ISSA Proceedings 2002 – William Wilberforce And The Abortion Controversy

In 1990, as she "decodes" abortion rhetoric, Celeste Condit (44-49) notes two primary pro-life argument strategies focused on history. The first develops a history of abortion framed to show it as "An Almost Absolute Value in History." Condit dissects this carefully framed history. Established as authoritative for its religious (basically Catholic) audience, it is necessarily selective. A focus on the sanctity of life gives this history its argumentative strength. The second strategy presents the strand of evil in history as pro-life writers develop "analogies between slavery, the holocaust, and abortion" (49). Ronald Reagan's essay, "Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation," a text that still appears on pro-life web sites, provides the typical comparisons of slavery and abortion. Condit (50) notes Reagan, like many rhetors, shapes history to suit his needs, focusing on a shaped sense of the meaning of events rather than a precise historical record. The linkage across time for Reagan and others exploring these analogies is "villainy." The audience is expected to join in the struggle against the newest evil attacking the sanctity of life. Condit concludes the unified history has enough value appeal to be broadly persuasive, but also enough "evident partisanship" to limit "its legitimacy" (52). In the 1990s a new historical analogy gains a central place in pro-life argument. The subject of this analogy is less well known that the earlier comparisons, but also better suited to the multi-faceted needs of contemporary pro-life discourse.

William Wilberforce, the "conscience of the nation" who spearheaded the long fight to abolish the profitable and socially acceptable slave trade in Great Britain, has become a source of inspiration and argument for a new generation and a new cause.

When William Wilberforce entered Parliament in 1780, slavery seemed an inextricable part of the British economy. Slaves were viewed as necessary in some of the colonies, The slave trade itself was profitable for the merchant marine, and the ships involved in the slave trade provided a training and recruiting ground for the British Navy. Religion and religious appeals were of relatively little

importance in that pre-Victorian society, but all of these things would change as the influence of the Wesleys took hold in the country and Wilberforce and the Clapham group promoted a transformation of "manners" and values in the social and political realm. Wilberforce had been a close friend of Pitt, was seen as one of the wittiest and most eloquent members of Parliament, and was understood to be at the center of power, when he determined to devote his life to the abolition of slavery and the transformation of manners of his time. He saw these two things as the causes God had set for him. The life events, political strategies, legislative efforts, personal manner, and writings of this man provide a rich source of argument for contemporary Christian pro-life activists whether they are seeking to motivate their adherents or to explain their cause to those outside the group. Charles Colson dubs Wilberforce "A special inspiration for today's politically incorrect, 'religious right activists': To stay in the public square, to keep fighting the battles despite debasement, derision, and defeat, as long as we believe that's where God wants us'" (Colson,1996, xxvi). Wilberforce serves as an exemplar of an activist who succeeded against the odds. Slavery was the galvanizing social evil for evangelicals of Wilberforce's day; today for many evangelicals and conservatives the issue is abortion and the pro-life activists have claimed Wilberforce. For example, on a pro-life web site of Life and Liberty Ministries, in an announcement of the "Face the Truth Tour," a Wilberforce statement appears under a photograph of a protest line of graphic abortion photos: "Never, never will we…extinguish every trace of this bloody traffic (slavery), of which our posterity, looking back to the history of those enlightened times, will scarce believe that it has been suffered to exist so long a disgrace and dishonor to this country" (2001). By implication the analogy is drawn here as elsewhere between slavery and abortion, between Wilberforce's struggle for social change and what is required of current activists. In this case the focus is on social action against a perceived evil rather than religious justification. This Wilberforce reference provides the committed viewer with analogous, successful social action against a past pervasive, but accepted social ill.

Kenneth Burke (1954/1984, 97) claims the "danger of analogy is that a *similarity* is taken as evidence of an *identity*. Because two things are found to possess a certain trait in common which our point of view considers notable, we take the common notable trait to indicate identity of character." This understood, argument by analogy is a natural way to establish persuasive identification with an audience. At the simplest level the speaker relates an experience or

perspective the audience shares, there is a sense of identity, of commonality between speaker and audience and so the group is more persuasible. At another level, the speaker demonstrates that one commonly held belief or "piety" (74) is like another less familiar, less accepted belief, and so, on the strength of analogy the new belief or piety may become part of the audience's sense of what is right and appropriate. In these ways, on this basis, argument by analogy, based on the struggle of William Wilberforce in his efforts to abolish slavery in Great Britain becomes a valuable tool for pro-life rhetors. Using a Burkean approach, drawing on terministic screens, pieties, identification, and perspective by incongruity, this paper will explore how a selection of pro-life related web sites use Wilberforce to develop argument by analogy to support their actions and motivate their adherents.

A quick Google web search for "William Wilberforce Abortion" reveals over four hundred potentially relevant sites. After eliminating duplications, resource lists, and sites where the terms both appear but not in significant relationship, the remaining sites (under sixty) all refer to William Wilberforce as they make implicit or explicit analogous links between slavery and abortion. These texts comprise the document sample for this study.

1. Analogy and Context: The War between Good and Evil

"All it takes for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing;" the Conservative Christian Fellowship, a British group associated with the Conservative party, opens their mission statement page with this paraphrase of Edmund Burke, then mentions William Wilberforce's fight against slavery as they call for contemporary Christians to act. After relating the current abortion rate in Maine, and summarizing Wilberforce's "attack" on "his enemy, slavery," an Issues Summary of the Christian Civic League of Maine (2002) asserts, "Battles for truth and righteousness are always raging, everywhere." The context for the pro-life use of the Wilberforce analogy is clear. Such language is unmistakable. This is an ongoing war against good and evil with pro-life advocates as the soldiers in the battle. The assumption of that context is basic to the analogy.

