz, Massey, and Veal (1991) argued that watching a 1990 Oklahoma gubernatorial debate affected perceptions of the candidates’ images and issue positions and, particularly for undecided viewers, assisted in the decision-making process. Hullett and Louden (1998) found that those who watched a 1994 Congressional debate recalled more statements from their preferred candidate. Robertson (2005) found that 2004 Senate debates in South Dakota influenced viewer vote choice, perceptions of the candidates’ character, and preferences for candidate policy positions. So, non-presidential debates have the potential to influence viewers. Unquestionably, political debates merit scholarly attention; this paper focuses on debates for the office of mayor.

Most research on campaign debates has focused on presidential debates, as Louden noted, despite the fact that there are many more non-presidential than presidential debates, published research is tilted in the opposite direction, “with presidential encounters capturing nearly all the attention” (p. 41). In fact, McKinney and Carlin (2004) lament the “lack of research on non-presidential debates,” particularly given how frequently they occur (p. 226). Pfau (1983) investigated format in non-presidential debates. Ornstein (1987) presents a conceptual discussion of non-presidential debates instead of research on
debate content or effects. Conrad concluded a rhetorical analysis of narrative form in the 1984 Helms-Hunt Senate debate (1993). Airne and Benoit (2005) examined the 2004 Senate debates between Obama and Keyes: 59% of the statements were acclaims, 37% were attacks, and 4% were defenses; policy was discussed more often than character (65% to 35%). Banwart and McKinney (2005) studied two U.S. senate and two gubernatorial debates from 2000 and 2002, reporting that positive comments (79%) and policy discussion (82%) dominated these encounters. These studies are a useful beginning, but the sample of debates, candidates, and years is still very small.

This study presents a content analysis of mayoral debates. Some research (e.g., Banwart & McKinney, 2005; Johnson, 1996) suggests that certain features of debates could vary by political office, one reason to extend current research on political debates to the office of mayor. This study adopts the Functional approach to studying campaign messages (Benoit, 2007). This is only one possible approach to studying these debates; however, applying this theory allows us to extend existing research to a new context, mayoral debates. Furthermore, we argue that replication is vital to the research process in order to provide more confidence in our conclusions (Rosenthal, 1991). As Lamal (1991) explained, replication is “necessary because our knowledge is corrigible” (p. 31). Thus, we extend current research applying Functional Theory (Benoit, 2007) to mayoral debates.

Theoretical Approach

Benoit’s (2007) Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse will provide the theoretical framework used in this study. Political campaign messages have three functions: acclaims, which praise the candidate; attacks, which attack the opponent; and defenses, which refute attacks. Of course, third party candidates and some candidates in primary campaigns may run merely to champion a cause; Functional Theory focuses on candidates who are genuinely seeking elective office. Such candidates need to convince voters that they are preferable to opponents and preferability can only be established by indicating that one is
desirable (acclaims), that an opponent is undesirable (attacks), or that alleged weaknesses are false (defenses).

Campaign messages can concern two pertinent topics: policy (governmental action and problems amenable to governmental action) and character (the qualities and abilities of the candidates). Examples of policy topics include employment, health care, crime, and education. Each of these topics is divided further. Policy utterances can focus on past deeds (governmental action), future plans (specific proposals for governmental action), and general goals (ends sought by the candidates). Character statements can concern personal qualities (personality), leadership ability (governmental experience), or ideals (values and principles). For example, character utterances include questions about whether a candidate can be trusted or has the experience needed to govern successfully. The Appendix offers an example of an attack and an acclaim on each of these forms of policy and character taken from a mayoral debate.

In his Functional Theory, Benoit (2007) argues that acclaims have no drawbacks whereas attacks have one drawback and defenses have three. Voters report that they dislike mudslinging (Merritt, 1984; Stewart, 1975), so there could be backlash against candidates who attack. Because one must identify the attack to refute it, defenses can (1) remind or inform viewers of a potential weakness of the defender, (2) create the impression that the defending candidate was reactive rather than proactive, (3) take a candidate off-message, discussing his or her weaknesses rather than strengths. For these reasons, the functions should be ordered generally in this way (it is possible that some individual candidates will choose not to conform to these expectations):

**H1. Acclaims will be the most frequently expressed function, and defenses the least frequent, in mayoral debates.**

Incumbents have numerous advantages over challengers (such as greater name recognition, fund-raising ability, experience; see Trent & Friedenberg, 2000; Trent & Trent, 1995). Accordingly, challengers usually need to provide voters a reason to
oust the incumbent and the way to reduce a candidate’s apparent desirability is through attacks.

**H2. Incumbents will acclaim more, and attack less, than challengers (or open seat candidates) in mayoral debates.**

It is important that only incumbents have a record in the office sought; challengers may have experience in other offices, but challengers rarely have experience as mayor. An incumbent’s record can be expected to contain both successes and failures, so the incumbent’s record is a resource for incumbents to acclaim and for challengers to attack (of course, incumbents sometimes attack the challenger’s record and sometimes challengers acclaim their own record—but these two kinds of remarks occur less frequently than discussions of the incumbent’s record by incumbent and challenger alike).

**H3. Incumbents will use past deeds more to acclaim—and less to attack—than challengers in mayoral debates.**

Voters at both the presidential (Benoit, 2003) and congressional level (Brazeal & Benoit, 2001) report that policy is a more important determinant of their vote than is character. Although it is possible that this preference may not be occur in mayoral debates, it is reasonable to assume that:

**H4. Policy will be discussed more than character in mayoral debates.**

Research using Functional Theory (e.g., Benoit, 2007) found that acclaims are more common than attacks in both general goals and ideals. It is much easier to agree with (acclaim) than to disagree with (attack) many goals and ideals, such as creating more jobs or the importance of equality.

**H5. General goals will be used more to acclaim than attack in mayoral debates.**

**H6. Ideals will be used more to acclaim than attack in mayoral debates.**

Testing these hypotheses with mayoral debates will add to our understanding of political debates.
Method

Statements by the candidates in these debates were unitized into themes, which are claims, statements, or arguments (a sentence may contain one or more themes; a theme could also span more than one sentence). Berelson (1952) indicated that a theme is “an assertion about a subject” (p. 18). Holsti (1969) defines a theme as “a single assertion about some subject” (p. 116). For example, in the New York City mayoral debate, Michael Bloomberg suggested that we should “continue to make sure that every child gets a good education. If we continue the course of making sure that this city is safe, safe from criminals and safe from terrorism” (11/1/05). This remark illustrates three themes: education, crime, and terrorism.

Each theme was then classified by function (acclaim, attack, or defense), topic (policy or character), and then form of policy (past deed, future plan, or general goal) or of character (personal quality, leadership ability, or ideal). We also noted the incumbency status (incumbent, challenger, open seat) of these candidates. Because this method generates frequency data, chi-squares were employed to test the hypotheses.

Three coders, who were trained in the coding system, content analyzed these texts. Intercoder reliability for these debates, calculated on 10% of the texts, was measured with Cohen’s (1960) kappa. The values of kappa were .94 for functions, .91 for topics, .87 for forms of policy, and .85 for forms of character. Landis and Koch (1977) explain that kappas of .81 or higher reflect almost perfect agreement between coders, so these values represent acceptable reliability.

Sample

There is no complete collection of non-presidential debates from which one can randomly select debates for analysis. So, of necessity, we employed a convenience sample of debates with transcripts located on the Internet. This sample consisted of ten mayoral debates held between 2005 and 2007, two from primary campaigns and eight from general election campaigns. Cities varied in population from about 19,000 to over 8 million (Brookfield, WI; Frederick, MI; Laurel, MS; New Orleans, LA;
New York City, NY; Pittsburgh, PA; San Francisco, CA; Waukesha, WI). The sample included 28 candidates (candidates who participated in both primary and general debates were only counted once) and all but six were affiliated with the Democratic or Republican parties.

Results

The first hypothesis concerned the relative proportions of the three functions of political campaigns in mayoral debate discourse. As predicted, acclaims were most common (75%), followed by attacks (18%) and defenses (7%). For example, in the Pittsburgh mayoral debate, Luke Ravenstahl declared that “The city of Pittsburgh and the Housing Authority recently merged their police departments. [It] saved our city taxpayers money [and] provided more efficient service” (10/11/07). Given that saving money and increasing efficiency are likely to be viewed as desirable, this statement functions as an acclaim. In the same debate, Mark DeSantis charged that “Right now, the city is a fiscal basket case. We have more debt per capita than any city in the country.” Debt is probably seen as undesirable, so this statement illustrates an attack. Ravenstahl responded to this accusation by stating that “I just want to clarify that this city will not go bankrupt in the next two or three years,” illustrating a defense. A chi-square goodness of fit test confirms that this distribution is significantly different from chance ($\chi^2 [df=2] =1356.52, p < .0001$). These data can be found in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions of Mayoral Debates</th>
<th>Acclaims</th>
<th>Attacks</th>
<th>Defenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incumbents</td>
<td>318 (76%)</td>
<td>28 (7%)</td>
<td>74 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challengers</td>
<td>334 (71%)</td>
<td>123 (26%)</td>
<td>13 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Seat</td>
<td>352 (89%)</td>
<td>30 (8%)</td>
<td>12 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Mayoral</td>
<td>1285 (75%)</td>
<td>326 (19%)</td>
<td>113 (7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: row percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.
Hypothesis two expected that incumbent candidates would acclaim more, and attacks less, than challengers. This was confirmed with these data: Incumbents acclaimed more (76% to 71%) and attacked less (7% to 26%) than challengers (the table includes data from open seat candidates even though no prediction is made for that group). A chi-square test of cross classification revealed that these differences were statistically significant ($\chi^2 [df =1] =45.69, p < .0001, \phi=.24$). These data are also reported in Table 1.

Next, we probed for potential differences in function between incumbents and challengers. H3 focuses on past deeds (accomplishments or failures in office). The prediction that incumbents will employ past deeds to acclaim more, and attack less, than challengers, was confirmed. 94% of the incumbents’ past deeds were acclaims whereas 6% were attacks; in contrast, 28% of challengers’ past deeds were acclaims and 72% were attacks. Challenger Mark DeSantis’s attack on the incumbent’s fiscal record is an example of an attack on past deeds; incumbent Rafenstahl’s statement about merger of the city and Housing Authority police departments illustrates an acclaim on past deeds. A chi-square test of cross classification confirmed that these differences were significant ($\chi^2 [df =1] =94.74, p < .0001, \phi=.69$). These data are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of Policy and Character in Mayoral Debates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Deeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Seat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
H4 anticipated that the comments in these debates would focus more on policy than character. This was indeed the case: Policy accounted for 70% of the themes in these debates, whereas character was 30%. In the Pittsburgh debate (10/11/07), DeSantis said that “my micro-loan program will provide loans from $500 to $5,000 to small businesses and the people who will choose the loan won’t be a banker, it will be the peers of that individual trying to seek that loan. And they won’t need collateral, they won’t a credit check. This program has worked in Philadelphia; it has worked in other cities as well. It has worked in cities around the world, and it can work here.” A proposal to loan money to small businesses is a clearly example of a policy utterance. In contrast, Ravenstahl declared that “The residents of the city of Pittsburgh need a mayor that’s a leader. They need a mayor that is willing to make the tough decisions.” This statement illustrates a character utterance. These differences were significant ($\chi^2 [df=1] = 263.88, p < .0001$). See Table 3 for these data.

Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Character</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incumbents</td>
<td>372 (83%)</td>
<td>75 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challengers</td>
<td>301 (66%)</td>
<td>156 (34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Seat</td>
<td>252 (66%)</td>
<td>130 (34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Mayoral</td>
<td>1132 (70%)</td>
<td>479 (30%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fifth hypothesis concerned the functions of general goals. As anticipated, this form of policy was employed more often to acclaim than attack (97% to 3%). A chi-square goodness of fit test indicates that the functions of general goals occur at significantly different frequencies ($\chi^2 [df=1] = 5.22, p < .05$). The final hypothesis addressed the functions of ideals. Again, this form of character was used more frequently as the basis of acclaims than attacks (92% to 8%). A goodness of fit test shows that these
differences are significant \( \chi^2 [df = 1] = 52.22, p < .0001 \). These data can be found in Table 2.

**Discussion**

Mayoral debates, as a whole, use acclaims more often than attacks and defenses least often (acclaims 75%, attacks 19%, defenses 7%). As explained previously, acclaims have no drawbacks, attacks have one (voters’ aversion to mudslinging), and defenses have three disadvantages (a defense could inform or remind the audience of a weakness, they may create the impression that the candidate is reactive rather than proactive, and they may take a candidate off-message). This distribution of functions conforms generally to the pattern found in presidential general election debates: 57% acclaims, 35% attacks, and 8% defenses (Benoit, 2007).

Candidates who are seeking re-election were prone to acclaim more, and attack less, than challengers. This may be due in part to the fact that challengers often need to give voters a reason to reject the incumbent. This pattern was consistent with that found in presidential general election debates: Incumbents acclaimed more (64% to 51%) and attacked less (25% to 44%) than challengers (Benoit, 2007). One unusual element of these data is that mayoral incumbents defended more than they attacked; however, incumbents were subjected to many more attacks than challengers, which provide greater motivation and more opportunity for incumbents to defend than challengers. Another reason for the disparity in use of functions by incumbents and challengers can be found in the candidates’ use of past deeds. Although challengers may have experience in another office, no experience elsewhere is as relevant to the election as experience in the office sought. Accordingly, both incumbents and challengers have a tendency to discuss the incumbent’s record. Obviously, incumbents will acclaim when talking about their record whereas challengers will attack when discussing the incumbent’s record. This was the case in mayoral debates; it was also the pattern in presidential debates. Incumbents acclaimed more (72% to 18%) and attacked less (28% to 82%) than challengers when discussing
past deeds (Benoit, 2007). The effect size here was quite large: $\varphi = .69$.

Candidates in mayoral debates focused more on policy than character. Although we have no data on voter preferences in mayoral elections specifically, polls on presidential (Benoit, 2003) and congressional (Brazeal & Benoit, 2001) indicate that most voters in those races consider policy more important than character. Presidential debates also stress policy more than character (75% to 25%; Benoit, 2007).

Candidates face an easier task when acclaiming than attacking most goals and ideals. Who could oppose more jobs, less crime, justice, or freedom? The candidates in these mayoral debates were more likely to use general goals and ideals to acclaim than attack (general goals: 97% acclaims, 3% attacks; ideals: 92% acclaims, 8% attacks). This relationship was true of general election debates (general goals: 85% acclaims, 15% attacks; ideals: 82% acclaims, 18% attacks; Benoit, 2007).

**Conclusion**

Political election campaign debates for offices at all levels of government are becoming more common as time passes. This study contributes to our understanding of certain aspects of these campaign events, analyzing the functions and topics of mayoral debates. The results of this analysis, along with findings from previous research on presidential debates, reveals consistent relationships in campaign debate messages (e.g., functions, incumbency, and topics) across campaign office. Indeed, analysis of political leaders’ debates in other countries reveals similar patterns (Benoit & Klyukovski, 2006; Benoit & Sheafer, 2006; Benoit, Wen, & Yu, 2007). These findings suggest that some aspects of political campaign messages, such as functions and topics of messages, remain constant across contexts. To the extent such consistency exists (and we do not claim there are no contextual differences), it makes researching and teaching campaign messages simpler. The nature of the political campaign situation—competing with opponents to win elective office—encourages candidates for political office to adopt similar message
strategies. Clearly other variables and other political campaign messages deserve scholarly attention, but we are building our knowledge of such messages through research. Further research could investigate political debates for other offices, such as governor and senator, as well as more recent debates.
Appendix: Examples of Acclaims and Attacks on the Forms of Policy and Character

Forms of Policy

Past Deeds
Acclaim: We have given our teachers a 33% raise over the last four years (Bloomberg)
Attack: Look, it’s a 50% drop out rate. One out of two kids without a diploma, without a future, and without a job. (Ferrer)

Future Plans
Acclaim: In the case of avian flu, [we must] have enough vaccine stockpiled so that we can take care of New Yorkers. (Ferrer)
Attack: Why are there secret memos emerging about the city guaranteeing to... give this developer 2,600 units of luxury housing. By the way with tax breaks from the city. (Ferrer)

General Goals
Acclaim: We need to replace office space and commercial space. (Ferrer)
Attack: He wants to build affordable housing and so do I. The difference is I have a way to do it with capital funds; he is going to have to do it with raising taxes. (Bloomberg)

Forms of Character

Personal Qualities
Acclaim: I want my children to look at me and say, “Daddy, you governed honestly. You governed fairly.” (Bloomberg)
Attack: I think everyone knows what my opponent stands for: He stands for complaining. (Bloomberg)

Leadership Ability
Acclaim: [The mayor of New York City has] a bully pulpit second in size and mass only to the
president of the United States. That’s leadership. (Ferrer)

Attack: I don’t think you can approach this [getting education money from the state] as a CEO in a negotiation by putting zero on the table and waiting for them to come up. (Ferrer)

Ideals

Acclaim: There is only one principle that has ever guided any decision I have ever made: That is this - that every New Yorker who works hard and does right should get the tools they need to build a better life here in the city. (Ferrer)

Attack: You can’t disclaim for the policies while you are opening your checkbook wide. . . Mike..., you are a [conservative] Republican. (Ferrer)

(Excerpts from the November 1, 2005 New York City mayoral debate)
References


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*Dr. William L. Benoit is Professor of Communication at University of Missouri, Jayne R. Henson is a Doctoral student at University of Missouri, and Sheila M. Maltos graduated in International Studies, Missouri*
ARGUMENTATION AND THE INTERNATIONAL PROBLEM OF GENOCIDE

Ben Voth, Southern Methodist University & Aaron Noland, James Madison University

In the summers of 2006 and 2007 I (Ben) had the unique opportunity and responsibility of working with Holocaust survivors at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Our common task was to sharpen the arguments survivors could make against the rhetorical visions that led to the tragedy of the Holocaust and to bolster public resistance to such contemporary crimes apparent incidents such as Rwanda, the Congo, and Darfur. Those workshops left with me with the indelible impression that argumentation scholars can do more to lift the stain of genocide from the fabric of human existence. This CAD Forum is dedicated to that belief and is a continuation of a theme that emerged in a personal way for me from the work on genocide. It is a theme expressed by noted Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel: What hurts the victim most is not the cruelty of the oppressor, but the silence of the bystander (Kristof 2006).