At times the evil and any reluctant champions are portrayed in harshly abrasive terms. The "Lincoln letters" contend the nation is "guilty before God; and the Christian church has a heavy account to answer for" because of "the monstrous institutionalized evil of the 'abortion industry'…. Not by continuing to permit the willful, premeditated murder of generations of precious preborn human beings,

and the grievously rapacious exploitation of their mothers is this Union to endure…" (The Lovejoy, Greeley, Jay, Adams, Wilberforce-memorial press: The Lincoln letters). The analogy is weakened by the suggestion that civil war is imminent Burke (1954/1984) classes argument by analogy as a form of perspective by incongruity, i.e. things are explored on the basis of their common traits, things are classified according to our interests, but one person's classification patterns might differ from another and so classifications can become "heuristic by reason of the fact that through the processes of abstraction and analogy, they dictate new groupings, hence new discoveries" (103). New links may bring new and unexpected ways of seeing things, or they may fail by taking the audience too far outside their own "sense of what properly goes with what" (74).
The Lincoln letter, with its tone of zealous certainty seems written by someone who too vested in their own classifications to be able to shape their argument to identify with those outside their group. The language is too strident and the analogical pairing too strained to be persuasive for those outside the group.

Getting the public outside the faithful adherents of the cause to understand, from the pro-life perspective, the nature of the enemy is the greatest challenge for pro-life. The emotion-laden language that has traditionally surrounded the abortion controversy and the often-polarized positions of the constituencies make the task all the more difficult. In explaining the attitudinal and hortatory nature of language, Kenneth Burke (1965/1973, 45) introduces the concept of the "terministic screen." He contends that while "any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality." In short, words as labels serve to direct or shape what we see. In the case of the loaded, but polarizing terms basic to the discourse of the abortion controversy, such screens become critical. Some pro-life groups contend that the very word "abortion has lost practically all its meaning" (Face the truth tour, 2002).
They contend the word has been emptied of its impact and hence has become a terministic screen which must be shattered if the pro-life message is to be heard: "People have no interest in stopping this killing of preborn children because they do not see the act or the results of the killing; therefore, it ceases to exist in their comfortable worlds." In short, they argue that the term "abortion" cannot evoke the context of the pro-life battle with evil (though pro-choice advocates would undoubtedly argue that the term certainly evokes another battle with evil from

their perspective). Recognizing that "we live in a visual society," pro-life proponents respond with "awful photos to convey the "ugly truth." They argue that just as Wilberforce needed to take "local clergy to the docks where men, women and children were being sold as so much chattel" for people to understand the context of the battle, so they must use visual imagery to make the evil real. The strategic use of visual imagery within the pro-life movement undoubtedly predates their strategic use of Wilberforce, but by linking their action to Wilberforce's early strategies they provide justification for a sometimes questioned method. Addressing the Pro-Life caucus of the U.S. House of Representatives, Fr. Frank Pavone (*Priests for life newsletter,* 1996) focused on Wilberforce's use of verbal print imagery in *The Book of Evidence* to break down screens of misunderstanding. Pavone called Congress to provide a similar book of evidence on what abortion does to babies and women." Pro-life adherents would seek to shatter what they see as the devalued terministic screen, "abortion," and fill it with attitudinal and hortatory meaning through vivid example. In that way they set the context of the battle and the nature of their enemy.

Calling slavery and abortion each the "moral outrage" of their time, the Unborn Children's Pro–Life web page provides extended development of the slavery: abortion analogy. The site begins by paralleling the arguments used to justify each:

The unborn child is not a human being/the African is not a human being. The unborn child does not feel pain and distress/The African does not feel pain and distress. Keep abortion safe, keep it legal, because if we don't do it, unsavoury abortionists will; at least our abortion clinics are clean./Keep slavery safe, keep it legal, because if we don't do it, smugglers will; at least our slave ships are clean (Renault).

The opening parallels are clear and somewhat startling when juxtaposed. The Burkean (1954/1984, 111) sense of perspective by incongruity is at work; pairings made "in accordance with a new schematization" reveal new meanings. The unexpected similarities foster a revised understanding of the elements of the pairing. The analogy provides heuristic insight into the context as the evil to be battled is established. The parallels then progress to the reasoning behind the Dred Scott decision (which legitimised slavery) and the Roe vs. Wade decision: the pro-life advocates here contend that both are based on the understanding that Blacks or unborn children were not to be considered as persons, but as something

which can be owned or disposed of by another. This is the familiar territory of Condit's analysis; the evil is the same. The new subject, Wilberforce, appears midway in the comparison as the "courageous man not blinded by the prejudices of his day" who lead "the battle against slavery." Warfare has been joined and "The pro-life movement is here to champion that cause [the 'preborn'] and accomplish what the anti-slavery movement finally did – return a fundamental, precious human right to every human being…. We are and will remain today's William Wilberforce!"

Some sites extend the analogy comparing slavery, the holocaust of WWII and abortion, the very pattern of evil Condit traced earlier, but now the Wilberforce struggle joins or even replaces the American abolition movement in the analogy sequence. A statement by the Christian Action Council reiterates the three evils using a quick linking of Wilberforce's fight against slavery, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's opposition to Hitler, and the current opposition to abortion. The focus shifts slightly from the three battles, to the champions in the fight. The nature of the enemy is clearly detailed:
"while we still cringe at the horrors committed in Nazi Germany, we should equally cringe at the extermination of over 4000 unborn children per day in the United States" Burke (1954/1984, 71-74) calls "piety" our sense of what "ought to be," our sense of "what properly goes with what."

This vivid comparison of Nazi atrocities and abortion attempts to identify with and stretch the established pieties of a broader audience by clarifying the context. The pious and the evil are potentially reclassified; the familiar champions of the past – Wilberforce and Bonhoeffer – fought evil in a pious cause; as will the champions of the fight against abortion according to the pious pairings of the analogy. This has the potential to sway Christians who are not already committed to the pro-life cause, but the chosen historical champions lack the same ready appeal for a secular audience and are thus less apt to reach them.