If this special edition only draws attention to the concerns of international humanity and the manner in which silence provides public space for injustice, it will have value to mitigate the prolonged and deep suffering of genocide. Among these ideas are: 1) a notion of "discursive complexity" allowing us to study
communication as a normative alternative to violence, 2) a heightened rhetorical sense of the authors of genocide—the genocidaire, 3) a critique of sovereignty vis-à-vis the interests of human individuals. In reviewing these three concepts, I hope to establish useful starting points for argumentation and communication scholars to help turn the bloody page of the twentieth century from one of death as a text toward our new century seeing life as a text.

The Problem of Genocide

The definition of genocide has largely centered on the UN document defining the process as a deliberate extermination of an ethnic group. Newton and Scharf provide the classic definition when reviewing the trial of Saddam Hussein:

*Genocide: The intentional destruction of a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, in whole or in part. The definition of genocide in the IHT statute is taken essentially word for word from the 1948 Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. It has been described by judges as the crime of crimes and is arguably, the most severe of the categories of crimes within the jurisdiction of the tribunal. Genocide is in many ways an extreme from of the crime against humanity of persecution, to which it is closely related.* (254).

Though the definition is its own important area of argument and debate, it is not the focus here. The daunting reality, however one defines genocides, is that upwards of 170 million people have been exterminated in genocidal slaughters since the beginning of the 20th century. A cursory review of major genocides is worthwhile:

- Armenian genocide: 1.5 million
- Holocaust: 10 million
- Stalinist purge of Ukraine: 10 million
- Mao's purges of China: 20 million
- Cambodia–Pol Pot: 2 million
- Kurds of Iraq–Hussein: 300,000
- Rwanda–Hutus: 1 million
Genocide has been four times as deadly as war. The vulnerability of largely unarmed civilians against military armed combatants makes the moral heartbreak of this violence even more incomprehensible. The ongoing genocides in places such as Darfur and Congo raise questions as to whether argumentation scholars as members of any intellectual movement, can make a difference (Tisdall 2009, Sudan: Progress 2008). Believing that silence is a primary part of the problem, this essay argues for making a difference.

The Discursive Limits of Genocide

The inevitability of genocide is arguably a function of an international legal system bounded by a pre-eminence of sovereignty for states over and against the sovereignty of human individuals. The current privilege of states rights, like the American era that struggled with civil rights of the 1960s, obviates our discourse of community regarding the present victims of genocide. Ultimately, the young white northern outsiders of Michael Schwerner and Goodman had to join the indigenous James Chaney in the human struggle against regimes of violence bolstered by states rights in order to disrupt the institutional violence of the South. Until the nation began to empathize with the struggles of individual civil rights activists in the South, it was not possible to overcome the blockade of states rights rhetoric that protected Jim Crowe practices.

Ethnic tensions like those in the civil rights era of the United States permeate the entire globe. Without dedicated activism and critique, the progress of human dignity will be slowed and the stubborn hold of intimidating violence will remain. With that in mind, three criteria can be recognized from a communication and argumentation standpoint to improve the human condition globally: 1) a moral notion of discursive...
complexity, 2) a heightened rhetorical sense of the perpetrators of genocide, and 3) a broad critique of state sovereignty vis-à-vis the human individual.

**Discursive Complexity**

Discursive complexity can be defined and recognized as the capacity of an individual or group to allow and encourage dissent. Furthermore, discursive complexity is a principle recognizing the value of various expressed viewpoints. Contrast this with discursive simplicity whereby an individual or group demands or insists upon a limited capacity of expression. Argumentation inherently valorizes discursive complexity by emphasizing the study and teaching of contrasting and competing ideas. Discursive complexity represents a moral point of view since we can prefer individuals and groups that make greater provision for free expression. Such environments encourage critical thinking and diminish the expectation and need for violence.

Discursive complexity can be a tool for moral judgment. In reviewing ethnic disputes globally, it is possible to assess and review how competing powers practice free expression. Powers that allow free expression ought to be preferred in disputes and powers that limit free expression should be pressured to allow greater capacities to question authorities about the use of power.

A recent incident involving Andrea Mitchell reporting in Sudan is illustrative. After a public press conference regarding genocide in the nation, Mitchell sought to follow government entities into a meeting among various public figures. Sudanese government officials grabbed her and forcibly removed her from the meeting. Mitchell protested her treatment and demanded to be present (Mitchell 2005). The Sudanese officials responded: "This is not America where you have press freedom. You will not be in this meeting." The silencing and repression of inquiry by the Sudanese government is an admission that their larger policies surrounding important questions such as Darfur are morally illegitimate. Bashir's government of Sudan cannot allow inquiry about its policies. This is an indication of discursive simplicity.
Drawing from this example, interested parties reviewing genocide claims should take into account the discursive complexity of competing agents. For instance, in a dispute between Russia and Georgia, which side seems more open to public inquiry about the dispute? It does seem that in South Ossetia that Russia had established a propaganda state wherein the operation of a free press was impossible (Kucera 2008). This distinction should modify our judgment of potentially equal states fighting one another.

The potential use of discursive complexity was apparent in the trial of Saddam Hussein in 2006. In the trial, defense attorneys argued rather artfully that Hussein's violence was justifiable, coming in response to known assassination threats coming from a small town in Iraq. According to the defense, the violence was no different than that of American soldiers in Fallujah acting in their own defense. According to Newton and Scharf, the prosecution won their case but failed to highlight the absence of trials for the accused when Saddam summarily killed 600 residents of the town, including children, in a show of force that gave no recourse to residents in the way of trial or appeal (2008). The absence of discursive complexity differentiates the behavior of the Iraqi sovereign and offers a measure of moral clarity.

The Genocidaire

Only the French seem to have a term for the perpetrators of genocide: the Genocidaire. This linguistic limitation is significant since from a Burkean standpoint, it limits our capacity to understand the agent and the act. The habit of viewing genocides as a scenic feature is detrimental to the victims and our capacity to seek justice. Media coverage tends to emphasize the place of genocide rather than the agents and agency. Tragedies in Sudan and Rwanda leave us more familiar with the place than the crime (Kanuma 2009; Sudan: Darfur suffers 2009; UN warned 2009). This scene/agency ratio creates the public impression that genocide is endemic to certain parts of the world. Africa will always be this way. We cannot change Somalia, Rwanda, and Sudan. This is the way of Africa. The reduction of human actions to geographical motion is a selection and therefore deflects reality (Burke 1968).
Individuals have chosen to give orders to kill. Individuals have taken arms in response to arguments for the purpose of carrying out genocides. It is possible to communicate with reference to agents and agency and re-establish the agent/scene ratio (Burke 1969).

This distinction is vital to the operation of international law. Establishing motive and action remains a critical distinction in the prosecution of genocide as a crime. So long as perpetrators can rely upon communication patterns emphasizing the scene, they will know that identification will be limited and the risk of prosecution low.

The difficult struggle over naming the Sudanese violence came to an abrupt end in 2003 when U.S. Secretary of State said in public to the U.S. Congress that the violence in Sudan constituted genocide." In an instant, the scene/act ratio became act/scene. The world saw an argument that the government of Sudan was committing genocide. This public argument stood in contrast to the State department's careful avoidance of the term during the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Power 2002; Tisdall 2009).

A consistent pattern of communicating about violence as instigated and caused rather than serially inevitable will convert motion back into action. The genocides in Africa do not arise out of the soil or elements of the continent. The genocides there and around the world are the consequences of public arguments made to individuals who then carry out the crimes—whether in Cambodia, Kosovo, Rwanda, Iraq, or Turkey.

Communication and argumentation scholars can identify proponents of genocide. Individuals can be named and the rhetoric they employ can be critiqued. This should displace the pedestrian 'place is violent' pattern which encourages students of the global public sphere to believe nothing can change.

**The State versus Individual**

A final remedy from the communication sphere regarding genocide is building of a broad critique of state's rights. Building on the analogy of civil rights, critics can ask questions about state sovereignty and the privilege of killing domestic civilians accorded
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to state leaders. The peculiar intensity of this privilege in places such as North Korea and Zimbabwe should draw critical attention. International law presently provides privilege to states over individuals (Elden 2006; UN Alleges 2008; de Waal 2008). Interference in state's rights internationally is construed as an act of war and leaves individuals without refuge from brutal violations of their humanity. The boundaries drawn by colonial powers become the lines of a discursive prison wherein an individual's humanity becomes profoundly contingent upon the wishes of the state.

A difficult issue in this discussion is an understanding of the differences between war and genocide. When military personnel from one sovereign engage in combat with military personnel from another sovereign, this is war. When military personnel or state sponsored militias attack and kill their own domestic populations, this is genocide. There is a difference and that difference is profoundly moral. The civic power position of civilians is inherently limited compared to military personnel. Discursive complexity in civilian/military relations is thus low. The capacity to resist and disagree with militarized states is marginal. Consequently, our moral outrage regarding genocide must exceed our moral outrage surrounding war. At present, it is difficult to discern that global moral sense—even among academic and international experts.

The dramatic reduction of state to state violence suggests that the world does perceive the state as more valuable than the individual. A broad critique of this preference should be supported by communication scholars due to intrinsic limits genocide imposes on public expression for the attacked population.

Conclusion
From the pervasiveness of global violence such as genocide, it is easy to draw a sense of inevitability. Human beings will always kill one another. This truism calls us to accept it as mere motion. Argumentation and communication scholars are better equipped than most experts to understand that humans rarely kill in random ways. They are motivated by words. Their actions are shaped by public arguments that establish the reasons for the Kill. The simple
and persistent creation of human scapegoats—while common—is not inevitable. Human beings can reconsider and advocates can suggest alternatives. We can resist and overcome that thing which hurts the victim of genocide most: silence. Each of the essays in this forum focuses on practical means for strengthening the public sphere surrounding human injustice.

References


*Dr. Ben Voth is an Associate Professor of Communication and Director of Forensics at Southern Methodist University and. Aaron Noland is a lecturer at James Madison University*
INTERNATIONAL APPEAL IN THE PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURAL: AN UPDATE ON GENRE AND AN EXPANSION OF ARGUMENT

Elizabeth Dudash, Missouri State University

The inaugural can be viewed as an introduction to a rhetorical period brought on by new leadership in the office of the presidency. Each presidential inaugural is subject to interpretation based on the era in which it occurred, the passing of time, or the specific rhetorical situation (Bitzer, 1983). Attempting to understand rhetoric based on its unique time period has limitations but can be enlightening. Nonetheless, trends over time and comparisons and contrasts of similar rhetorical events can be lost when only a specific situation is examined. Conversely, a close examination of trends without respect for the specific constraints of a situation may deform our understanding of trends (Ryan, 1993).

In terms of presidential inaugurals, this forced choice between examining trends or speeches in specific situations has limited critics’ ability to fully understand the evolutional changes in types of rhetoric. Specific complaints about the study of presidential inaugurals as a category of rhetoric range from arguments that inaugurals do not constitute their own group (Ryan, 1993), to a critique that the categorization is incomplete (Sigelman, 1996), to a failure to acknowledge that the trends within the category of presidential inaugurals and the unique rhetorical situations can be addressed simultaneously (Lim, 2002).

There are ways of viewing and analyzing trends and specific situations of rhetorical acts which suggest that the limitation of generic criticism is overstated, and that an examination of similar rhetorical acts over time requires a specific critical eye towards allowing those acts to evolve or change. In addition, genre criticism is not dead or lacking in utility, but rather critics’ adherence to strict generic interpretations have led to more
debate about the method of criticism than about the rhetorical act itself. In fact, generic criticism may function as a useful short cut for critics that allows for more in-depth analysis of specific rhetorical situations. One component that accounts for both the unique situation and the trends of the inaugurals is that of Presidential arguments regarding American global interests. Since the rhetorical situation is based on the audience and the audience has changed with increased media and global issues in the twentieth and twenty first century, the inaugural has adapted. How the country is constructed and how the office of the presidency is upheld in the inaugural has shifted and so must the critic’s eye in reviewing these arguments in the public sphere.

Beasley (2001) introduced a new way of viewing in inaugurals. First, Beasley suggests that there is a link between American ideals and American identity and that Presidential Inaugurals provide a solid textual base for this analysis. Second, she argues that the president “must find ways of breathing life into these abstractions to make them compelling to the American people” because this is the enactment of the office and a reconstitution of the people (p. 174). Finally, Beasley (2001) treats the inaugural addresses as group or category, justifying the study of inaugurals as a genre of speech. It is with these three points that a study of the genre of the inaugural is warranted and, in part, the reason the identity of the people should be examined in terms of the international stage. As Beasley (2001) states, “The speech itself demands it; party divisions must be healed, some level of nonpartisanship must be affirmed, and international audiences and exigencies must be addressed as well” (p. 175).

If Beasley is correct that the ideals of the American people as defined by the Inaugural Address builds the identity of the people, then newly elected presidents should consider the international community in their inaugural addresses. The critic must consider how international issues play a part in the inaugural to build this identity. Most presidential inaugurals have included some element of the international community and those elements have been largely ignored in inaugural speech studies. In order to consider trends in presidential inaugurals (genre), specific
rhetorical situations, the evolutilon changes in time reflected in speeches and other rhetorical elements, this analysis finds that in addition to upholding the office of the presidency, inaugurals are also used to address the international community. The maintenance of the office of the president—particularly in its inception requires an examination of the arguments made to constitute the president as an international entity rather than a solely domestic leader.

**Literature Review**

A generic analysis is an inductive categorization system used to group seemingly similar texts and analyze their shared elements. Campbell and Jamieson (1990) state that the presidential inaugural address is composed of five main elements: Reuniting the country and reconstituting them as “the people” (p. 17); “Reaffirming traditional values” (p. 19); “Setting forth the principles of the office” (p. 20); “Recognizing limits on Presidential power” (p. 24); and achieving all of these in epideictic address. Speeches in which one or more of these elements are missing, or not addressed completely, suggest one of two things; Either the speech was not a successful and complete inaugural, or specific situational constraints prevented the use of an element or suggested different rhetorical strategies.

There are problems with genre theory. Ryan (1993) argues that genre theory “hinders more than it helps” (p. xvii) because it requires the critic to examine the text with certain assumptions already in place about the elements which are deemed to be important. He also argues that the inaugural address should not be considered epideictic or ceremonial oratory, but rather deliberative. Finally, he argues that twentieth century presidential rhetoric is different from traditional presidential rhetoric and therefore the genre is limited. Joslyn (1986) points out that all presidential inaugurals do not meet the requirements set forth by Campbell and Jamieson thereby suggesting that the genre may be bad. Sigelman (1996) states that, “Over time, presidents have become more and more likely to employ language that is accessible to the masses, have invoked more and more unity symbols, and have done more to establish links with traditional
American values” (p. 90). Sigelman’s suggestion that the genre can change does not suggest that the theory and method are useless. However, in acknowledging the changes, we find that the genre must be more flexible. Inaugural texts that do not utilize certain generic elements of the inaugural, but employ other rhetorical strategies do not cease being presidential inaugurals. Rather, critics must deal with these rogue elements in analysis. This more flexible view of generic criticism may lead to questions about the value of genre theory on the whole (Solomon, 1988).