Some websites use the analogy to contextualize the social challenges faced by the two movements: "The slave trade, like abortion today, was a money-making industry. Few people wanted to give it up. We need to exhibit the same determination and faith of Wilberforce and Wesley" (DeMar,1999). The speaker uses the analogy to establish a sense of shared difficulties and to demand a sense of equally shared responsibility to face those difficulties. Other sites (e.g. Sarfati, 2001) focus on the recurring argument about public space and private morality.

“Wilberforce… had to battle prevailing attitudes like, ‘Humanity is a private feeling, not a public principle to act upon’ (Earl of Abingdon) and “Things have come to a pretty pass when religion is allowed to invade public life'” (Lord Melbourne). Pro-life supporters are quick to recognize the similarities in the arguments raised by current and past opponents of social changes they support. The telling quotation by Lord Melbourne is used elsewhere by Charles Colson (2001, May 3). In delineating the similarity for their audience the activists seek to win their claim that abortion, like slavery, is not a private issue. Current social piety disapproves of slavery and cannot accept Melbourne’s critique of Wilberforce’s aims. In identifying their own quest with the earlier one, the proponents of pro-life suggest that social standards can change again as they have changed in the past, that society can learn a new set of social pieties, a new sense of what is appropriate: evil can be exposed.

There are predictable arguments within the movement over how the war with evil is to be waged – by direct involvement in political action or by changing the hearts of society through evangelization. Both methods suit the context and challenge evil, but the nature of the warfare is necessarily different. Notably, Wilberforce used both methods and so can be applied in diverse ways. Salina Bible Church uses this as they attempt to resolve the dispute between Cal Thomas, who claims that “Christians have become over-involved” and have lost the power to witness for their faith by focusing on political issues, and James Dobson, who warns that Christians cannot neglect the political process if they are “to defend family and religious rights.”
Salina Bible contends that both men want the same thing, to confront the evil they perceive in society, but they are emphasizing different methods to reach their goal. That assessment seems an oversimplification of the differences, but their almost throw-away one line reference to Wilberforce as the English Christian legislator who “fought” slavery, helps them build their case. A pro-life Canadian MP who had avoided politics “believing that morality and politics are mutually exclusive,” (Kunz, 2000) would later claim Wilberforce as one of his models and a source of inspiration in the long pro-life struggle. The Wilberforce pattern of faith and action challenges those nervous about entering the muddy realm of politics. For some pro-life activists there are no questions about the appropriateness of direct Christian political action.

Randall Terry (1999), founder of the radical pro-life group – Operation Rescue,

not surprisingly decries the Cal Thomas perspective, calling Thomas's book "more dangerous than… child pornography… and certainly more deplorable (in content and aim) than some of the most villainous books of history." He rejects the book's call for pastoral political neutrality and its assertion that "the main purpose of government is to promote an ordered society." Challenging evil and reforming society may disrupt order, but for Terry the context requires the direct fight by the champions of right. Wilberforce showed the way, even though that way could be longer than anyone wished. Terry rebukes Thomas for his demands that the pro-life movement should have made significant strides already if it was going to succeed: "Can you imagine if Cal Thomas has been advising William Wilberforce? It took Wilberforce fifty years of parliamentary labor to finally make slavery illegal….He would have told Wilberforce to throw in the towel." The context of the war with evil calls forth champions to emulate Wilberforce and carry on the long fight.

2. Analogy and Argument Issues: Strategic Choices

Ronald Nugent's discussion of the similar lack of human status argument provides a sharp contrast with the Lincoln letter discussed above. The imagery is just as vivid, but the language is more restrained, and the choice of analogic focus makes the criticism persuasive. He cites the case of the slave ship whose captain threw over a hundred slaves overboard. A suit brought against the ship's owners failed when the "Attorney general argued that it was 'a case of goods and chattels' and the Chief Justice stated that it was "exactly as if horses had been thrown overboard.'"

Nugent pairs this with a quotation from a book on Abortion law: "Medically and legally the embryo and the foetus are merely parts of the mother's body, and not yet human." The linkage is jarring, but the classifications seem more appropriate than the threats of civil war in the Lincoln letter. This is perspective by incongruity achieving its heuristic Burkean end.

Strategic choices in the use of the analogy also shape the way pro-life adherents address issues of action strategy. There is conflict within the pro-life movement over whether groups should advocate simply for a complete ban on abortion or they should support compromise legislation such as bills opposing partial birth abortions. Groups from both sides appeal to the Wilberforce analogy for support, Wilberforce's pattern of action and behavior is a type for the in group to emulate; Wilberforce is made the model for evangelical action and therefore his behavior

becomes a proof for them. In discussing "When compromising is not a compromise," Scott Klusendorf carefully develops the Wilberforce analogy to show that an incremental approach to the abortion campaign is appropriate and practical rather than a moral compromise. He notes Wilberforce's "first move was not to end slavery outright – a goal he simply could not achieve… – but to end state-sponsored slave trade in Great Britain. Like partial-birth legislation today, Wilberforce's bill went down to defeat" repeatedly. The bill ending the trade finally passed in 1807 and a bill abolishing slavery came eighteen years later. Klusendorf sees this not as "compromise" but "good moral thinking."
Matt Trewhella, writing for Missionaries to the Preborn, looks to Wilberforce to justify "a complete abolition strategy." He contends that Wilberforce never advocated the half-measure strategy….He constantly had to combat his allies in the abolition movement who wanted gradual reforms. He said….to introduce half-measures against this 'man-stealing,' would lead the public to no longer view it as raw evil, but rather, just a bad thing which needed to be regulated.

Different sets of are used to justify different perspectives. The source of the analogy, Wilberforce's abolition campaign, remains the same, but the content of the analogy shifts according to the needs and interest of the arguer.
Congressman Chris Smith (2000), needing to justify a politically and religiously sound approach to fighting abortion carefully sets Wilberforce up as part of "a vibrant, talented group of believers who fasted, prayed and worked in the cause." His suffering for the cause is deftly stressed as we are told Wilberforce was "reviled….vilified… [and] twice physically assaulted." Only then, with the credentials of the exemplar firmly in place, does Smith dare to apply the language of slow compromise to Wilberforce: "Incremental victory by incremental victory, in 1807 the slave trade was finally totally abolished. It had taken 20 long years to win this world-changing reform….Wilberforce then went after slavery itself." Smith continues his argument by citing the "vitally important incremental victories" that pro-life activists have won. For Smith the Wilberforce analogy serves to legitimize his own course of action regarding abortion and to motivate the audience to maintain their efforts.