However, genre theory is helpful to a critic. First, it is an organizing principle that helps the critic sort through the text. Second, once the critic is able to look at the text after all parts have been categorized into the genre, the disregarded text can be examined and utilized for further exploration of the text. Third, by acknowledging that the situational constraints that led to certain generic elements may have changed or shifted over time, critics learn more about the text under examination. Finally, genre theory helps the critic by providing a starting point and a lens, but need not act as a set of blinders. While Ryan’s (1993) and others’ criticisms are valid, they are not unanswerable nor do they lead to a conclusion that genre theory is useless or unproductive. In the Aristotelian view, a talented critic is capable of both recognizing the shared elements of categories of speeches—and the impact of those consistent elements on an argument—while taking into consideration the potential for rhetorical creativity.

In order to understand any rhetorical act, genre critics accept that the situation in which the act occurs is of vital importance. The time period, power relationships, current events, technology, and other elements of the situation impact the choices of the rhetor. Presidential inaugurals are particularly subject to the occasion of the speech as they reconstruct the highest office of elected governance. The inaugural occurs at steady intervals (every four years) and follows similar events (campaigns and elections) and generally takes place in the same physical location. Therefore, inaugurals share elements in purpose and strategy. However, inaugurals also occur in different time periods and therefore will be subject to different rhetorical exigencies. These exigencies call for
responses that may be different from previous inaugurals and, in turn, those responses are indicators of how the office is constructed.

Rowland (2002) suggests that inaugurals follow a certain pattern that is also composed of four elements including that the address be formal, that it commit to values, tell the people where the nation places itself in the context of history and be ceremonial. These four characteristics reflect the spirit of Campbell and Jamieson’s generic elements for an inaugural. Rowland’s fifth element departs from Campbell and Jamieson by suggesting that the president also address international relationships.

Particularly Rowland (2002) says that the role of the United States in the world should be both powerful and friendly. He contends that an inaugural should “reassure the allies and warn enemies” (p. 223). Intuitively, it would seem that any presidential address would perform this function. The characteristics of reassuring allies and warning enemies warrant a closer look, particularly in terms of more recent presidential inaugurals.

Political speech, and particularly presidential rhetoric, is often divided into sections based on chronology. The start of the twentieth century is a common dividing line. This division of the modern president versus the traditional president seems to suggest different rhetorical constraints and a different set of generic elements. New elements based on the era of the presidency are not necessarily ignored by generic criticism. As previously acknowledged critics may diverge from the genre of inaugurals and examine disregarded rhetoric in a speech for different rhetorical elements. However, when presidents of a certain era use similar rhetorical strategies or have similar elements present and those elements are consistent, then there might be cause for a change in the genre.

The twentieth century presidents are often considered to be set apart from previous presidents by the technological advances in message dissemination. The medium of the inaugural has changed and affects the way in which presidents address the public. Lim (2002) suggests that the presidency has changed and evolved not only in the last century but over time. In his computer
generated content analysis of inaugurals, Lim found five trends evident in presidential rhetoric. He argues that presidential addresses, including inaugurals and the state of the union address, have become “anti-intellectual, abstract, assertive, democratic, and conversational” (p. 346). Of these five, assertiveness is arguably the most distinctive. In the current state of international war, economic crises, and global instability, American construction of its highest office will require a finessing of international assertiveness and Barak Obama’s inaugural on January 20th, 2009 supports this contention. According to Lim, this assertiveness manifests itself as “activist, it adopts a ‘realist’ preoccupation with the language of power and is very confident” (346). This development in presidential rhetoric warrants a close examination of the inaugural in terms of the international audience. Lim’s work confirms a trend apparent in the 21st century consistent with America’s growing symbolic presence in global affairs that is mirrored in the arguments framing the American presidency at each inaugural.

In sum, the literature suggests that inaugurals perform certain functions, but that the list of functions may need some massaging. It can also be surmised that presidential inaugurals have changed over time, that they do shift based on the shrinking global village and American values (Kinnier, Dannenbaum, Lee, Aasen & Kearnes, 2004). Freedman (2002) suggests that a great shift in inaugurals occurred in 1960, “The four decades that separate Kennedy and Bush include the rise and fall of the imperial presidency” (p. 4). He suggests that within that time the balance between the branches and the world order have made presidential address unique from any other time period. However, limiting this study to only the last forty years would not address the issues of the historicity of the presidency and the evolution of inaugurals. Based on this literature, the following textual analysis attempts to answer several questions. Do presidential inaugural addresses “reassure the allies and warn enemies” as suggested by Rowland? Should reassuring allies and warning enemies be considered a new element of the genre? Is this new element evident in all presidential inaugurals or has it evolved over time? Finally, do the
American ideals and identity found in inaugurals reflect a new positioning—the position on the global stage?

**Method**

In order to answer these questions, the author examined all presidential addresses for references to international relations. Based on the previous work from Rowland (2002), special focus was placed on the concepts of reassuring allies and warning enemies. Each inaugural was examined by three trained readers who were instructed to find examples of statements that address international relationships with allies or enemies. The readers then discussed whether each inaugural addressed allies and enemies, and how those groups were defined and addressed.

Once the texts were examined, the examples were then organized into sub-groups. These sub-groups were used to define the elements of reassuring allies and warning enemies. Each sub-group was defined by multiple examples from different inaugurals. Since this study aimed to look at evolutionary rather than fixed elements of inaugural addresses.

**Textual Analysis**

After studying the inaugural addresses from the birth of U.S. to the present, two trends become apparent. International relations are more important in general and presidents have tended to make use of rhetorical statements that can be categorized as reassuring allies and warning our enemies. The statements designed to reassure the nation’s allies revolve around four themes: Promoting democracy abroad, protecting allies in war, advocating world peace, and strengthening relationships with allies.

*Promoting democracy abroad.* The United States has generally followed a policy of supporting democratic reforms abroad, as well as the spread foreign democracy. For that reason, it is not surprising to find statements that clarify this concept in the inaugural address.

In Truman’s inaugural address, the President echoes support for democracy abroad with his call for support to the United Nations:
First, we will continue to give unfaltering support to the United Nations and related agencies, and we will continue to search for ways to strengthen their authority and increase their effectiveness. We believe that the United Nations will be strengthened by the new nations which are being formed in lands now advancing toward self-government under democratic principles.

Another example is in President Bush’s second inaugural address in which he clearly calls for democracy abroad. This statement communicates the expectations and goals of this particular presidency by expressing the foreign policy priorities of the Bush administration or the presidential administrations of the recent past. President Bush states:

*The leaders of governments with long habits of control need to know: To serve your people you must learn to trust them. Start on this journey of progress and justice, and America will walk at your side. And all the allies of the United States can know: we honor your friendship, we rely on your counsel, and we depend on your help. Division among free nations is a primary goal of freedom’s enemies the concerted effort of free nations to promote democracy is a prelude to our enemies’ defeat.*

An interesting point is that while calling for democratic reforms and promising support for those reforms, the President also attempts to reassure allies that the United States government is receptive to the input from these foreign governments. This is a direct response to criticism that the United States was acting unilaterally in the “war on terror”.

Promoting democracy is apparent in the most recent inaugural from Barak Obama. Obama said:

*Our Founding Fathers, faced with perils we can scarcely imagine, drafted a charter to assure the rule of law and the rights of man, a charter expanded by the blood of generations. Those ideals still light the world, and we will not give them up for expediency’s sake. And so to all other peoples and governments who are watching today, from the grandest capitals to the small village where my father
was born: know that America is a friend of each nation and every man, woman, and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity, and that we are ready to lead once more.

Obama does not only address the promotion of democracy, but also indicates that America will be an example, an exemplar, and a leader in that change.

Protecting allies in war. The United States has often been called upon to provide support to its allies in war. It is an important feature of American foreign and military policy that the nation is able to protect and defend its allies. Statements designed to reassure allies that America will be there when called upon have become more frequent in presidential inaugurals. One of the earliest examples of this type of statement can be found in the Truman inaugural address:

Third, we will strengthen freedom-loving nations against the dangers of aggression. We are now working out with a number of countries a joint agreement designed to strengthen the security of the North Atlantic area. Such an agreement would take the form of a collective defense arrangement within the terms of the United Nations Charter.

This statement appears within a larger discussion of America’s plans for the recovery from World War II and plans for protecting allies during the Cold War. These statements make it clear that it is a policy of the government to provide protection for the nation’s allies.

President Clinton, in his first inaugural address again makes it clear that the United States would act when necessary. Clinton states in his first inaugural address:

While America rebuilds at home, we will not shrink from the challenges, nor fail to seize the opportunities, of this new world. Together with our friends and allies, we will work to shape change, lest it engulfs us. When our vital interests are challenged, or the will and conscience of the international community is defied we will act—with peaceful diplomacy when ever possible, with force when necessary.
As with the rhetoric of President Clinton, President George W. Bush promises to protect the nation’s allies in both his first and second inaugural address. In his first inaugural he states:

*We will defend our allies and our interests. We will show purpose without arrogance. We will meet aggression and bad faith with resolve and strength. And to all nations, we will speak for the values that gave our nation birth.*

Presidents signal to the international community that the United States is willing to come to the aid of allies when necessary. Obama echoed this same sentiment,

*To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect. To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society’s ills on the West - know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy. To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history; but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist. To the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish.*

Much like his predecessors, Obama tempers the promise of protection with the challenge that certain conditions must be met. This is particularly important in the 20th and 21st centuries as the globe shrinks and America’s position must be defined.

*World peace.* Another common category are statements designed to pledge that the United States will be a nation that promotes and pursues peace. The examples of calls for world peace have become more frequent as America has become more active in the international community. During the height of the Cold War president Kennedy makes this call:

*Finally, to those nations who would make themselves our adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request: that both sides begin anew the quest for peace, before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction.*
Nixon, in his inaugurals, also references world peace. Specifically, in his first inaugural he says, “Let us take as our goal: where peace is unknown, make it welcome; where peace is fragile, make it strong; where peace is temporary, make it permanent.” Carter said, “Tapping this new spirit, there can be no nobler nor more ambitious task for America to undertake on this day of a new beginning than to help shape a just and peaceful world that is truly humane.” Obama said,

*We cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.*

These references to world peace may be attributed to the increasing American presence in international affairs. As a young nation there was little reason to call for world peace, but as the United States has grown in stature and developed the ability to answer these calls with force when necessary, promoting peace has become a more common feature of inaugural addresses.

*Strengthening relationships.* Strengthening relationships encompasses rhetoric that discusses the general and specific nature of our relationships around the globe. This feature of inaugural rhetoric is intended to assuage the fears that are present with the change of administration—that the change in personalities and ruling philosophy could cause a shift in the nature or quality of the nation’s relationships. For an example of how this rhetoric functions one can look to Reagan’s first inaugural. The president uses language of friendship and loyalty to describe the foreign policy plans of his administration:

*To those neighbors and allies who share our freedom, we will strengthen our historic ties and assure them of our support and firm commitment. We will match loyalty with loyalty. We will strive for mutually beneficial relations. We will not use our friendship to impose on their sovereignty, for our own sovereignty is not for sale.*
President Reagan speaks of reinforcing and strengthening bonds which may be directed to the nation’s North Atlantic allies which were seen as a crucial partner in the Cold War.

President George H.W. Bush takes a slightly different tone when he discusses building and strengthening international relationships:

> To the world, too, we offer new engagement and a renewed vow: We will stay strong to protect the peace. The "offered hand" is a reluctant fist; but once made, strong, and can be used with great effect.

President Obama used a similar metaphor to talk about foreign relations when he said, “we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist.” In this instance, Obama was referring to those governments with whom our relationships have been strained. In terms of extending relationships with allies, Obama said, “With old friends and former foes, we will work tirelessly to lessen the nuclear threat, and roll back the specter of a warming planet.”

As is confirmed by the illustrations presented here, the rhetorical element of reassuring allies is present in multiple presidential inaugurals, although rhetors must decide how they fulfill these requirements based on the specific exigencies of the time. The various rhetorical elements of promoting democracy abroad, protecting allies in war, world peace, and strengthening and maintaining and building relationships with allies categories are evident. This is sufficient evidence to include this element in future analyses of presidential inaugurals.

**Threatening the Adversaries**

Another aspect of inaugurals is threatening or warning the adversaries. This category is defined by the elements of national security protection, defending human rights, and projecting strength.

*National security protection.* Presidents who employ statements of this type do so to communicate the United States’ willingness to protect the security of the nation. The President makes certain that adversaries of the United States understand the
determination to serve the best interest of the United States and its allies. This proclamation clarifies the nation’s readiness and firm resolve to take protective actions if the need arises. One example of this type of statement is found within President Truman’s inaugural address: “If we can make it sufficiently clear, in advance, that any armed attack affecting our national security would be met with overwhelming force, the armed attack might never occur.” President Truman threatens the adversaries by expressing his determination to protect the nation’s security. A similar example is present in President George W. Bush’s second inaugural address: “My most solemn duty is to protect this nation and its people from further attacks and emerging threats. Some have unwisely chosen to test America’s resolve, and have found it firm.” Like President Truman, President Bush communicates the United States’ willingness to protect national security.

Perhaps the clearest reference to national security is in President Obama’s inaugural when he said,

> We will not apologize for our way of life, nor will we waver in its defense, and for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken; you cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you.

What is interesting about this passage is that it follows a reassurance to our allies. Obama uses antithesis throughout his inaugural to position America as an arbiter, as a decider, and a determiner of world peace.

*Defending human rights.* A subsequent category within the larger category of threatening the adversaries addresses human rights and liberties. An example of this can be found within President Carter’s inaugural, “Our commitment to human rights must be absolute, our laws fair, our natural beauty preserved; the powerful must not persecute the weak, and human dignity must be enhanced.” Reagan continues this assertion in his second inaugural: “Freedom is one of the deepest and noblest aspirations of the human spirit. People, worldwide, hunger for the right of self-determination, for those inalienable rights that make for human dignity and progress.” In George W. Bush’s second inaugural, he
also justifies action in defense of human rights, “In the long run, there is no justice without freedom, and there can be no human rights without human liberty.” In President Obama’s inaugural there are multiple references to helping the hungry, the poor, or nations that need assistance from the wealthier countries. He preached responsibility for the basic rights of global citizens.

Several more examples can be found in other inaugurals. Human rights issues worldwide have been a part of the presidential inaugural and can be traced to President Grant’s inaugural in 1873. The international community is an audience for the inaugural as these human rights are valued and their protection is assured. As the international audience has become larger and the role of the U.S. in protecting human rights has expanded, the need for the president to reassure their protection has increased.

**Projecting strength.** Another crucial category under threatening the adversaries is to project strength within the inaugural address. This element is reflective of Lim’s 2002 conclusion that presidential rhetoric has become more assertive. President Nixon is particularly assertive in his inaugural address by stating: “But to all those who would be tempted by weakness, let us leave no doubt that we will be as strong as we need to be for as long as we need to be.” In this statement, Nixon threatens the adversaries and reminds them that passage of time will not weaken American resolve. Following this same trend President Reagan claims in his first inaugural address:

*As for the enemies of freedom, those who are potential adversaries, they will be reminded that peace is the highest aspiration of the American people. We will negotiate for it, sacrifice for it; we will not surrender for it-now or ever. Our forbearance should never be misunderstood. Our reluctance for conflict should not be misjudged as a failure of will. When action is required to preserve our national security, we will act. We will maintain sufficient strength to prevail if need be, knowing that if we do, so we have the best chance of never having to use that strength.*
Like Nixon, Reagan reminds the listeners that time will not weaken the nation’s strength. The pursuit of freedom envelops the American ideal of protecting national strength and defending human rights.

Finally, President Obama is clear in his warning to others that they must “unclench their fists” and that Americans will not apologize for lifestyle choices or “way of life.” In projecting strength, he does so by explaining that those who oppose America will be defeated and he reminds everyone that this strength comes with a price:

\[
\text{With hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents, and endure what storms may come. Let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested we refused to let this journey end, that we did not turn back nor did we falter; and with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.}
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As is evidenced by these examples, the element of threatening the adversaries is present in multiple presidential inaugurals—namely by addressing the issues of protecting national security, defending human rights, and projecting strength.

**Discussion**

The preponderance of evidence suggests that two themes are present in presidential inaugurals: reassuring allies and warning the enemies. There are several ways that these elements may fit into different inaugurals. First, although most of the examples presented here are from the twentieth century, some examples are present in earlier inaugurals. For example, Madison in 1809 refers to “belligerent nations” and “foreign intrigues and partialities.” This might be the oldest example of directly addressing foreign party concerns. The time period of the inaugurals impacts how these themes are interpreted. For example, during the civil war, the president might refer to the south as an ally or an enemy. Prior to the civil war era, there was some fear that foreign countries might try to influence America. This apprehension was well articulated in George Washington’s *Farewell address*. During the birth years of
the nation, John Adams makes reference to foreign friends and involvement. Therefore, the new generic element proposed herein has ample support from even traditional presidential inaugurals.

Second, there are multiple ways in which presidents may wish to fulfill this requirement. Outright threats or veiled isolationism can function as one of these two elements. Also, usually the elements are merged together when one statement or sentence might fit into both themes. Rhetors have a choice in how to express threats and reassurance based on the specific situation.

Third, the State of the Union Address differs from the inaugural in several ways. The State of the Union requires specific policy action and the inaugural only requires a reference to international relations. How specific or vague the president may be is determined by the time period in which the inaugural occurs. In the earlier stages of the American democracy, references to foreign interests were more vague. For Obama, foreign relations—good and bad—were center stage and possibly a theme. This theme reflected the melting pot of the United States for Obama and was steeped in the historicity of an African American man becoming president for the first time. The international stage was prominent in his speech due to recent events and the historical importance of his taking office.

This study shows substantial textual support for genre theory—particularly as related to the category of presidential inaugurals. By exhibiting how genre criticism can aid critics in organizing their observations, how the theory might be read with more flexibility, and how the presidential inaugural does not cease being an inaugural with every change, it shows that genre theory is not only alive, but useful. Its organic vitality in fact contributes to its utility in contemporary settings. More importantly, these new elements suggest that international argument is critical to our current understanding of the presidential inaugural. If the inaugural is indeed the maintenance of an institution (Campbell & Jamieson, 1990; Rowland, 2004), then that maintenance must be argued and articulated at the international level. The international stage must be maintained and the American president uses the inaugural to argue for this presence in the international arena.
Conclusion

Inaugurals clearly indicate that Rowland (2002) was correct when he suggested that presidents should reassure allies and warn enemies, at least based within the inductive genre creation method. An examination of all of the discussion of foreign relationships is part of this speech. While the inaugural is ceremonial address, it is also deliberative in nature and therefore a discussion of relationships is part of the occasion marking an inaugural. The inaugural is not only a domestic speech. Instead, as the global village shrinks, as the world community becomes more connected through technology, and as the inaugural becomes more important to the world, the genre needs to take international affairs into account. Foreign affairs are becoming domestic issues, and domestic issues mesh as foreign affairs.

Times will change and so must speaking situations. The presidential inaugural will always have the goal of reuniting the country and standing firm in a time of leadership change, but it also helps our friends abroad understand the office of the president and ultimately America as a symbolized form. Through language and argument our leaders construct the government for its people and through language and argument our leaders build or destroy a global role—four years at a time.

Bibliography


*Dr. Elizabeth A. Dudash is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication at Missouri State University.*
MENSTRUATION DISCRIMINATION: THE MENSTRUAL TABOO AS A RHETORICAL FUNCTION OF DISCOURSE IN THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ADVANCES OF WOMEN’S RIGHTS

Erika M. Thomas, Wayne State University

In an American advertisement for Tampax® Pearl Tampons™ which appeared in Cosmopolitan in 2005, a scuba diver is pictured and appears only a few yards away from a giant shark. The caption reads, “A leak can attract unwanted attention.” The message in this advertisement tells women that leaking blood is not without consequences, often dangerous and deadly. It plays upon the old tabooed message that leaks of blood can cause harm by attracting dangerous and deadly wild animals. While the belief that wild animals are attracted to menstrual blood is a proven myth, a particular modern truth remains implicit in the advertisement: leaks can cause so much embarrassment and shame that you will feel like dying rather than engage in the social public sphere. In our modern American culture, women are encouraged to hide their menstruation by maintaining strict codes of cleanliness and concealment.

Despite advances in scientific knowledge and progressive social relations, treating menstruation as a taboo topic has remained the popular approach since ancient times. Today, the menstruation taboo remains a phenomenon in all cultures. Within Western culture, messages and campaigns exist to end international menstrual taboos and encourage women’s advancement through access to the public sphere. However the discourses contain messages which continue to portray
menstruation as an act that threatens to publicly harm women and expose their weakness. This study explores the recent dissemination of such conflicting messages to the global community. I contend that modern political and consumer campaigns construct public arguments about values such as women's rights and equal citizenship through a discourse of menstruation taboo that restricts and limits improvements for women in the public sphere.

I begin the analysis by showing how the menstruation taboo operates as a rhetorical strategy to construct identity and division. I trace the history of women’s advancement, the changing nature of the menstruation taboo and its influence in allowing Western women to access the public sphere on the basis that they guard against bodily pollution. Finally, I examine the complex nature of today’s “menstruation politics” by arguing that state and consumer campaigns, such as Procter & Gamble’s “Protecting Futures” campaign and the integration of female interrogators in the War on Terror, appear to initiate “discourses of equality” with the purpose of advancing women, while simultaneously reifying rhetoric that risks marginalizing menstruating women in the public sphere.

The Role of Taboo (A Rhetorical Function of Discourse)

Anthropologist, Mary Douglas (2004), defined taboo as:

[A] spontaneous coding practice which sets up a vocabulary of spatial limits and physical and verbal signals to hedge around vulnerable relations. It threatens specific dangers if the code is not respected. Some of the dangers which follow on taboo-breaking spread harm indiscriminately on contact. Feared contagion extends the danger of a broken taboo to the whole community. (p. xiii)

According to Douglas, communities maintain order by recognizing a taboo and obeying its avoidance rules. Douglas argues that societies code elements as taboo, dirty, or dangerous in order to protect distinctive categories of their universe and to distinguish the ambiguous and the sacred. As such, taboos are often created by
“leaders of the society” and “controllers of opinion” to structure social relations and stabilize power structures (Douglas, p. xiii). Early cultures created taboos around such elements as pollution produced by the body, just as members of modern societies categorize the unclassifiable as “dirty” or “dangerous” in order to establish a social structure and justify behavior. Thus, categorization of dirt and the customs surrounding such elements continues a tradition of using “rituals of purity and impurity” to “create unity in experience” (Douglas, p. 3).

For Douglas, the rituals that create a shared experience both among and within communities organize reality. Members of a society are required to take seriously that society’s rituals and taboos because they operate as arguments and “truths” which construct a culture’s way of knowing. Members of a culture may not entirely understand why the avoidance of a particular pollutant, food, or touch “eliminates” the danger or risk, but they accept such claims and corresponding rituals as necessary because it is a part of their world. In this context dirt represents disorder. Through rituals, cultures tame dirt, reject it, or use it in creative ways so that order reemerges in the culture. Rituals of cleanliness and hygiene reflect the social relations in the culture, commonly subordinating a group of people on the basis of physical differences described as body pollution. For example, taboos have been used to reinforce gender hierarchies. These taboos function as social arguments compelling social adherence in regards to gender relations. Douglas states, “There are beliefs that each sex is a danger to the other through contact with sexual fluids. According to other beliefs, only one sex is endangered by contact with the other, usually males from females, but sometimes the reverse. Such patterns of sexual danger can be seen to express symmetry or hierarchy” (p. 4). Douglas explains that sexual pollution and bodily pollution are understood as symbols which represent the relations between parts of society and mirror hierarchy. For Douglas, a resemblance or association exists between the body’s physical boundaries and danger in a community. Thus, rituals controlling bodily pollution allow a society to understand their society and its boundaries.
Douglas’ explanation of this function of taboo mirrors Kenneth Burke’s explanation of how humans use symbols, rituals and ceremonies to construct identity (1966). As the “symbol using animal,” humans mark the behavior and orientation of others to develop their own sense of self (Burke, p. 3). In other words, people use symbols rhetorically to organize, argue and create understanding between others and ourselves, or to create opposing identities. Burke explains, “Identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division. If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity” (1969b, p. 22).

According to Burke, one does not need to sharply scrutinize “identification” to find its ironic counterpart, division (1969b, p. 23). Through this theory of identification, Burke provides an explanation for how taboo operates in rhetorical terms. Taboo is society’s ritual for crafting identity through the process of demarcating differences in discourses. Taboo seeks to expose the arguments, beliefs and/or behaviors that construct an “us” and a “them.” According to this explanation, taboo, such as the menstruation taboo, is used to create divisions between or common identification among groups of people. In the case of the menstruation taboo, a division is constructed between men and women, and this division becomes one way we identify, mark, argue and/or justify sexual difference.

In The Philosophy of Literary Form, Burke (1969) explains the processes of proclaiming and embracing an identity. One method for engaging in reidentification involves the process of scapegoating. He states: “Since the symbolic transformation involves a sloughing off, you may expect to find some variant of killing in the work . . . So we get to the ‘scapegoat,’ the ‘representative’ or ‘vessel’ of certain unwanted evils, the sacrificial animal upon whose back the burden of these evils is ritualistically loaded” (Burke, 1969a, p. 40). As societies grew in social complexity, sacrificial animals were replaced by other humans who were made “worthy” of sacrifice. Burke describes one
strategy of scapegoating: the creature becomes worthy of sacrifice fatalistically due to a personal flaw or a punishable action.

The ritual of scapegoating becomes a form of symbolic redemption—a strategy necessary to keep order. Burke explains the motive and impulse to keep society’s “symmetry,” a strategy to keep order:

In their societies, they will seek to keep order. If order, then a need to repress the tendencies to disorder. If repression, then responsibility for imposing, accepting, or resisting the repression. If responsibility, then guilt. If guilt, then the need for redemption, which involves sacrifice, which in turn allows for substitution. At this point, the logic of perfection enters. (1961, p. 314)

According to Burke, most religious stories are illustrations of the guilt-redemption cycle that becomes a template for all other stories. Burke explains: “Though this may be a mystery theologically, its logological analogue is not mysterious. Logologically, there is a ‘fall’ from a prior state of unity, whenever some one term is broken into two or more terms, so that we have the ‘divisiveness’ of ‘classification’ where we formerly had had a ‘vision of perfect oneness’” (Burke, 1961, p. 175).

An example commonly invoked by Burke is the story of Adam and Eve and their fall from the Garden of Eden. Burke’s cycle begins with a sense of uncertainty or disruption which becomes linked to contamination or pollution. Once Adam and Eve ate the apple from the Tree of Knowledge, they were no longer “pure”; thus they were labeled polluted and removed from the Garden. When order cannot be kept, then the individual experiences guilt, and shortly thereafter seeks redemption. Burke explains that redemption can be achieved through two courses, mortification (or self sacrifice) or the identification of a scapegoat (someone to blame), such as Adam and Eve. In order for us to end guilt and begin redemption, Burke contends that we are motivated to participate in symbolic redemptive acts that we identify with the sin. For women, menses becomes the source of this feeling and evidence of difference. The menstruation taboo not only demarcates women from men, but also makes women feel guilt. By
participating in rituals of cleanliness and following normative paths to absolution, they acknowledge their complicity in the guilt redemption cycle and their agreement with the claim that the bodily act is pollution.

Through Burke we learn the rhetorical significance of society’s scapegoats. Since we have no identity without difference and since the existence of difference requires the presence of a scapegoat, all societies require a scapegoat to justify their unified identity. In his essay, “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s Battle,” Burke explains:

> People so dislike the idea of internal division that, where there is a real internal division, their dislike can easily be turned against the man or group who would so much as name it, let alone proposing to act upon it. Their natural and justified resentment against internal division itself, is turned against the diagnostician who states it as a fact. This diagnostician, it is felt, is the cause of the disunity he named. (1969a, p. 206)

Burke maintains that society fears losing its unity and identity and as a result finds ways to rhetorically demarcate difference. By finding scapegoats or enforcing feelings of mortification onto others we reestablish order and identification in our society. Thus, menstruating women experience more than their biological menstrual cycle; every month they experience the guilt-redemption cycle, which society has come to recognize as the menstrual taboo. Women understand the implied social argument whereby their participation authenticates the social contract to engage in purity rituals.

Douglas and Burke show that division is critical in constructing identity for others; thus, taboo is one discursive strategy used by societies in order to create division. Douglas and Burke demonstrate the conditions of possibility that allows the discursive establishment of societal taboos. By understanding the motives that craft a society’s discourse and the argument for division we can identify rhetorical and argumentative strategies that propagate taboos and their meanings and attempt to alter divisive discourse to end discriminatory practices. Through a
rhetorical and argumentative lens, the current state of the Western menstruation taboo and its dissemination of messages is exposed to show how discrimination toward women continues in Western and non-Western cultures. The continued existence of the menstruation taboo may be used as a justification to bar women from accessing the entirety of the public sphere.

Gendered Citizenship and the Western Menstrual Taboo

It has been established by such scholars as Jürgen Habermas, John Dewey and Hannah Arendt that access to the public sphere is equated to rights of citizenship. For example, Habermas’ 1962 work, Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere, traces the development of the bourgeois public and private spheres and describes members of the public similarly to traditional notions of the Western “citizen.” The public sphere consists of a group of middle class, educated citizens, who engage in rational-critical argumentation in salons, coffee houses, and “table” and literary societies throughout Europe (Habermas p. 32-34). Habermas explains:

*The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized by publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor.* (p. 27)

For Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere became an idealized prototype for the foundation of pure democracy and citizenship by governing through societal consensus. The existence of a public sphere allowed for a private sphere to emerge and provided an intimate sphere or familial sphere, thus reserving the public sphere for the citizenry’s government and rational-critical discourse.

Since the members of Habermas’ public gain access to the public sphere by owning property and acting as a sovereign leader of a household, the Western citizen was conflated with “private man” for, during this time, men were solely the “owner of
commodities” and “head of the family.” Throughout the centuries, women were constructed as non-citizens because of exclusion from the public sphere premised on women’s sexuality and their association with the body. Ruth Lister (2002) illustrates that, given an explicit connection between the public sphere and citizenship exists, the public sphere contains a gendered divide that affects citizens and sexual minorities. She states:

_The male heterosexual human or citizen is firmly located in the public sphere, disassociated from the female private sphere, or the realm of necessity and the body. Indeed, public space has been described as 'male, heterosexual.' This public-private divide represents the very foundation stone as traditionally conceived and practiced. As such, it has both privileged male heterosexual access to the public sphere of citizenship and regulated the terms on which heterosexual women and lesbians and gays have been able to enter the public sphere as citizens._ (194-195)

According to Lister, traditional notions of citizenship are “disembodied” since political participation was linked to masculine notions of reason and rationality (p. 193). Thus, women were initially denied citizenship in most Western cultures because society accepted the arguments that they were more emotional and passionate than men due to their essential nature. Lister states: “Only male individuals were deemed capable of transcending the body; women as sexual beings and as bearers of children were not” (p. 194).

Women’s association with the corporeal is relevant to another construction of Western women’s bodies as “dirty” and “leaky”. In _Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism_, Elizabeth Grosz (1994) contends that certain bodily zones and bodily development have come to mark the way in which men and women in Western societies “signify, live, and practice their sexualities and desires” (p. 198). These characteristics serve to emphasize the difference between men and women and justify social arguments for male dominance, yet such cultural marks are often biologically arbitrary. Physical development marks
womanhood rather than reason and rationality. It also confines a woman to her body. Grosz explains that the measurement of womanhood is identified with the development of breasts, hips, and the onset of menstruation. She states: “While clearly the development of these characteristics leads to many different attitudes and responses . . . there remains a broadly common coding of the female body as a body which leaks, which bleeds, which is at the mercy of hormonal and reproductive functions” (Grosz, p. 204). Specifically, Grosz shows how the West constructs the female body so that it is viewed as “leaking, uncontrollable, seeping liquid . . .” (Grosz, p. 203). Grosz illustrates how our views of bodily fluids, like menstruation, are not constituted with ontological meaning, but rather are attributed meaning based on the hierarchical structuring of heterosexual male desire. She states:

[F]or the girl, menstruation, associated as it is with blood, with injury and the wound, with a mess that does not dry invisibly, that leaks, uncontrollable, not in sleep, in dreams, but whenever it occurs, indicates the beginning of an out-of-control status that she was led to believe ends with childhood. The idea of soiling oneself, of dirt, of the very dirt produced by the body itself, staining the subject, is a “normal” condition of infancy, but in the case of the maturing woman it is a mark or stain of her future status, the impulsion into a future of a past that she thought she left behind. This necessarily marks womanhood, whatever else it may mean for a particular woman, as outside herself, outside its time . . . and place . . . and thus a paradoxical entity, on the very border between infancy and adulthood, nature and culture, subject and object, rational being and irrational animal. (Grosz, p. 205)

The arguments that women are “leaky” and therefore considered emotional, natural, and irrational led to the pathology of menstruation and a societal menstrual taboo. This taboo allowed American society to restrict women’s rights to equality and citizenship. Historical accounts of society’s attitudes toward menstruation reveal that discourse about menses was first relegated
to the private sphere prior to the twentieth century. Like the discourse of human sexuality, women and men viewed discussions about menstruation and women’s personal hygiene as unacceptable in the public. Additionally, before the invention of the sanitary napkin, women themselves were restricted to the private sphere due to menstruation. In her article, “‘The Greatest Invention of the Century:’ Menstruation in visual and material culture,” Alia Al-Khalidi (2000) explains that “the onset of menstruation marked the beginning of a different and more limited existence for Victorian girls, because ‘simply to manage the hygiene of menstruation in a household where it could not be acknowledged or revealed created a sense of anxiety or shame’” (Al-Khalidi, p. 67). Management and hygiene limited women’s existence because it restricted their education and communication to the woman’s home. Furthermore, the secrecy and etiquette surrounding menstruation meant that communication within the home and private sphere was also carefully negotiated and regulated.