In an update on Colorado pro-life legislation, Carrie Gordon (1997, April) cites State Representative Barry Arrington's use of the Wilberforce history of repeated efforts and legislative defeats as a source of consolation after Arrington's bill criminalizing partial-birth abortions was defeated. Gordon reminds her readers

that Wilberforce suffered years of defeats, not just one, and then she shows how even that one defeat served a purpose: “the bill presents voters a rare opportunity to determine how all 65 members of the Colorado House feel about abortion.” The analogy implies incremental progress in the midst of defeat; the advocates are thus motivated to continue the struggle.

The clearest extended discussion of Wilberforce’s own use of the incremental approach is found in the conclusion of an analysis of The Canadian Pro-Life Movement in the 21st Century. Having stated “one does not have to sacrifice one’s morality to gain politically,” thus attacking the charges that politics and political compromise are necessarily immoral, the conclusion details Wilberforce’s incremental successes:

… Wilberforce urged his supporters not to attack the ownership of slaves directly, but to first fight against the trade in slaves. Moreover, even as he presented legislation to end the slave trade, he would often vote for and sometimes introduced bills that recognized slavery and slave owner’s rights. One law he supported… banned ship owners from throwing slaves overboard.… [T]he bill technically recognized the rights of slave owners to transport their property. Wilberforce…supported the law because he knew it would force society to recognize the personhood of slaves and so in the long run, help their cause. Though he never wavered from his commitment to end slavery, Wilberforce always fought for what was politically possible, knowing that it was often the only moral thing he could do at that time.… As William Hazlitt warned after Wilberforce’s death, “A man must make his choice not only between virtue and vice, but between different virtue.”

The precise detail in the use of the analogy undercuts hasty opposing argument efforts like Trewhella’s. Careful, strategic use of the analogy proves the case completely.

3. Analogy and Group Identity: Manipulating Pieties

Discourse of any social movement may be directed to members of the group to reinforce their commitment to the goals of the group or to an audience outside the group in an effort to convert them to the group’s perspective or to draw them into the group. The manipulation of pieties, the reaffirming or reordering of one’s sense of what goes with what is a primary method for accomplishing these aims. References to Wilberforce serve both functions.

The Wilberforce analogy is used to build a sense of group identity, to establish for

each member of the pro-life group who they are as soldiers in the fight against evil. Such identification building sometimes comes in entertainment. John Eldredge's one-man show portraying William Wilberforce served as dinner entertainment at meetings of Oregon Right to Life (ORTL Conference Schedule) and Presbyterian s Pro-Life (Committee to review implementation). Wilberforce is clearly the group hero: his story has been identified as their story; his pieties are their pieties. For a pro-life audience to see an enactment of Wilberforce's trials and his ultimate success is to be affirmed in the piety of their own beliefs and actions, and reassured that the long struggle is also to be expected. Fitting within the piety structure of the analogy, the multiple failures, the societal rejection are all normal. The continuation of the analogy promises the pious member a hopeful resolution to the pro-life struggles. To demand immediate success, as Randall Terry accused Cal Thomas of doing in the example discussed above, would be impious. It would break the ordered structure of the analogy.

Addressing another pro-life audience, Congressman Chris Smith's (2000) use of the Wilberforce /slavery analogy begins with pieties common to people both in and out of the movement – the desire to be understood and respected, and a hatred of slavery: "We have much in common with those equally misunderstood and belittled members of the movement to abolish another grotesque human rights abuse – slavery."
The relatively unemotional, yet sympathetic linkage of the two causes through the identification of the treatment of the adherents and the root description of the causes could begin to pull in a larger audience, but as Smith develops his argument he is clearly focused on the committed pro-life supporters. He suggests Wilberforce 's example "can offer fresh inspiration, direction, and a much-needed historical perspective." This is to be a motivational speech appealing to the pieties and addressing the needs of a group that has faced many setbacks. He introduces Wilberforce as a politician who "underwent a 'great change' conversion… which revolutionized his priorities." Wilberforce is thus a "born again" politician apparently like the speaker. We are told Wilberforce anticipated "quick success" as Smith's "Sound familiar?" aside suggests some in the audience may have done, but Wilberforce is warned by John Wesley, "Unless god has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you?" As Wilberforce was warned and motivated by Wesley's analysis of the pious system, even so the contemporary pro-life supporter comes to understand quick success is not part of the way things are or

can piously be expected to be.

Charles Colson argues the moral issue at the heart of Wilberforce's fight against slavery and the current evangelical Christian objections to abortion is the same: "the sanctity and dignity of human life" (The Lieberman effect: Awakening the religious left?). The piety is basic to contemporary society, though the application of that piety to the abortion issue is contentious. Colson thus goes further in is efforts to motivate broader society. He adds Wesley and Shaftsbury's efforts for labor reform and modern Christian's objections to Communism. By linking the familiar, broader examples of the social piety – pro-labor/ anti Communism – with a less accepted example of piety, he seems to be seeking identification with a larger audience.