Historical archives indicate that menstruation was banished to the private and domestic spheres due to the perspective that such discussions are not pertinent to the “common good.” Such silencing created an environment that hurt women by denying them proper education on the topic, relation to other women, and equal rights in the public sphere. By extension, ritualistic practices, exclusion, and commodification associated with the hiding of menstruation led to additional oppression of women.

Over time, the Western menstruation taboo’s enunciative functions have changed in order to accommodate shifting historical contexts and developments. For instance, the emergence of the feminine hygiene industry and new paradigms and knowledge in the scientific community necessitated a realignment and shift in the discourse and implications of the menstruation taboo. I suggest that a modified menstrual taboo discourse was necessary to regulate and control woman’s bodies ironically in a time when American society was beginning to award women additional rights. As women gained access to the public sphere, the feminine hygiene industry developed and scientific advances were made, increasing
medical knowledge about women’s bodies. Nonetheless, the menstruation taboo gained a public presence to remind women that menstruation was an ongoing threat to their social status.

During the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, women began to access the public sphere, campaigning for the abolition of slavery and creating a suffrage movement that eventually led to the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. Meanwhile, significant advances were made in medical knowledge and professional texts, especially in the understanding of menstruation. According to Gigi Santow (2001), although the science of menstruation remained “baffling and unexplainable” throughout the eighteenth century, “the nineteenth century, especially toward its end, was characterized by remarkable progress . . . Embryology made great advances and physiology some . . . Thereafter, operative successes ‘slowly guided the profession into surgical channels, and were largely responsible for the new specialty – gynecology’” (Santow, p. 65). Since scientific advancement disproved the logic behind previous and more radical taboos, society needed to find means to keep the abject—in this case menstrual blood—outside the public sphere.

Regulatory and essentialist discourse that attempted to keep women’s bodies from the public sphere slowly disappeared from medical texts; however discourse that regulated aspects of women’s bodily functions was found in other elements in our culture. The rhetoric and arguments found in consumer industries, advertising, and pop culture uphold the discursive regime that reiterates the messages of the menstrual taboo.

With the addition of mass-produced feminine hygiene products, Western women were no longer limited to the private or domestic sphere during their menstrual cycle. Delaney, Lupton, and Toth (1971) explain:

*The turning point seems to have come around the time women gained the vote; large percentages of the female population were gaining advanced degrees, entering the professions, and in general reaping the benefits of the ‘century of struggle’ for legal and political equality. An enormously liberating factor in these advances was the*
mass marketing of disposable sanitary napkins after World War I. (p. 51-52)

Feminine hygiene products provide women with an easy and more effective means for concealing menstrual blood from the public. The ability to conceal menstruation made it easier for women to access jobs, careers, and education; previously menstruating women were restricted from such areas. Although the feminine hygiene industry contributed to the improvement in women’s societal status, they also reinforced a menstrual taboo that emphasized fear and insecurity in order to sell products. While menstrual products are not inherently problematic, the discourse used when selling and advertising such products to women remain unnecessarily harmful and negative.

Early Western advertising campaigns illustrate the restrictions placed on the visibility of menstruation in the public sphere. During the 1880’s, material culture began to control menstruation with the release of the first patent for the sanitary towel (Al-Khalidi, p. 67). The product necessitated public discourse on the hygiene of menstruating women by discussing management procedures, like the control of visibility of blood and the presence of odor or other physical signs of menstruation. Additionally, metaphorical and coded discourses about feminine hygiene products emerged to control the discussion of menstruation in the public sphere, and it also led to consumers to purchase feminine hygiene products to police their bodies and control their menstruation. Through these products and advertising campaigns, society constructed a cultural argument: women can enter the public sphere as long menstruation remains invisible and controlled. Al-Khalidi explains that the attempt to sell personal hygiene products through catalogs did not increase visibility and discussion of menstruation like a cultural critic from that time claimed; rather the discourse privatized the topic by emphasizing discreetness and attempting to limit the products’ visibility in stores.

Restriction of menstruation to the private sphere continues in elements of contemporary Western society thus restricting Western women from full citizenship. According to
Elizabeth Arveda Kissling (1996), the menstrual taboo contains a communication taboo, or “the belief that menstruation should not be talked about.” Kissling explains:

*Menstruation must be concealed verbally as well as physically, and communication rules and restrictions permeate and define the concealment and activity taboos. A substantial majority of American adults and adolescents believe that it is socially unacceptable to discuss menstruation, especially in mixed company. Many believe that it is unacceptable to discuss menstruation even within the family.* (p. 293-294)

Al-Khalidi agrees that women’s situation today is the same: “The continuation of such strategies—emphasizing concealment and user compliance with standardized menstrual etiquette—remains evident in contemporary consumption practices” (Al-Khalidi, p. 65).

Likewise, Lee and Sasser-Coen (1996) explain that information and discourse regarding menstruation are characterized by practices of discipline and concealment. Girls are introduced to this argument at an early age.

*Girls are exposed to a plethora of subtle and not-so-subtle messages, whispered secretly in school playgrounds, stated matter-of-factly in lectures and documentaries, and boldly exclaimed in television commercials. Sometimes girls receive no direct personal information about menstruation at all, and occasionally they receive affirming and positive messages.* (p. 61)

References to menstruation and feminine hygiene products in the mass media are also carefully regulated and limited. Carefully repressed public discourses surrounding menstruation exist only because they are necessary to privately regulate the threat of menstruation. In order to regulate women’s hygiene, hygiene products are sold and menstruation is talked about in such a way that society establishes a taboo.

Advertisements in women’s magazines and on television reveal how women are taught specific, negative associations to menstruation through arguments about its harms found in images and texts. According to Karen Houppert (1999), advertisements for
disposable pads, such as Kotex, have been full of dire warnings about preventing offensive hygiene and odors, since the products first emerged in the 1920’s. “Fast-forward fifty years and Playtex plays on the same insecurities” (p. 37). The contemporary menstrual taboo constitutes a social argument to women that they are threatened by the danger of embarrassment, ostracism, or dirt caused by their own periods. According to Reirdan and Hastings (1990):

*Even well educated informants have acceded to the “medicalizing” of menstruation and see menstruation and menopause as a problem to be managed, and not a natural part of a healthy women’s life. In retrospect, the apparently greater openness about menstruation on the television screen, selling menstrual hygiene products and joking about PMS, perpetuate the bias of viewing menstruation as essentially a matter of hygiene and disease.* (p. 20)

Societal discourse continually argues for women to feel self-conscious about menstruating. Lee and Sasser-Ceon (1996) suggest that most words used to talk about or describe female genitalia imply that it is “smelly” and “unpleasant.” Because women’s identities are so closely linked to their bodies, girls and women face internalized oppression, embarrassment, and shame. “In terms of gender we can say that in our society language and forms of knowledge about the female body uphold practices and justify ideas, behaviors, and policies that maintain patriarchal social relations and function symbolically to represent understandings of women’s roles” (Reirdan and Hastings, p. 20).

Thus, an examination of the menstrual taboo reveals that the taboo’s discourse is used to regulate and control woman’s bodies and their consumption. Although women mostly entered the public sphere with the first and second waves of the feminist movement, discursive regimes allow the menstruation taboo to continue today *limiting their rights as full citizens*. Delaney, Lupton, and Toth refer to this discursive strategy as “menstrual politics.” They explain:
Since the advent of modern science, the fears and prejudices surrounding menstruation have given way to an acceptance of it as a normal bodily process — at least in print. But the habits of centuries are not easily unlearned by men who depend on women’s manifest physical differences to give a rationale for their belief in her emotional, economic, and social otherness. That is why the system we call menstrual politics has by no means disappeared with the twentieth century and the ‘emancipation’ of women from their biologically determined roles. (p. 47-48)

Women are permitted access to the public sphere but they accept the argument that they must follow a strict regiment of care of the self by policing their bodies, in particular the “leak” of menstrual blood.

**P&G’s Protecting Futures Campaign**

While some advertisements and campaigns attempt to avoid and repress discussion of menstruation and/or the American menstrual taboo, one recent advertising campaign engaged in a very different strategy by identifying and locating origins of the taboo that are debilitating to some women. In the early months of 2008, it was nearly impossible to watch television or read a magazine without encountering advertisements for the Proctor & Gamble “Protecting Futures” campaign (2008). One particular advertisement features a desolate scene: a young, African girl in a school uniform sits alone at a wooden desk in a barren field. She appears completely isolated by her community. The advertisement displays this message in white, bold lettering: “There are lots of reasons kids miss school. Being a girl shouldn’t be one of them.” Although the purpose of the advertisement is initially unclear, further examination of the advertisement and recognition of the Always® and Tampax® logos, reveals the claim that the purchase of P&G’s feminine hygiene products will lead to the education and societal inclusion of young African girls. The advertisement explains P&G’s philanthropic campaign:
In some regions of the world, many girls have to stay home when they get their period just because they don’t have protection. Which means they may fall so far behind, they drop out. You can help change that. Your purchase of Always or Tampax helps us donate 1.4 million through 2008 to the United Nations Association’s HERO campaign to provide feminine protection and education to girls in Southern Africa. Because every girl deserves her chance to shine. Use your period for good at www.protectingfutures.com. (P&G, 2008)

On the surface, the campaign offers a positive and powerful message. Always® now endorses a new slogan that encourages women to “use their period for good,” which seems like a progressive move away from the contemporary taboo. Additionally, the campaign is largely viewed as an act of generosity and charity. Bree Kessler and Summer Wood (2008) describe the goals of the project:

the Protecting Futures campaign proposes to help keep young girls in school by providing schools with comprehensive support, including clean water, new classrooms, and bathrooms, year-round feeding programs, teacher training in puberty education, traveling health educators and nurses, and – of course – stockpiles of Always® pads and Tampax® tampons for a new generation of female consumers. (Kessler & Wood, p. 13)

Despite the good intentions of P&G’s campaign, I agree with Kessler and Wood, who argue that the advertisements are “not-so-simple.” Although the advertisement seeks to reduce an extreme non-Western taboo, the social argument that African women are excluded from society due to menses – and for this, the campaign is to be commended – the arguments within the campaign require a critical reading in order to thoroughly understand the implications of its discourse. I contend that before we unquestioningly encourage and celebrate the appropriation of Western feminist rhetoric and the goal of social emancipation in such campaigns, critics must also consider the ways cultural and
persistent expectations of the American menstrual taboo remain intact. In other words, the “Protecting Futures” campaign criticizes the exclusion of women from public spheres, but it still uses rhetoric that reaffirms the American taboo’s stance that menstruation is debilitating and requires the disciplining and policing of female bodies. While the addition of feminine hygiene products has the ability to accommodate women in engaging in deceptive acts that hides menstruation and allows for their inclusion in society, we must remember that a hegemonic, Western perspective that stresses gender normative behavior and menstrual politics is simultaneously enforced. The “Protecting Futures” campaign signals an exigency in American society. Although the campaign attempts to address the persistence of sexual discrimination that exists throughout the world, it also indicates that the American menstrual taboo is spreading through globalization, despite the progressive and feminist rhetoric used by Western governments and corporations.

The campaign assumes that menstruation is the only obstacle to a young girl’s equal education in African countries. Kessler and Wood argue that this is a troubling claim because it is based on an assumption that menstruation is always “a debilitating, polluting phenomenon in need of control” (p. 13). Certainly, different implications and consequences derive from variations of the menstruation taboo found in all cultures and societies. Thus, it is not the case that menstruation is the same experience for every woman in every culture throughout the world. Western liberal feminism is critiqued often for generally asserting such arguments. The “Protecting Futures” campaign is problematic because it applies a similar cultural generalization too broadly to all areas of Africa. All African women do not experience exclusion with the start of menses, nor are all African women’s social status changes viewed through the lens of Western patriarchal structures. Kessler and Wood contend that, in some parts of Africa, women celebrate the start of menstruation and gain respect and status. Alma Gottlieb (1988) investigates the Beng, an ethnic group on the Ivory Coast. Gottlieb argues that although many anthropological explanations of comparative menstruation beliefs have only focused on the
polluting meaning of menstrual blood, the Beng show that menstruation is not always read as dangerous to others. “We have discovered, then, that a rule that seems to impose a restriction on women, and thus to reflect their general polluting character—the taboo on their entering the forest while menstruating—is instead part of a wider system of symbolic classification of space and fertility” (Gottlieb, p. 73). A similar rule that women should not cook for older men when menstruating is predicated on protecting fertility rather than avoiding dirt, as Beng men agree that food cooked by menstruating women is considered the most delicious food.

The “Protecting Futures” campaign also risks conflating arguments about social hierarchy in African cultures with menstruation, when a matrix of cultural beliefs is responsible for limiting the social status of women in these countries. Rarely are the cultural beliefs found in countries like Africa easily changed with consumerism of Western products. Thus, the claims made in the advertisement are dangerous generalizations that risk conflating and grouping nations, religions, cultures and populations. It also introduces Western consumer practices to cultures that may be unable to use and maintain such methods to change women’s social status.

The rhetoric of “Protecting Futures” is also troublesome because it attempts to transfer aspects of both the Western menstruation taboo and masculinized notions of Western citizenship to Africa. Strict personal hygienic rituals become a requirement for all women, thereby teaching African women that in order to enter into the public sphere and become a “citizen,” women should purchase and use disposable pads and consume Western images and rhetorical messages about their bodies, which are often negative. Additionally, when the West attempts to define and discursively construct women from other cultures through a Western lens, they deny culture, identity, and alternate perspectives of citizenship.

By using the “Protecting Futures” campaign, the West fails to identify, change, or solve the aspects of its own menstrual taboo; instead it reframes the taboo by drawing attention to
extreme, non-Western menstrual practices found in some foreign nations. Although the West has good intentions, Chandra Mohanty (2003) argues that such characterizations and focus on the Third World creates a paternalistic attitude toward third world women. She states:

When the category of “sexually oppressed women” is located within particular systems in the Third World that are defined on a scale that is normed through Eurocentric assumptions, not only are Third World women defined in a particular way prior to their entry into social relations, but, since no connections are made between First and Third World power shifts, the assumption is reinforced that the Third World just has not evolved to the extent that the West has. (Mohanty, p.40)

Rather than attempting to eliminate the tabooed messages in American culture, “Protecting Futures” draws attention to non-Western, radical menstrual taboos. It may provide some African women with a tool of deception to overcome culturally discriminating beliefs, like the non-Western menstrual taboo, but it leaves the notions of the Western menstruation taboo intact by persuading African women to use tampons and sanitary napkins because they, too, are “leaky” and “dirty.”

Rhetorical globalization occurs through the metaphors and concepts of “citizenship” found in the campaign’s advertisements. Through P&G’s campaign, Western notions of citizenship—such as accessing the public sphere by following masculinist hygiene norms—are reframed as pre-requisites to citizenship in all cultures. Such discursive constructions are only aspects of Western citizenship and not concepts critical to allowing oppressed members of Western society access publicly recognizable status in their countries and societies. The campaign unquestioningly assumes African women will successfully gain equal citizenship through the same means as Western women.

A rhetorical examination of P&G’s advertisement illustrates that the campaign does not create a completely inclusive environment for African girls. In fact traditional notions of the public/private spheres are reified through its rhetoric, which as I
have shown are critiqued by some feminist scholars. The discourse of the “Protecting Futures” campaign extends Western norms and expectations of citizenships to other nations and emphasizes the discursive divide between public and private spheres. In many African cultures, girls and women are clearly viewed as marginalized populations, but eliminating discrimination is more complicated than the solution provided by P&G.

I do not intend to discourage attempts to remove radical and debilitating menstruation taboos from cultures, but instead seek to show why corporations must act with caution when trying to alter cultural practices. Western women can feel accomplished knowing that some African women may experience an improved lifestyle with the introduction of P&G’s products. However, we must also accept that the solution for helping African women gain citizenship status is not transferring Western discursive notions of citizenship and hygienic rituals. By changing our rhetoric, we can eliminate the menstrual taboo, rather than removing one menstruation taboo only to replace it with another one.

**The Use of Fake Menstrual Blood as an Interrogation Tactic in the War on Terror**

Since 9/11, images of female US combatants and interrogators and liberated Muslim women are commonly found in the mass media. These images accompany a discourse of feminism and the argument that the West is advancing women’s rights throughout the world. Since the invasion of Afghanistan, the Bush Administration has portrayed the “War on Terror” and the invasion of Iraq as wars being fought for gender equality. In her article, “Keeping the Home Front Burning: Renegotiating the gender and sexuality in US mass media after September 11,” Deborah Cohler (2006) contends that the American mass media’s proliferation of photos and articles about women rights must be questioned rather than blindly accepted as a feminist agenda. These images and arguments are evidence of the emergence of the concept of “nationalist feminism.” Cohler states: “‘nationalist feminism’ highlights the dangerous thematic and rhetorical linkages between ‘progressive’ western feminists and conservative nation-builders.”
we need to consider nationalist feminism precisely because Bush’s colonial pseudo-feminism is grounded in the same historical and cultural tropes as much US liberal feminism” (p. 245). In order to further examine nationalist feminism, I critically analyze the recent appropriation of the equal rights rhetoric that justifies women’s roles in the War on Terror. Although it appears that American women are progressing and gaining rights in the military, recent tasks assigned to women interrogators will potentially further propagate a Western and non-Western menstrual taboo. In particular, the use of fake menstrual blood in the interrogation of prisoners illustrates the ways in which women are used as tools in the War on Terror. Additionally, Middle Eastern women may face further oppression by their society due to the reification of the menstrual taboo. Although the government continues to fight a war justified for women’s rights, interrogation tactics used to “win” the War on Terror reify both Western and non-Western social arguments that menstrual blood is threatening and dangerous, a discourse that is detrimental to women’s advancement in public spheres.

During media investigations of the War on Terror, Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib, reporters uncovered various interrogation techniques and strategies used by women interrogators. According to Kelly Oliver (2007), who investigates the role of female soldiers in her work *Women as Weapons of War*, columnists and writers have depicted scenarios where female interrogators place their hands down their pants and wipe fake menstrual blood across prisoners’ faces. The use of female sexuality and fake menstrual blood is an attempt “to “break” Muslim prisoners by making them unclean and therefore “unworthy to pray” (Oliver, p. 27). Oliver describes the reaction of army sergeant, Erik Saar, who after witnessing the invocation of menstruation, felt “unclean” and later cried in the shower. Oliver reminds readers that while Saar’s disgust was directed toward the military, his horror was initiated by the spectacle of menstrual blood.

The negative reactions which result from such scenes reveal menstrual blood is feared and avoided in both Western and
non-Western cultures. Oliver agrees: “The military’s use of pretend menstrual blood in interrogation makes apparent the imagined threat of menstruation in patriarchal cultures, most particularly ours. The imagined threat is made explicit when menstrual blood becomes part of the arsenal of ‘sexual tactics’ used by the military” (p. 28). The use of menstrual blood as an interrogation tactic has multiple implications for both American and Middle Eastern women.

First, the use of fake menstrual blood reveals the complex nature of modern menstrual politics. On the one hand, the essentialist nature of menstruation assures that Western women gain participation in the American military and the War on Terror. The exposure of fake menstrual blood and the use of one’s womanhood initially ensure access to a traditionally male-dominated sphere, an action which is viewed as empowering by some women. Thus, the United States points to images of women interrogators as evidence of “progress.” Fake menstruation as an interrogation tactic also allows Western women to use a symbol of bodily difference and inferiority as a means to confront discrimination in their own culture and “challenge” the tactics of terrorism. However, it is necessary to question this accomplishment by asking: what is the implication of the use of fake menstrual blood to interrogate prisoners? If access to the public requires women to hide their menstruation, what is the consequence for exposing it? I am concerned that the use of this tactic in military interrogations will serve as reminder of the biological differences that exist between men and women rather than eliminate or appropriate such disdain for menstrual blood. The consequences may further divide men and women in other areas such as the equal participation of combat and warfare. The use of women in interrogations does not signify status changes and improved rights for female soldiers; instead it turns women, their sexuality, and their biology into a weapon of war. Women’s bodies are not integrated into the state; they are exploited by the state. The new role of female interrogators risks reinforcing the military’s patriarchal domination and further excluding women from the
military according to the justification that female embodiment is sexual and/or dangerous.

Second, implications also exist for non-Western women in Middle Eastern cultures. For example, radical social beliefs derive from the menstruation taboo in Middle Eastern cultures, similar to the ones addressed in the “Protecting Futures” campaign. John Finer (2006), in a *Washington Post* article reports that menstruation discrimination is common throughout the Middle East. In Baghdad, July 2006, during the divorce court proceedings of Raad and Nidhal Khalil, Family Court Judge Salim al-Moussawi began his proceedings by asking Nidhal the traditional question, “Are you pure today?” By nodding her assent, the trial can continue. If Nidhal, a Shiite Muslim, was menstruating, she could not continue with court proceedings (Finer, p. A15). This example reveals that many Middle Eastern cultures maintain overt menstrual taboos. Female interrogators and the United States military exacerbate the taboo by playing on the myth that menstruation is dirty, threatening, and dangerous. The possibility always exists that prisoners and enemy combatants faced with such interrogation tactics may begin to deconstruct the taboo and accept that menstrual blood is not dangerous or powerful. However, if such an outcome was foreseen, the US would not exploit the taboo beliefs as a war tactic. Thus, the US’s exploitation of the menstrual taboo assures its reification throughout the international community and further risks discriminatory practices enacted against Middle Eastern women.

**Conclusion**

The “Protecting Futures” campaign and the use of fake menstrual blood as an interrogation tactic provide evidence that a “nationalist feminism” remains a dominant discourse in modern day politics. The hypocrisies of this new feminism are exposed in instances where a discursive reification of the menstrual taboo occurs. Although some discourse found in the “Protecting Futures” campaign and in the War on Terror advances women’s rights, the covert rhetorical function of the menstruation taboo threatens to harm the social status of other women. It is important that the
United States and other Western countries continue to embrace feminist ideals; however, citizens, corporations, and the US government must consider the potential setbacks in the employment of their strategies and in the appropriation of this rhetoric of equality. Recent international campaigns and governmental action indicate that, despite the scholarship of feminists and postcolonial theorists, the campaigns globally deploy a discourse of citizenship through Western constructs and ideals and risk constructing women’s bodies as leaky, threatening, and exploitable. The bodies of Western and non-Western women are becoming sites of conflict for notions of Western citizenship, equal rights, and specific cultural practices.

I have argued that even when society tries to advance the rights of women, reification of the menstruation taboo has a rhetorical function to limit women’s participation in other parts of the “public sphere.” As the taboo is rhetorically practiced and reinforced in the United States, progressive and feminist discourses lose their potential despite the organizational and national attempts to end the menstrual taboo internationally. I have exposed the implicit ways in which an American menstrual taboo is at risk of becoming an accepted, hegemonic discourse. Identifying the discursive strategies of the taboo is the first step in challenging and ending bodily repression of women. It is imperative that communication scholars continue to identify the rhetorical and argumentative messages in international discourse, such as the American menstruation taboo, to determine whether the social results of those messages are positive or negative for women. By eliminating the rhetorical and hierarchical divisions established by social arguments and carefully considering the power of symbols like menstruation the status of women will improve in both Western and non-Western cultures.
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Erika M. Thomas is a doctoral candidate at Wayne State University. A portion of this manuscript was presented at the National Communication Association, in 2007, Chicago, IL. The author thanks Marylou Naumoff, Kelly Young, James Cherney, and Ben Voth their careful readings and useful suggestions that led to the final version of this manuscript.
THE USES OF HISTORY: DELIBERATIVE ANALOGY AND VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

Sarah Spring, University of Iowa

The bombings of the last two weeks have raised a number of analogies with wars of the past — nearly all of them false and, in fact, dangerous. – Victor Davis Hanson

A common trope in political discourse, from the founding of the American republic, has been the use of historical analogies as a means of legitimation; the classics in particular have been used as a model and bellwether for the American political experience. One political commentator who uses history in political discourse is Victor Davis Hanson, a senior fellow at Stanford’s Hoover Institute. Hanson is trained as a classicist and has written a number of books and articles on classical subjects, most recently A War Like No Other: How the Athenians and Spartans Fought the Peloponnesian War (2005). He is most well known, however, for his writing on contemporary political questions. Hanson is a syndicated columnist for the Tribune News Service and is a regular contributor for the National Review. This combination of interests creates for Hanson as a unique perspective in his regular op-ed contributions.

This paper considers how Hanson uses classical history as a source of authority, particularly through the device of analogy. Specifically, I argue that Hanson (mis)represents historical facts to validate his neo-conservative positions. This practice allows Hanson to assume a position of authority because his average reader has little knowledge of the historical facts Hanson is referencing. Hanson uses classical history as rhetorical legitimation. Thomas Farrell’s conception of social knowledge will
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serve as a foundation for understanding how Hanson uses history to gain authority for his arguments. According to Farrell (1982), there are two basic categories of knowledge, social and technical. Social knowledge implies consensus, the information imparted by rhetorical appeals to commonalities in the audience (Farrell, 1982). Technical knowledge is employed by people within a community who have extensive knowledge of a subject, using complex jargon that is inaccessible to outsiders. This thesis will argue that Hanson’s extensive use of historical analogy conflates technical and social knowledge. This conflation is achieved by continued use of classical history in rhetorical situations that call for social knowledge, when in fact the referents for the analogy are technical knowledge. The consensus is not a commonality of knowledge about ancient history, but rather the authority provided by seemingly neutral idea of history. History in this understanding is universally valid, immutable and static. Yet, history is none of these things. As with any cultural signifier, there are mythologies that appeal to multiple authorities and signifieds. Hanson’s writing is uniquely coded because the analogies he uses are largely opaque to his audience. This usage is intriguing since we commonly view metaphor and analogy as a means for simplification and clarification. This coding both allows Hanson to garner legitimation from his position of authority as a classical scholar and constrains debate on his positions. I argue that Hanson’s work is an example of how analogy in a deliberative context may become counter-productive to oppositional argument in the public sphere.

In fact, Hanson (2001) was catapulted to a wide audience when immediately prior to September 11, 2001 he published his book *Carnage and Culture*, examining the importance of leadership in times of conflict. The relevance of this publication after September 11th gave him prominence as a commentator on national news shows. He was soon awarded a regular column in the right leaning news magazine *The National Review*. Hanson’s clear and precise prose quickly made him one of the most widely known classicists in America. *The Daily Telegraph* (2005) has called him America’s “celebrity classicist” and his website claims
that he has been published in sources as diverse as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Times*. Hanson is also widely sought in the publishing world. For his latest book *A War like No Other* he received an advance of $500,000 called “unprecedented” in classical scholarship by the *Los Angeles Times*. According to Francois Debrix (2005), Hanson’s work “is meant to have a very high populist appeal” (p. 1163). Hanson has risen to the national stage despite the abstruse nature of his specialization.

Hanson’s columns focus not on classical topics, but on terrorist attacks of September 11th, the American response, the war in Iraq and other very topical and relevant issues in national political discourse. In these columns, Hanson frequently cites ancient sources and classical history to “document” his arguments, but rarely makes arguments solely about classical history. However, his writing as a pundit would not be as relevant without his historical viewpoint.

Hanson quickly became a favorite of the Bush administration. Barry Gewen (2003) of the *New York Times* reported that Vice President Dick Cheney cited Hanson as “reflecting his own philosophy.” Cheney has quoted Hanson in speeches and reportedly encouraged his staff to read Hanson’s work. Hanson was also a consultant for the Pentagon Office of Net Assessment and was repeatedly invited to the White House and referred to as Bush’s favorite historian (Meyerson, 2005). Hanson’s relevance to the White House and its allies is striking given that his classicist training is very distinct from the military or political consultants that the Bush administration typically called upon. The influence of Hanson, relying on his arguments from ancient history, makes this essay noteworthy, particularly given the gravity of the policy decisions that Hanson endorsed. It is important to understand how Hanson’s use of history authorized him to join the small group of people who shaped the Bush administration’s policies.

**Social Knowledge and Analogy**

The starting point is social knowledge, particularly in the context of deliberative public rhetoric. Deliberative rhetoric is
The philosophy of history has been considered by some of the most esteemed philosophers from Hegel to Nietzsche to Foucault and others. The use of history as a trope in deliberative rhetoric is in itself a means of legitimation. That is, historical knowledge lends authority to those who deploy it in the public sphere, by the singular virtue that it is historical knowledge. I argue that historians employ a type of technical knowledge and when this knowledge is used in public discourse it allows historical knowledge to become “neutral facts,” legitimizing any number of arguments. Technical knowledge, as Farrell (1978) argues, can stifle public debate (p. 330). Historical technical knowledge because of its legitimation and remoteness from public life allows even less intervention from the public. The use of historical knowledge is comparatively inaccessible for public deliberation, a limitation; particularly compounded when evoking distanced classical history.

Analogy is a common means of using historical “fact” to argue about the present. Analogical reasoning and argument are a “whole family of arguments that assert important similar or dissimilar relationships between two or more persons, places, things, or events in order to support a disputable position” (Gronbeck, 1998). Analogy is not the only means by which this kind of historical argument is deployed. The use of historical events to argue about the present in deliberative context certainly lends itself to analogical reasoning. This understanding of analogical reasoning, in combination with the discussion of social knowledge and historicism brings us to a larger argument. The use of analogical reasoning is a deterministic frame, lending legitimation and deflecting criticism.

Starting in his article “Knowledge, Consensus and Rhetorical Theory,” Farrell (1976) makes the case for a pragmatic conception of “social knowledge” as a basis for rhetoric. Social knowledge is consensus driven; Farrell (1976) argues “(s)ocial knowledge must presume or attribute a consensus concerning the generalizable interest of persons in order that argument may
culminate in the advocacy of choice and action” (p. 7). The public must have a basic understanding of the concepts and terms in a rhetorical act for it to be persuasive in deliberation.

Technical knowledge is opposed to social knowledge in its basic lack of broad consensus on the terms and issues involved; “‘technical’ knowledge is grounded upon a consensus removed from public scrutiny” (Farrell, 1978, p. 330). For example, a climatologist making an argument about the necessity of emissions reductions might use technical terms in describing global warming. If the public has no means to judge the reliability of the terms, technical knowledge excludes non-specialists from meaningful public discourse. Technical knowledge crowds out the function of social knowledge in creating discussion and is often appropriated into the public sphere, as it is with Hanson. Goodnight (1982) elaborates that “argument practices arising from the personal and technical spheres presently substitute the semblance of deliberative discourse for actual deliberation, thereby diminishing public life” (p. 215).

History, as a trope, is itself a means of garnering authority. Authority and legitimation of history as a trope are important means by which the historical-deliberative analogy garners force in argument. Authority, construed rhetorically, is the ability of a person making an argument or claim to make their position more powerful on the basis of the form rather than the content of the message. According to Farrell (1982), authority is “grounded through its social-knowledge base” (p. 135). This point is well taken; social knowledge is relevant not only to the content of the speech, but also to the form. The form of a text can include the identity of the speaker, where it is presented and the type of argument that is used (among other things). The simple fact that historical material is being presented is a means of legitimation. History, as a trope, is a discourse that carries significant authority. History qua historical discourse creates historical narratives that form our cultural understanding of history. Kammen (1991) explains that “myths may be activated or reactivated in order to legitimize a version of history that is useful or attractive…mythic history…may be mobilized to bolster a traditional order on the
basis of a distant past” (p. 17). Further, Barthes (1997) makes the argument that historical discourse creates a “realistic effect” that allows historical discourse to develop authority simply by asserting that “it happened” (p. 122). The authority given to historical “facts” is culturally constructed. This cultural power is related in two ways to Farrell’s conception of social knowledge. First, the authority of history is garnered through social knowledge. The public widely accepts the “immortality of facts.” More importantly, this cultural power and authority then reshapes social knowledge about certain historical discourses. Discourse that relies on history, although it could be largely fabricated, is largely viewed as authoritative on the basis that is history.