4. Analogy and the Potential for Success: Motivating Continuance

In presenting a "Biblical perspective on the abortion battle," George Robertson used Wilberforce's decades of effort to call his readers to be faithful in the struggle even in the face of constant failure: "[Wilberforce] heard the news on his deathbed that the slaves were emancipated. It is hard for a culture accustomed to instant everything to be persistent in even a good cause for a long period of time … we may not ever see abortion reversed; but that does not mean our labor is in vain. Little victories will be won; lives will still be saved; and there is reward in just being "John Wesley's letter of encouragement to Wilberforce reminding him "not to be weary in well-doing" for God who had "guided" him from youth would "continue to strengthen him in this and all things." The Wilberforce analogy becomes an argument for endurance, a motivating appeal to a discouraged and conflicted in group. Robertson notes that he is addressing the group after the" assassination by Paul Hill of the abortionist and his bodyguard." Robertson says the group has "lost our focus" and needs to be reminded of what we must really be about and how the victory will come." He affirms "that the battle, the weapons, and the strategy are primarily spiritual." Wilberforce is presented at the close of the text. Robertson's presentation of the story is terse, but the details are sufficient to make his point. If his audience was familiar with the details of the story, as they may well have been given the number of articles and books by and about Wilberforce which have appeared in Christian magazines and bookstores in recent years, then Robertson's anecdote would serve to evoke the full power of the Wilberforce analogy. Wilberforce was known not only for his persistence and his political strategies, but also for his deep faith and spiritual discipline.

Robertson does not make that point explicit, but it could easily have been evoked by what he did say for the more informed of his audience.

The Wilberforce example reinforces commitment in group members who are discouraged by their lack of immediate success. Graham Capill (2001) tells members of the Christian Heritage party of New Zealand to "Thank again of Wilberforce. Can you think of a greater example of patience and determination?" Capill quickly details the importance of slavery in the economy of 18th century Britain and the decades of struggle with repeated failures that Wilberforce went through in his effort to abolish slavery. He then makes the link clear and issues the motivating challenge: "We face a similar evil: abortion – the slaughter of the innocent. But do we have the determination to fight it year after year for 20 plus years? Does the Christian church have the fortitude to stand by politicians despite failure? In my experience it hasn't! the church has swallowed the world's emphasis on success and when something is not instantly successful, too often we conclude that God isn't in it. If this is your approach, you will never influence the nation for righteousness." If Wilberforce could fight for decades against a socially entrenched evil, then Capill suggests that surely the Christian activists of today can do no less. In a statement from the British Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, Wilberforce is included in the "cloud of witnesses" who watch current Christians battle, witnesses who "opposed with vigour the evils of their own day….even though their vision of final vindication was seen only dimly." With these examples, the activists are told that their hop need not be "fixed …on the successes of the pro-life movement to date" but on "the living God" ("The unborn child and obedience to God").

Harder uses his review of Wilberforce's long struggle against the odds as a threat to group membership: "Like Wilberforce, I may die, never seeing the realization of the wonderful dreams that God has put in my heart for the unborn. But nevertheless, dying content in the knowledge that Eugene harder, to the day of his death, was the salt of the earth and the light of the world…. I have this burning conviction that if I am not light and salt, then [I] am not a disciple of Jesus the Light of the World [.]" (Harder, 1995). The argument of similarity of conditions, similarity of challenges, can be used to inspire action or to require action. The analogy proves a valuable tool for motivating pro-life adherents.

5. Conclusion

The argument base provided by the Wilberforce vs. slavery analogy is potentially

stronger than the simple appeals to the American abolition movement made earlier and dissected by Celeste Condit. The same moral focus on the sanctity and dignity of human life prevails, but the extended timeline of Wilberforce's efforts, the careful emphasis on faith and activism which he exemplified, and the rich parallels in contemporary attitudes for the movements gives a richness to the possibilities of argument. Potential strategic uses of the analogy are enriched by the shift to Wilberforce. The context of war between good and evil was evident in the discourse critiqued by Condit. The shift toward the Wilberforce analogy and away from the American abolition movement, Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War, might initially seem to weaken that context of war, but it actually enhances the argument options. With Wilberforce, pro-life rhetors can avoid the issue of violent change and focus on the less bloody, but equally contested political struggle. Violent change violates the society sense of the pious; slow and steady reform, with time to shape the pieties of society incrementally along the way, arouses less animosity. The shift to Wilberforce would seem to enhance pro-life opportunities to sway a broader audience. The shift offers a further advantage in efforts to reach beyond the pro-life in group: the Wilberforce material is less familiar to the general audience. This gives the analogy the appeal of newness; arguments rooted in it have the potential to sound fresh. If carefully worded they can perhaps more easily avoid the heavy-handed emotional assumptions of some pro-life in group discourse.

The Wilberforce analogy comprises a significant argument base for pro-life advocates. It aids in breaking down the terministic screen posed by the loaded term, "abortion," and legitimizing movement aims through identification with shared pieties. Once identification is assumed, then the analogy suggests and justifies persuasive strategies to be employed. When the group is conflicted over appropriate methodology the analogy becomes a touchstone authority for what is or should be acceptable and expected.

Given the duration of the abortion controversy and the minimal successes garnered by the pro-life movement, the shift to the Wilberforce analogy serves a valuable motivational function by providing the audience with an example of a success whose struggle was equally contentious in his time, fraught with similar setbacks, and carried on for decades. The shift is the Wilberforce analogy is a recognition that the pro-life struggle will be a marathon rather than a sprint; the soldiers in the battle need to be prepared accordingly and they need suitable

heroes. Wilberforce meets the need admirably. He exemplifies persistent, faithful endurance. When the group is disheartened, the analogy provides a base for motivation; the challenges faced by Wilberforce and his cohort are easily seen as similar to those faced by pro-life forces; if Wilberforce could work with faith and determination for nearly fifty years, then it is easy for a leader to convince pro-life adherents that they should be willing to do the same: “Wilberforce succeeded because he and his allies committed their way to the Lord, fasted, prayed, worked diligently within the political process, and did good. We need do nothing more, but by no means, nothing less.” (Smith, 2000)

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 – World Environment Day 2000: Arguing For Environmental Action

World Environment Day, established in 1972, is "one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates world wide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action ... [it] is also a multi-media event which inspires thousands of journalists to write and report enthusiastically and critically on the environment" (UNEP Web page). World Environment Day is celebrated on June 5 (more than 100 countries observe the event annually) with a different country selected to host the ceremonies each year. Australia was selected as the host country and Adelaide as the primary site for the 2000 celebrations. I attended the event and took field notes on the activities, arguments advanced, and value

appeals invoked in the public rhetoric. I collected available print materials and media coverage on site and later through a Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe review of General News. This essay explores the strategic events and discourse of World Environment Day 2000 including the media's response, offers a descriptive analysis of the argumentative strategies employed in the activities, and compares the observed events with the media's coverage of the celebration.