The use of history configures a manner of thinking that Hayden White labels “historical knowledge.” This knowledge for White (1987) is characterized by its narrativity and its literary qualities. The key question is how history as a discourse is formulated as a narrative, with intent to tell a specific story about the past. Narratives about the past, for White, allow for the mythic and realistic effects of history to take full force. The narrativization of history is not neutral, but rather serves particular political and ideological ends. History, in the same way that a novel might employ narrative, is a particular way of telling and that method itself allows historical discourse to become more culturally powerful, simply by nature of being history (White, 1987). I will label Hanson’s use of history historical deliberative analogy. This type of analogical reasoning cannot help but function as a narrative. White (1987) explains how using the past to argue about the present functions as a narrative: “(a)ccording to this view of history as communication, a history is conceived to a ‘message’ about a ‘referent’ (the past, historical events, and so on) the content of which is both ‘information’ (the ‘facts’) and an explanation (the ‘narrative account’)” (p. 40). Historical deliberative analogy is then a particular kind of analogy that asserts causality for its referent. This type of discourse inevitably contains the ideological subtexts that are obscured by the legitimation native to historical narratives.

Hanson relies on history as legitimation. In his writing he also uses a particular logic to connect history to the present, that is,
analogy. Rhetorical scholars have frequently considered how metaphors shape and frame public policy discourse. Most basically, metaphors are a conceptual building block of discourse. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) write that “(o)ur conceptual system...plays a central role in defining our everyday realities...the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor” (p. 3). Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) landmark book, *Metaphors We Live By*, argued that our system of language uses metaphors to shape the way we think about almost everything. For example, they cite common metaphorical parlance such as “time is money” to demonstrate how phrases like “waste of time” depend on a complex system of metaphor to organize reality (p. 8). Rhetorically, metaphors create a “vocabulary of motives” that allow people to understand and shape how they make decisions (Ivie, 1974). Both Ivie and Lakoff and Johnson make the strong case that metaphors shape the way we understand the world. The use of a metaphor frames any situation in which it is used. For instance, in the “time is money” example the monetary framing of time means that we conceive of time as a commodity (1980, p. 8). Metaphors are extremely powerful in their ability to shape how rhetoric functions. Ivie and other have written about how “metaphors” have shaped policy discourse about the Cold War and other policy situations.

Analogical reasoning and metaphor are intimately related, Goodnight (2004) argues “(m)etaphors precede analogies because the act of comparison is a fusion of seeing one thing in terms of another, a move to apprehend that is opened up to testing by the pressure or temptation to render explicit what is grasped at once and as whole.” Analogies function similarly to metaphors by framing how we view both the given situation and the compared referent. A key distinction between the type of framing in metaphor and analogy is that analogy is almost always used purposefully. The referent in an analogy is intended to be used as a frame for the issue at hand; whereas in metaphor, the pervasiveness of metaphor in everyday language means that the framing inherent in metaphors is unconscious, while still significant.
Analogies are frequent in almost all types of writing. Deliberative analogies use analogical reasoning to make arguments about the future public policy decisions (given that deliberative rhetoric is concerned with similar subjects). Analogies in a deliberative context frame how the decision is made and thought about. Mary Stuckey (1992) argues that “(c)ertain events, like certain people and certain places, become symbols for actions and policy positions…these metaphors help to order political reality.” I would argue Stuckey’s understanding of “metaphor” is better understood as analogy: events stand in for other policy positions. Much in the same way that metaphors frame the world, analogies order the way political decisions are made.

Analogical reasoning in the public sphere can be counterproductive to deliberation if the referent is sufficiently distant from public knowledge that it can be easily distorted. Nietzsche warns against this way of using the past. As Euben (2003) explains, Nietzsche that idealization of the past “is a form of disengagement, of making them (the Greeks) decorative rather than allowing them to invigorate our political, cultural, or intellectual lives” (p. 8-9). Nietzsche, responding to some historicizing forces of his own time, labeled the kind of analogical reasoning I examine “monumentalizing.” Nietzsche (1997) argues “the monumental mode of regarding history rules over the other modes…the past itself suffers harm: whole segments of it are forgotten, despise and flow away in an uninterrupted colourless flood and only individualized embellished facts rise of out it like islands” (p. 70-71). The exclusion of events that Nietzsche describes here is significant because it demonstrates that historical thinking in this way is not instructive of what history actually is, but rather functions in the Burkean sense of a terministic screen. White (1987) makes a similar point arguing that “…exclusions consign to historical thinking the kinds of events that lend themselves to whatever currently passes for educated common sense. They effect a disciplining of the imagination…and set the limits on what constitutes a specifically historical event” (p. 66). Metaphorical/analogical thinking by its nature picks specific events and thus participates in this type of exclusion. The
metaphorical frames inherent in analogical reasoning are often more exclusive of actual understanding of history than they are illuminative.

Given that social knowledge is a key component of deliberation, the use of analogy for deliberation must be affected by and affects social knowledge. Because historical knowledge itself is not by nature a social knowledge (historians possess a particular kind of technical knowledge of the past), history cannot be thought of as simply another form of social knowledge. The discourses that historical texts produce, as explained by White and Barthes, derive authority from their very status. Social knowledge about the technical expertise of historians or about the “truth” of history allows these discourses to be self-referential in their claims to authority. My point is that is that what matters is not what history is about; the issue is the medium or form. History is “true” because it is history. Secondly, the metaphorical logic of historical deliberative analogy creates frames on reality that cause these analogies to include only what they find relevant and exclude any other historical knowledge. These inclusions and exclusions are particularly important in a deliberative context because as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explain, metaphorical framing is fundamental to what is relevant to a deliberative context, which is to say they frame what we think of as reality as terministic screens.

David Noon (2004) reminds us that historical analogy is more about forgetting than remembering: “the very device that pretends to remind us of the past instead demands both unwitting and active forgetfulness... the ‘obvious’ feel offered by certain historical analogies means that it is not the past so much as its interpretation that repeats itself.” My argument, thus, is not anti-historical but rather a call for more responsible uses of the past. The oft-repeated adage that those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it might not be so useless after all. Yet, the method by which we choose to remember is vital to avoiding this repetition. Historicism is more likely to cause this kind of cycle than any other approach to history. White (1987) contributes to this argument saying that “nothing is better suited to lead to a repetition of the past than a study of it that is reverential or convincingly
objective” (p. 82). Historical deliberative analogy causes a more potent method of erasing the past because the analogy itself has a powerful myth-making function. The narrative enshrined by this kind of deliberation creates canonical interpretations of the past. In this way, historical deliberative analogy is counter-productive to effective public sphere deliberation.

**Case Study: Victor Davis Hanson**

Most examples in this case study are drawn from his 2002 book *An Autumn of War*, a compilation of Hanson’s editorial writing, mainly appearing in the *National Journal* between September 11, 2002 and December 22, 2002; a book that Bush and Cheney both read and recommended, according to the anecdotes, suggests that the text itself is a good example of writing by Hanson that may have influenced policy. The other selections, *A War Like No Other* and *Ripples of Battle* were critically acclaimed and widely read, further representing Hanson’s historical work.

These selections provide an overview that demonstrates how his work uses historical narrative and deliberative analogies. The essays in *An Autumn of War* are part of an ongoing debate in the United States about foreign policy, particularly after September 11th, 2001. Hanson’s editorials and historical accounts contributed to the deliberative voices being heard.

Furthermore, Hanson’s work is an instance when historical deliberative analogy may become counter-productive to oppositional argument in the public sphere. *An Autumn of War* demonstrates how social knowledge and technical knowledge meet in the public sphere in terms of history.

Finally, Hanson’s work is an excellent example of how historical narratives garner legitimation through their form, simply by being “historical.” I argue that Hanson’s framing of history allows his work to have a stronger authority in the public sphere than other voices. The third facet is Hanson’s use of universal ‘lessons’ of history that exhibits how public memory can be misused in the public sphere.

Most of Hanson’s discourse does not rely on social knowledge in the strict sense, in that his referents would not be
commonly known among a public audience. Hanson’s discussion of the classics demonstrates the way in which he would like such history to be social knowledge and popular collective memory. Hanson’s interest in reviving the classics is first located in one his most widely read books, *Who Killed Homer? The Demise of Classical Education and the Recovery of Greek Wisdom*. In the book, Hanson attempts to explain the lack of popularity and the demise of classical education in America. He concludes that we Americans should learn about classical history and use that knowledge to emulate the Greeks. Hanson (1998) writes:

> The loss of Greek wisdom even as its material legacy is sweeping the planet is a tragic development – a story of corruption filled with irony. The Greeks gave us the tools to improve our material world... We need make no apology for seeing a unique moral lesson in Greek literature beyond ‘text,’ ‘rhetoric,’ and ‘discourse,’ for thinking the Greeks belong to those outside campus... (p. xviii)

The claim that we must use the “moral lesson(s)” of the Greeks in our lives is suspect. Nietzsche’s (1997) argument that the use of classical history be “untimely” is useful here (p. 57) untimely in the sense that history should be outside our contemporary thinking. Hanson’s own invocation of “Greek wisdom” in his political writings is a good example of what he might mean by lessons in Greek texts. This use of history is precisely the kind of universal lessons of the past that are problematic in the public sphere. It is paradoxical that Hanson perhaps knows best that his audience has no substantive knowledge of ancient history, but yet is prolific in his reference to the classics.

The monopolization of knowledge that is a result of the historical distance between the classics and a contemporary audience makes Hanson’s writing unassailable. This usage is a perfect demonstration of how technical knowledge is used to garner authority. Public memory or public understanding of classical history is largely unavailable to assess his work. Furthermore, his status as a historian creates an impenetrable air of
authority in his analogies that allow his analogical reasoning to have powerful persuasive force. The simple use of “history as history” garners more authority for his claims as well, as Hayden White’s work reminds us. This legitimation is further amplified by the public’s complete lack of understanding of Greek and Roman history and culture (as demonstrated by *Who Killed Homer*). The implication is if Hanson’s audience is the general public, his work is either not persuasive because they cannot understand the referents or that it is persuasive because his use of classical history legitimates his authority precisely because it is history.

But who is Hanson’s audience? The popularity of *An Autumn of War* should not be understated. Hanson’s subsequent book received a $500,000 advance from his publisher, a massive figure that demonstrates the widespread popularity of his work (Holland, 2005). Hanson is also a regular contributor to the widely circulated *National Review*. Given this, it’s fair to surmise that Hanson is at least read modestly by the American public, if not on a wide scale. The popularity of his works was put well by *Publisher’s Weekly* which argues: “Hanson may succeed the late Stephen Ambrose as America’s laureate of military history” (2003). Euben (2005) argues that Hanson’s work has led a movement for a thorough consideration on Thucydides in policy deliberation (p. 5). As Euben notes, the other important audience for the book, *Autumn of War* is the neo-conservative faction at the White House. The book was published shortly before the invasion of Iraq in 2002. It is interesting to note that Dick Cheney read the book, according to a number of accounts and reportedly told his staff “that it encapsulated his tough-guy philosophy” (Gewen, 2003). Maureen Dowd (2003) dubbed Hanson “Cheney’s war guru.” Given this, the audience for the work is both the general public and those in positions of power. The implication is that Hanson’s writing is significant in terms of its effect on public policy.

In the summer of 2001, Hanson published *Carnage and Culture*, a book about the importance of leadership in times of crisis. Hanson and the book garnered attention from the national media after September 11th due to the relevance of the book’s
thesis (Tempest, 2004). Hanson then began writing for the National Review and those articles were then compiled into An Autumn of War. After the success of his book Carnage and Culture, Hanson’s credibility as a historian allowed him to write with authority on classical subjects, and the seeming relevance of classical history to the contemporary crisis gave him authority to write about contemporary events.

Collective memory studies also provide insight into the process by which Hanson’s classical history becomes persuasive knowledge. Classical memory is so far removed from any personal particular memories of his audience; Hanson’s arguments are made persuasive by the sheer remoteness, the “pastness” of his arguments. But, Hanson’s technical authority is enhanced by his knowledge of the classics, amplified by the fact that few people knew much about them except that they were a long time ago and were somehow related to the Greeks. Hanson’s use of classical history in the above and following examples demonstrates this. To a typical American audience, classics seem like a super-specialized type of discourse, because they are so remote. I would liken this to the type of knowledge a neurological surgeon would have. The extreme specialization and training of the surgeon would legitimize almost anything they said on the subject. Hanson is the brain surgeon of history because he’s talking about Greek history.

Legitimation in history is gained in many ways for Hanson. Consider this example of historical narration as Hanson (2003) presents his argument that war is an inherent part of the world:

At the universities, throughout the national media, in our suburbs-and perhaps, unfortunately, inside the State Department-there are very dangerous ideas floating around about Mr. bin Laden and this present war. We would do well to cast them aside and look to our past. War for most of the past twenty-five hundred years of Western Civilization was seen as a tragedy innate to the human condition... Wars were a sort of acquisition... Bullies, whether out of vanity or a desire for power and recognition, took things from other people unless they
were stopped. And if they were to be halted, citizens – among them good, kind, and well-read men like Socrates, Sophocles, Thucydides, and Demosthenes – fought to protect their freedom and to save the innocent… (p. 64)

Hanson’s criticism of the anti-war movement is that they oppose all war despite any redeeming circumstances. His main argument for war as a defense against “bullies” could easily be turned on its head when thinking about imperial Athens as a “bully.” It is at best dubious to think that imperial Athens was simply defending against petty aggressors. But here Hanson cites no evidence for his claims, rather just making assertions based in suspect generalizations about Greek history. This demonstrates the circularity of his use of the past – he can draw on almost any example from classical history, frame it as a justification and move on.

The most bizarre of the essays in An Autumn of War is titled “A Voice from the Past” in which Hanson makes up a fictional conversation with Thucydides. Hanson poses questions about the War in Iraq and other contemporary political situations and then chooses quotes from Thucydides as answers. This piece is simply baffling, given that the quotes are mainly out of context and cryptic “answers” at best. Yet, this article provides another stylistic device that Hanson uses, drawing upon direct quotes from classical literature, in bizarre way. This particular question and answer comes from the middle of the conversation:

Question: But, General, you must concede that after Vietnam and now the disaster in New York, there is a growing fear that we might not prevail, but instead provoke even greater terror. The Taliban sounded pretty dangerous, after all, and there’s still Iraq and all the rest.

Thucydides: One must confront enemies not merely with spirit but with disdain. Confidence—indeed a blissful ignorance—can reside even in a coward’s breast, but disdain is the privilege of those who, like us, have been assured by reflection of their superiority to their
adversary. More the chances of war are the same; knowledge fortifies courage by the contempt that is its consequence… [2.631] (2003, p. 146-147)

The “answer” comes from Pericles’ first speech urging the Athenians to go to war. It’s hard to surmise just how Hanson came up with this response or any in the editorial, but my best guess is that he opened Thucydides at a random page and pointed. Again, this demonstrates how Hanson can use almost any part of classical history as a justification for his viewpoints regardless of their actual applicability. The entire idea of asking Thucydides seems similar to the mystical augury of the sortes virgilae. Sir Phillip Sidney’s (1595) Elizabethan work gives a description of this practice in “The Defence of Poesie.” Sidney describes a type of poet-prophet who took the work of Virgil and opened it to a page and verse and subsequently used that verse to make a prediction about the future.1 Hanson is performing his own sort of Sortes Thucydideae, relying again on the mythical quality of classical history. In Hanson’s view, we can arbitrarily choose some selections from the great authors to guide current policy. History is not only realistically mythical; it is also prophetic for Hanson.

The legitimation of Hanson’s arguments from his pseudo-social knowledge and from his historical discourse both contribute to how his use of deliberative analogies functions. Analogical thinking depends on the comparison between two events and as Burke (1984) puts it “similarity is taken as evidence of identity” (p. 97). Here is typical Hanson (2003) passage that demonstrates this type of argument:

The destruction of the World Trade Center, the downing of four airliners, and the ravaging of the Pentagon…. Thousands of our countrymen are dead; we accept that the world can never be quite what it was… Like the Greek city-states in the path of Xerxes’ terror, or Athens in the shadow of Macedon, they wonder whether there is an escape from the ordeal ahead, through moderation and

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1 This practice is also done with other great works such as the Bible etc
conciliation. There is none ... Salamis, not envoys and ambassadors, halted Xerxes. (p. 43)

Here Hanson makes an analogy between September 11th and the Persian war. The article in which this example was found was originally published on September 26, 2001. Zerubavel’s (1994) point that when there is social disruption societies seek to “restructure the past… to its future agenda” amplifies this point (p. 105). Hanson’s use of analogical reasoning and calling upon the past is particularly poignant after September 11th because there is a need for identification, something to explain the tragedy. Analogical thinking creates parallels that allow these identifications to become significant and rhetorical. The argument here displays the persuasive power of analogical reasoning.