To understand the format and goals for the event, some additional background information is appropriate. The host site organizes public events that focus largely on spectacle as a way of generating public attention to the environment – parades, concerts, rallies, school competitions, clean-up activities, etc. World Environment Day celebrations also have a political component, the official events – symposia, treaty signings, and information campaigns. The political activities reinforce environmental agreements as well as provide a forum where delegates and international guests can exchange strategies for environmental action or garnering desirable media coverage.

In his December 1999 press release, Robert Hill, Australian Environment Minister, articulates an additional agenda for host countries, to garner favorable international attention for their environmental achievements and commitments: "World Environment Day is a cause for national activity and celebrations … to … show the world that Australia's unique heritage is in good hands" (http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/env/99/mr18dec99.html).

The host country's agenda and the U.N.'s goals for the commemoration rely on good media coverage of political and public events. *1. Scholarship and Media Coverage of the Environment*

Since Earth Day 1970, media attention to environmental issues (Collins & Kephart, 1995) has been largely focused on events and discourse that created good spectacle: public controversies as in the fluoridation campaign and public reaction to nuclear power (Mazur, 1981); the accident at Three Mile Island (Friedman, 1981); media gatekeeping in the asbestos awareness campaign (Freimuth and Nevel, 1981); the snail darter controversy (Glynn & Tims, 1982); acid rain (Glynn, 1988); the spotted owl debate (Lange, 1993; Moore, 1993; Paystrup, 1994; Opt 1994); or potential/actual environmental disasters such as Chernobyl (Luke, 1987), environmental risk (Rentz, 1992), and the Exxon Valdez accident (Williams & Treadway, 1992). Each of these environmental situations lent itself to "crisis coverage" or was characterized by spectacle and most often framed, by the media, as a Race Against the Clock to prevent environmental

disaster. Lange (1993) notes, “resource conflict has become a quintessential feature” (239) of environmental reporting with the media framing resource conflict as Economy vs. the Environment in which only one end is served, or as Political Wrangling in which the focus shifts from the environmental issue under consideration to a blow-by-blow reporting of the bickering between political factions–party politics, developed vs. developing nations, industry vs. environmentalists (Collins & Kephart, 1995).

Scholars investigating environmental campaigns and media coverage note a lack of research into how public attitudes and action with respect to the environment are changed. Oravec’s (1984) discussion of competing value hierarchies and Cox’s (1982) discussion of the *loci communes* which become the basis for the public’s “interpretation of general values in situated moments of decision and action” (228) nudged scholarship toward a focus on argument in environmental discourse.

This essay explores how the symbolic activities associated with World Environment Day and the news accounts it encouraged constructed meaning for the public through the selection of particular rhetorical frames for the events, the emphasis on particular values, and the arguments advanced and reported. World Environment Day is a strategic act designed to construct a reality in which environmental activism is central. As such, successful ceremonies will tap into the values, arguments, and assumptions of the global public (not the least of which is the global media) in such a way that environmental action becomes foremost in the public’s agenda.

The critic of environmental communication, especially of public awareness campaigns such as World Environment Day, must assess the quality of the argumentative strategies that were adopted. To this end, this essay assesses the choice of public and political events to commemorate World Environment Day 2000 in Adelaide. Strategic choices at this level, however, can be enhanced or minimized by the media’s coverage of the events. The paper analyzes the number of stories and the frames the media employs to report the event. Parades and rallies generate mass participation and heighten the excitement of the moment, but they are often given more importance in media stories (because they contain spectacle) than the scientific messages that are proposed in the more serious activities of the celebration. Similarly problematic, the symposia and treaty signings are easily reported as examples of a lack of global commitment,

especially when the major players, like the United States, are unwilling to participate fully. In this case, Political Wrangling as a frame minimizes the scientific frames that could be employed. The media's coverage of these rhetorical acts has the potential to facilitate or to threaten the United Nations General Assembly's goal of fostering global environmental action because even the choice of frames that journalists employ (e.g., "The Environment" as a symbolic complex that demands attention) shape public understanding.

The remainder of this essay explores the strategic events and discourse of Australia's ceremonies and the media's response to this global event. It entails participant observation, a numerical assessment of patterns of media coverage, and a close textual analysis for narrative frames.

2. Public and Political Events in Adelaide

Adelaide hosted a large number of public events designed to enhance awareness of and commitment to protecting the environment. In the week leading up to June 5, Adelaide decorated the city and its public transportation with colorful banners and posters that included the logo and theme, "2000 The Environment Millennium: Time to Act". Posters, postcards, and banners feature a sea turtle and a graphic for the year 2000 with each number in a photo block (one of a golden frog, one of sand dunes, one of green leaves, one of coral on the ocean floor) to remind the viewer of environmental problems facing the globe. Local stores developed merchandise to commemorate the day, including tee shirts, hats, and even chocolate frogs to remind those with a sweet tooth that many species of frogs are endangered. Eco Party 2000 provided entertainment along with environmental information on Adelaide's threatened plants and animals in exchange for a gold coin contribution for environmental action. The invitation noted, "This is your opportunity to party and protect our planet!"

The Rundle Mall in central Adelaide displayed local, governmental, and industry exhibits to promote environmental awareness. A giant inflated platypus and numerous activities tailored to children dominated the mall. Activities included a treasure hunt through informational materials and 3D art displays illustrating the effects of pollution on river plant and animal life with an emphasis on ways of preventing stormwater pollution. "The Treasure Hunt will . . .challenge the children to draw links between the messages and their own lives. Successful completion of the Treasure Hunt will result in participants taking home a raised awareness of stormwater issues and a treasure trove of goodies" ("World

Environment Day program). During the week preceding June 5, the Australian Youth Parliament debated environmental issues as did high school virtual debate teams in Adelaide and in her sister cities, such as Christchurch, New Zealand. The Adelaide Botanic Gardens developed an interpretive trail to educate the public to the importance of water. Each of the preceding activities and displays was designed to bring the environment to the public's attention. It would have been difficult to live and work in Adelaide without seeing the environmental displays the city provided or read and hear about the World Environment Day events. The focus for most of these public activities, beyond environmental awareness, was the threat to life posed by water mismanagement (waste, salination), air pollution, and species endangerment.

Local organizations such as Threatened Species Network for South Australia sponsored additional activities, including a competition for the best biodiverse backyard. Smogbusters sought to educate the public to the need for sustainable transport by having "people wearing nitrogen dioxide samplers around the Adelaide city area" ("World Environment Day: Leave). Environmental groups and city planners sponsored numerous tree plantings, the most frequently employed symbolic activity in World Environment Day celebrations globally, and waterside cleanup activities to symbolize the role of human effort in addressing environmental needs. The value of waterside cleanup projects is well known to Australian children. Public schools have units devoted to environmental education, especially the preservation of water resources. Activity projects and a poster campaign produced by the Waters and Rivers Commission teach children that human, plant, and animal life are interdependent and remain healthy only with a healthy water system. One poster campaign is organized around the theme, "I can do that" with individual posters focusing on clean water, a healthy wetlands, living streams and catchment friendly gardening. Each of the posters includes a statement about the dependence on water, e.g. "Dragonfly larvae and many other animals depend on clean water in our rivers and wetlands for their survival" followed by a list of activities that humans can engage in to preserve water resources. The water cleanup activities in the Adelaide area included removal of noxious weeds and exotic species and replanting the riverbanks with indigenous plants, water monitoring projects by local school children, and restoring coastal vegetation.

The splashiest and predictably most frequently reported event because of its

nature as spectacle was the 6000 school children marching in a parade that terminated at the reviewing stand where United Nations dignitaries joined Australian officials in formally opening the World Environment Day 2000 activities. The children were dressed as environmental problems and solutions. Anticipating the parade, Adelaide's *The Advertiser* reported that 65 schools from throughout South Australia would be sending 6200 children to participate. An elementary school teacher was quoted, "The children in my class are a big pond the children on the outside will all be in blue garbage bags with streams and invertebrates hanging from them … In the middle we've got frogs, tadpoles and a bit of pollution" (Huppatz, 6/3/00, 32). The television coverage in South Australia focused on the children's parade and replanting activities. References to the inflatable platypus and other larger than life environmental characters inhabiting Rundle Mall were frequently included in news accounts that anticipated and reported the events of June 5.

There is a consistent argument running across the public activities sponsored in recognition of World Environment Day: Human effort is needed immediately to correct numerous environmental problems. Although the problems are generally traceable back to human action, the focus is less on who or what caused the problem and more on the needed immediacy of a solution. By framing the argument in this way, humans are seen more as change agents and less as culpable for environmental degradation. The argument assumes a public aware of the environmental issues and generally in agreement with the premise that human effort is needed immediately. It also presupposes an audience accepting of the proposed courses of action. The argumentative stance assumes that the only barrier to solving environmental problems is human inaction. The public, then, is seen as agreeing with environmental activists, but merely quiescent. Given these assumptions, the logical campaign to wage is one that raises public awareness of the necessity for acting immediately. Activating an agreeing but quiescent audience requires different arguments than educating or convincing a neutral or disagreeing audience. For example, arguments justifying tree plantings and waterway cleanup replantings emphasize how much help individuals have given and can provide in re-creating a sound ecosystem; they assume agreement with the definition of the problem and proposed solutions. The appeal is cast as a greening of Australia. Stephen R. Kellert's taxonomy of basic values would see this as a humanistic appeal to a love of nature. Although we seldom think of environmental activism as representing a dominionistic value, a form of mastery

of nature, in effect tree plants and waterway restructuring reflect a belief in the human ability to design and thereby improve nature. The resultant worth value is to maintain nature/the environment for its potential use or to enhance nature's indirect use value by recognizing its ecosystem functions: worth value "refers to some tangible benefit that accrues to a human being" (Perlman, Adelson & Wilson, 1997, 44).

Value appeals and assessment of worth give substance to argument frames. Frames organize, clarify relationships, direct the attention of the receiver of the message. Edelman (1993) explained that frames can evoke particular and arbitrarily established social realities: "Far from being stable, the social world is … a kaleidoscope of potential realities, any of which can be readily evoked by alternating the ways in which observations are framed and categorized" (p. 232). Gamson (1989) makes the link between the substance of an argument and the meaning it takes on; e.g., facts have meaning only as they are "embedded in a frame or story line that organizes them and gives them coherence, selecting certain ones to emphasize while ignoring others" (p. 157). In the case in point, the explanation, that what is being removed are exotic plants introduced by humans, and that it is more environmentally sound to replanted with native species, is left unarticulated. The science behind this preference for native plants is also ignored frequently in the appeal for replanting. The argument frame and supporting value appeals constitute what Murray Edelman would term a contestable category. An example of what happened at one of the advertised tree plantings on June 5 illustrates why argument frames and value appeals are worth considering when designing an informational or action campaign.