Hanson’s analogical arguments also consistently rely on great people or events to provide referents and identification. Nietzsche (1997) describes monumental history this way: “the great moments in history in the struggles of the human individual constitute a chain, that this chain unites mankind across the millennia like a range of human mountain peaks...” (p. 68). For Nietzsche, this kind of monumental history, which is clearly similar to analogical thinking, damages historical knowledge because of its selectivity. Hanson’s work is an exemplar of this kind of monumental history because he parses out great events and persons as valuable to the present. The following exemplifies this point:

In this classical paradigm, the present crisis, I think, looks something like this: The United States, being a strong and wealthy society, invites envy because of the success of its restless culture of freedom, democracy, self-critique, secular rationalism, and open markets... If, like the Athenians, we butcher neutral Melians for no good cause, then our war is evil and we should lose. But if we fight to preserve freedom like the Greeks at Thermopylae and the GIs at Normandy Beach, then war is the right and indeed the only thing we can do. (2003, p. 65-66)

The paradigmatic view of history Hanson advocates here is certainly parallel to monumentalizing, or setting up the past as a
guide to the present. The use of analogy immediately following demonstrates how monumental history calls for analogical reasoning. This kind of monumental history is not about actual education regarding the past, but rather is about forgetting the past; it sees universally aggrandized figures. Hanson’s analogy proves this point: the Athenians killing Melians is only evil while the defense at Thermopylae is only good. This is not to say that such a claim is false, but Hanson seeks to derive one universal understanding of each side in battle, without really explaining either.

Hanson’s use of deliberative analogy displays a number of characteristics that make them less contestable than other facets of public discourse. Consider the following as a final example:

_We in the United States have suffered a great loss. But the incineration of innocent civilians in our cities was not due to our intrinsic weaknesses but rather, like the Greeks in the weeks before Thermopylae, attributable to our naiveté and unpreparedness. The bloody wages of this ignorance of the power of a free people aroused are age-old and unmistakable—Xerxes’s sixty thousand washed ashore at Salamis... Western nations at war, from the Greeks to the present, are not weak but enormously lethal—far out of proportion to their relatively small population and territory. This power is not an accident of geography, much less attributable to natural resources or genes, but rather found in its very ideas and values. The foundations of Western culture—freedom, civic militarism, capitalism, individualism, constitutional government, and secular rationalism—when applied to the battlefield have always resulted in carnage for their adversaries_ (2003, p. 6).

Here Hanson writes in his typical straightforward style, arguing that the “West” will defeat terrorism because of its superiority. This article was written on September 12th and published on September 26th, 2001 according to the book. The timing is key because it demonstrates how Hanson was able to manipulate his immense knowledge of classics to make arguments that were directly relevant to the emerging debate about whether or
not to retaliate. The technical knowledge he employs here gives his argument the authority capable of intimidating a typical reader. His use of the narrativizing account that all of Western history proves Western superiority draws a line from the past to the present that provides a mythic quality to his argument. His historical account must be correct simply by virtue of the fact that it references remote history. The referent, Salamis, is not a battle that the audience would be familiar with and as such makes the collective memory he references static and not open to debate. The whole argument centers around universal qualities of Western culture such as “freedom”; these universals mean that the knowledge is not generative. All of these factors combine to make this argument bullet-proof to public debate and deliberation.

Conclusion

There are those that hold up the use of analogy in deliberation. For example, Goodnight argues for the use of deliberative analogical reasoning in the public sphere in an essay entitled “Iraq is George Bush’s Vietnam.” His argument centers on particular deliberative analogies that are able to “challenge” common assumptions about policy choices. Based on the work of Lakoff and Johnson, Goodnight (2004) argues that analogies can contest a metaphor in public debate “comparisons with the past will be made and contested because such likenesses offer powerful frames of references, fields of invention, avenues of interpretation, and grounds for contesting legitimacy.” For Goodnight, deliberative analogies open up space for “controversy” in the public sphere. Goodnight’s work on the subject are found in three articles that consider the case studies of Reagan’s policy debates about Central America, Clinton and Haiti, and more recent debates on Iraq. He presents this description of the function of deliberative analogy in his Iraq article:

(1) Claim: A known case X should inform the uncertain case Y

(2) Warrant: Because in telling respects case X is like case Y
(3) Exception: Because only in circumstantial respects is case X different than case Y
(4) Why? Grounding in literal, resonant, principled or reflexive comparison.
A deliberative analogy multiplies the inventive space for argument because when invoked, not only are the issues related to the present case under discussion debatable (Y), but also the nature of case (X) as well as its continuing relevance to (Y) are put under discussion.

(2004) Goodnight’s main point is that the memory of the past among the public allows contestation to become more viable and contestable in the case of historical analogies. While Goodnight’s argument is sound, the questions advanced in this chapter about technical knowledge and authority present some challenges to the general applicability of historical analogy in public sphere deliberation.

Goodnight (1996) further argues in the context of Reagan and Central America that “The contested historical narratives undermined the grounds for common discussion, fragmented consensus, and expanded the scope and stakes of partisan opposition” (p. 151). This seeming contradiction between Goodnight’s two arguments about analogy demonstrates simply that all deliberative analogy is not equal. Goodnight here presents a key argument that can be used against the use of historical deliberative analogy, that policy deliberation on the meaning of history can be counter-productive when the sides do not approach history from an equal standing. The problem being, of course, that given history’s tendency to create legitimation based on narratives that support ideological ends, analogies most often are present when the opposing sides do not have equal access to those narratives.

There are further conditions that limit the contestability of deliberative analogy, including its ability to be truly deliberative. First, history is not an avenue for interpretation that is open widely to the public; it is fundamentally a technical type of argument. History can be accessible to most, but not the type of history used
in deliberative analogy that is highly specific and policy based, such as Hanson’s usage. Secondly, Goodnight’s argument assumes that deliberation on the terms of history being presented is open to the public. Given the form of most policy discussions, particularly those he cites which are mainly debates about presidential policies, public deliberation is not likely to focus on whether the historical referent is adequate but rather whether the conclusion is relevant. Historical analogy is more likely to be used by a speaker in power rather than by those who are contesting legitimacy, because history is more effective in reinforcing the status quo.

Goodnight’s claim that analogy allows oppositional debate only works for one side of the debate, those already possessing power and not those in resistant positions. The discursive function of history as a narrative explains how these historical referents are given legitimacy in the public sphere. Self-referential history creates its own authority, and because it is inherently laden with ideology it is not the most effective means for people trying to contest power relationships. More effective resistance would be a discourse, according to White (1966), which emphasizes “discontinuity, disruption, and chaos” in how we connect to the past (p. 166).

History and analogy are inevitable and will continue to be used in American policy discussions and in the public sphere for as long as there is a public sphere. The question is, what is a productive use of deliberative analogy and how do we get there? While the conclusions, simply judging from Hanson’s work, might not be all too encouraging, I believe there is a possibility for deliberative uses of history that can as Goodnight (2004) hopes “offer powerful frames of reference…and grounds for contesting legitimacy” (p. 8). History is an essential constituent of what forms social knowledge and is used rhetorically. Understanding the tensions between technical history and how it is deployed in the public sphere is necessary to appropriately include deliberative analogy as a means for contesting legitimacy.

The view of deliberative analogy offered by Goodnight views the practice as the main productive in the public sphere for allowing debate and discussion. Goodnight does provide a number
of conditions. In his discussion of Reagan and Central American crises Goodnight (1996) maintained that the use of historical analogy was handicapped by the differing frames the Left and Right used in the debate, namely that the Right used history to validate the status quo and the Left unsuccessfully tried to contextualize the Right’s revisionism. The ideal deliberative analogy that would allow for Goodnight’s concept of open contestation would include extensive discussion of the historical case. Hanson’s prolific use of historical analogy and its importance in the debate about Iraq demonstrate another case of the complexity of deliberative analogy.

Hanson’s work demonstrates a few other conditions that are necessary to allow contestation to happen in the public sphere with deliberative analogy. First, the authority of the advocate must be considered. As a historian, Hanson’s arguments from history allow his use of historical referents to have more value than others. The form that they take also enhances the validity of Hanson’s arguments. The narrative frame of history promotes a mythologized history that Goodnight would seek to avoid. Hanson’s authority as a specialist crowds out oppositional argument. Secondly, Hanson’s arguments are largely based in classical history, of which the collective memory is almost non-existent. Collective memory of the classics is mainly formed through vague generalizations. The lessons of the classics view that Hanson employs allow his arguments to be legitimated both because no one in the public knows about what he talks and also because distanced Roman and Greek histories are seen as unquestionable. This demonstrates that deliberative analogies should also include pasts that are known by the public. Farrell’s understanding of social knowledge as “consensus driven” should underwrite this. For social knowledge to generate discussion people have to have some common knowledge. These exceptions to Goodnight’s ideal deliberative analogy suggest that a more nuanced view of history is necessary to make analogical reasoning a productive terrain for public debate.

Hayden White and others have demonstrated the dangers of using history as an ideological storehouse from which we draw
out conclusions about the present. Understanding history is certainly an important endeavor for the public and policy makers alike, but the use of history characterized by Hanson is counterproductive. Hanson’s use of classical history is not about educating the public using some understanding of the classics, but rather is a particular framing of collective memory that is aimed at forgetting the larger scope of classical history. When Hanson isolates ideological lessons from Thucydides, for example, we are unable to see the larger context and polyphony of voices that exist in classical history, and in any type of history. David Noon’s (2004) observation about historical analogy deserves repeating “it is not the past as much as its interpretation that repeats itself.” Thus, Hanson’s assertion that we should listen to “Greek wisdom” in the process of learning about history becomes self-serving. Hanson’s use of deliberative analogy is more about justifying conservative political positions than reinvigorating classical education in the United States.

How can students and critics read and understand history, particular classical history, in way that avoids these pitfalls? Should classical history never be invoked in policy debates? If there is no movement towards a more thorough education of the general public in terms of the classics, using the classics in deliberative contexts will inevitability lead us to these same problems. Thus, classical education is an imperative, not only because it is foundational for much of our culture, but also because it will likely continue to be used in the Hanson manner. In the absence of common understanding of classical history, deliberative analogies employing the classics serve only to reinforce canonical views of history and cause the public to forget that there are other voices. We should listen instead to the polyphony of history. Nietzsche called this view of history “untimely,” that is having a healthy understanding of the past but abstaining from using the past only to inform the present. Engaging with classical history allows informed deliberation to occur in public discussion. A public with an understanding of classical history would contest representation and references to classical history. The problem, of course, is that this formulation may be unattainable on a broad
scale. When deliberative analogy is potentially a viable method with which to challenge some policy positions, as Goodnight has argued, there is the danger that Hanson and others will abuse these formulations. Thus, critical audiences should remain attentive to the conditions under which deliberative analogy is deployed particularly when the referent is distantly historical.

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Sarah Spring is a doctoral candidate at the University of Iowa.
Book Review


An engaging and often fun read, Thank You for Arguing attempts to strike a balance between contemporary examples and classical rhetorical concepts. Author Jay Heinrichs draws from experiences in his daily life with which most of his readers can relate—arguments with his wife, children and employers—as well as from history and popular culture. Thankfully, we found no tired repetition of the old “Socrates is a man” syllogism in the book.

Heinrichs successfully updates the study of rhetoric and argumentation while maintaining strong links to classical concepts and taxonomy. Heinrichs is at home discussing Brad Pitt and South Park, while easily integrating classical ideas and traditional concepts such as phronesis, kairos and prosopopoeia.

Thank You for Arguing is arranged into four main themes: offense, defense, advanced offense and advanced agreement. The first section—argumentative offense—is clearly Heinrichs’ primary interest, and comprises nearly half the book. Heinrichs introduces his readers to simple but effective argumentative techniques such as controlling the tense of the argument, focusing on future-oriented deliberative questions rather than forensic questions of blame or epidictic concern with value. Heinrichs’ distinctions are heavily influenced by Aristotelian conceptions of rhetoric and he does a fair job of imparting practical instruction in argumentation. Heinrichs’ chapters on defense are primarily dedicated to issues of identification of fallacies—including violations of argumentative etiquette—assessing ethos, and
practical wisdom. Heinrichs’ section on “advanced offense” emphasizes identification through language choice and style, kairos and the selection of the appropriate argumentation medium. The final section titled “advanced agreement” is dedicated to timing and selecting the right argumentative tool for the argumentative job. Heinrich concludes with a chapter that reflects on the importance of rhetoric and argumentation in a democratic society.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the book is Heinrichs’ insertion of various items of interest in textboxes on the margins of the primary text. He identifies in the textboxes several different types of information including what he calls “argument tools” such as sympathy, stance, and the dogged question, notes useful figures of speech and a whole menu of “try this” selections such as “try this at home” and “try this with the boss.” All are practical suggestions for applying the techniques he describes. Finally, he includes in the textboxes what he calls “persuasion alerts” where he points out various argumentative and persuasive strategies he has used in the text. These textboxes not only appeal to short-attention spanned readers but encourage readers to reflect upon Heinrichs’ position, to recognized arguments where they might not have known to look for them, and to consider how they might apply some of these ideas in their own lives.

Heinrichs includes a few useful appendices. The first is simply called “The Tools” and is an outline and user-friendly guide to the 136 different tools of argument he identifies in textboxes throughout the text. Additional appendices include a glossary, a timeline of rhetoric and argumentation, and a list for further reading.

Thank You for Arguing presents scholars of argumentation and rhetoric with an interesting dilemma. The term “rhetoric” in popular discourse still sounds a negative note and conveying rhetoric as the antithesis of substantive inquiry and action. We are eager to support efforts to reorient public understanding of rhetoric as more than a system of artifice and inflated language; a system which forestalls and impedes rather than encourages action. Heinrichs’ praise of rhetoric is a strong
effort to re-establish and restore rhetoric as one of the virtues of a free and democratic society. His effort, however, also calls forth a Platonic condemnation.

It is, of course, a matter of debate as to whether or not Plato’s criticisms of the sophists were fair or accurate. Certainly much scholarship in recent years (e.g., the extensive work by Takis Poulakis) has vindicated the sophists. One might wonder, however, if Plato would not have called such efforts “a boorish sort of wisdom” as he called those who argued relative to whether or not the girl Oreithyia was indeed stolen by Boreas, the god of the north wind, or merely blown off the high rocks by a gust of wind. What mattered to Plato was not the historicity of the myth but the truth of the tale. Plato’s issue with the sophists is not whether or not Gorgias, Protagoras and Hippias actually practiced the ignoble form of rhetoric he condemned. The key is whether rhetoric wrongly understood and thus wrongly taught is not a virtuous art but a knack—a series of devices, artifices and tricks that its propagators could describe but not explain.

And this is precisely what Heinrichs has produced: a handbook of sophisms. We note that, despite the subject of the book and despite attention to definition throughout the work, Heinrichs fails to define the most important term of all—argument. The failure undermines his efforts to defend rhetoric or provide an especially useful manual on argumentation. Heinrichs slides back and forth through the different senses of the term. He fails to distinguish between argument as a function of rhetorical reason giving in order to convince, argument as a tool for achieving consensus, and argument as a form of proof. Indeed, Heinrichs’ understanding of argument is so broad and amorphous that at one point he seems to take the position that almost anything that might modify anyone’s behavior is argumentative including a wristwatch alarm, smoke detector and even a pile of fox poop.

Similarly, while leaning heavily upon Aristotelian distinctions, Heinrichs ignores Aristotle’s warning in Rhetoric of language designed to provoke emotion such as prejudice, pity, or anger. Heinrichs consistently advocates such use, yet Aristotle in Rhetoric likened it to warping a carpenter’s rule before using it.
While we applaud Heinrichs’ efforts to revitalize an interest in classical philosophers and the connection of ancient ideas to contemporary conditions, we cannot in good conscience encourage or support that effort if it is advanced by twisting Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine and others into various manifestations of Machiavelli.

This Machiavellian approach, we argue, ultimately undermines Heinrichs’ efforts. Heinrichs’ preaches a “whatever works” approach to argument, which is the very assumption for which Plato condemned the sophists. As Heinrichs declared outright: “If it works, then you’ve won the argument” (p. 19). Thus he embraces manipulation, misleading and even deception. Plato believed rhetorical practices advocated by the sophists could never be ethical since they encouraged speakers to draw from popular belief regardless of the truth of that belief and heedless of the propensity to perpetuate falsehoods. One need only recall certain efforts to encourage a war based on false but widely held beliefs that Iraq was linked with Al Queda to see the effective of the strategy. But effective does not mean ethical. The ethical question was set aside by some sophists then and by Heinrichs now.

This should not, we believe, completely disqualify Heinrichs’ efforts. There is much of value in Thank You for Arguing and we believe students could certainly benefit from giving it a read. We do not recommend it for entry-level courses where students are most susceptible to his “If it works, then you’ve won the argument” (p. 19) approach. We only recommend it as a secondary text for advanced courses where the greater emphasis is placed on works more central to the philosophical and classical sources of argumentation and rhetorical theory, and where additional readings may counter-point the “whatever works” philosophy of argument.

James P. Dimock
Daniel Cronn-Mills
Minnesota State University, Mankato
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