The local paper and posters surrounding the Town Hall in Adelaide advertised a tree planting activity to begin at 10 a.m. along the tramway at stop 18. It was one of only two activities listed for June 4, in addition to the informational exhibits in the Rundle Mall. As such, I assumed it would be a major activity, attended by dignitaries from Australia and the United Nations, and thus covered extensively by the media. I arrived 15 minutes early and discovered only one person who was hauling boxes of roses and perennial plants toward a recently cleared but not tilled patch of land (approximately 15 feet by 30 feet) located between the tram rails and a residential street. An umbrella table, several plastic chairs, and two unattended boom mikes set off to the side were the only indication that a media event might soon be happening at the site. The man told me that he lived across

the street and had secured the plants from a local nursery. He had distributed flyers in the neighborhood to encourage people to join him in a planting program. He was not sure when the officials would arrive, but hoped that they would bring additional planting material. After the two of us planted for about 20 minutes a hand full of neighbors joined us to finish planting everything that he had managed to get contributed from a local nursery. The neighborhood was pleased with their efforts and assured me that by removing the overgrown bushes and re-landscaping the tram stop they felt they were contributing to increased use of the tram, and thus acting in the spirit of World Environment Day and the greening of Australia. Because the stop had been dark and overgrown, several muggings had taken place and the elderly community members had stopped using public transportation as a result. For the locals, replanting served a safety value, but it also represented an aesthetic value. The neighbors felt they were part of the Adopt-A-Tram Station program that had been developed in Adelaide. They were committed to maintaining the flowers, hand watering the plants and weeding out the native grasses that had previously given the stop an un-cared-for appearance.

Fifteen minutes after we finished planting, a corps of conservation volunteers arrived with more of the fast growing native trees and bushes that had earlier been removed. They informed the neighborhood group that the roses and perennials would need to be removed and native species planted in their stead. On the heels of this announcement a handful of dignitaries arrived by private cars. Three reporters also arrived in time for a brief speech praising Adelaide for its World Environment Day activities, especially their commitment to planting trees throughout the area. During the speeches the corps of conservation volunteers planted about two dozen native trees. In less than thirty minutes after their arrival, the dignitaries, media, and conservation corps left Tram stop 18. They left a frustrated group of local volunteers who found themselves at odds with the official agenda for re-plantings. No one bothered to explain that native species require less water and support indigenous animal life. No one bothered to explain that an aesthetic garden was not necessarily environmentally sound. The greening of Adelaide was a contestable category, an argument that strategically would have been better framed from a scientific perspective. Rather than focus on action, the reasons for action might still have allowed accommodation of the neighborhood’s safety concerns and desire to be involved with the science behind native planting.

This one example of miscommunication points to the need for careful audience analysis and subsequent arguments that seek what Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1971) term “objects of agreement” shared by the public and that are less contestable. Because the public is already committed to water preservation and wary of increased salination (or seemed to be given general public discourse on the topic), this consensus might have made a better basis for seeking public action than the vaguer appeal to a green Australia or arguments designed to seek action/solutions before they carefully articulate the problems and their causes. The powerful spectacle of replanting garnered some desired media attention and even the imagination of the public (this was a neighborhood, I was told, that had not worked together before), but the rationale for the action was not clear and hence the neighborhood efforts were misdirected. Something less symbolic and more informational or, alternatively, symbolic activities based on a solid informational campaign would have better achieved the strategic end that the planners of World Environment Day 2000 sought.

The political events planned for World Environment Day 2000 were less numerous than the public events and were subsequently less visible to both the public and the media. UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) sponsored a major awards ceremony held June 4 to recognize outstanding achievement in environmental work internationally and within Australia, the Urban Forest Biodiversity Program hosted a national conference that addressed “Conserving Biodiversity in Urban Environments” and the Adelaide City Council hosted an environment forum at the Town Hall for senior government officials, business leaders, and members of the public.

This later event dealt with the challenges and opportunities for implementing sustainability. The Lord Mayor’s welcome focused on Adelaide’s efforts to meet the Agenda 21 program and environmental management plan; the city’s goal was to be recognized as a first class sustainability locale. The keynote was delivered by Professor Padayachee, Chair of the International Council for Local Government Initiatives. His argument was that environmental change would best emerge once the paradigm was changed from a focus on protocols and international diplomatic efforts to tackling the problems where they occur. Success, he argued, in environmental improvement depends on recognizing the value of local government and local initiatives and making sure local governments get their feet wet by talking with their constituencies about perceived environmental problems and what might be done to address these issues. He used an African saying, “Rain

doesn’t fall on a single hut” to argue that drought doesn’t happen to a single hut or single nation; globally we are connected. The challenge then was to Australia; if Australia fails in its environmental action, it will be a real failure because they have so many resources and so few people. Adelaide was praised as being the second best city globally in setting a high goal for reducing emissions that contribute to the greenhouse effect. Five additional speakers talked about local initiates to enhance sustainability:Tony Wilkins, National Environmental Manager for News Ltd; Dr. Bill Brignal from Thames Water (UK); Alan Ockenden, Torrens and Patawalonga Catchment Water Management Board; Margaret Bolster, Conservation Council of South Australia; and Greg Black, Housing Trust of South Australia. Each speaker used examples of their local efforts to enhance sustainability; each addressed the challenges their organizations or locales still faced. The speeches were followed by a question-answer session that was quite confrontational of the claims made by each of the speakers. The hostility of the questions made it clear that little dialogue would ensue.

The choice of speakers and their topics reflects the secondary agenda of demonstrating Australia’s efforts to protect the environment. The speeches and the informational materials distributed outside of the hall by United Water, South Australian Housing Trust, Environmental Services, and Amcor Recycling Australia all were geared to this end. The explanation of environmental actions were consonant with that ideal, but the arguments reflected direct use worth for the environment and the need to support the environment in order to sustain utilitarian values. It is perhaps not surprising that the tone of the question-answer session challenged these appeals. Environmental activists who rejected the congratulatory tone of the invited reports would argue that making efforts to recycle only so that you have more natural resources to use is not a sufficiently green attitude. For example, one questioner told the process specialist for Thames water that their solution to water treatment employed processes that were also destructive to the aquatic environment; another questioned *The Advertiser’s* boast that they used significant amounts of recycled paper, countering the argument with statistics indicating their recycling was no better than other papers. The questioners’ arguments reflected humanistic and moralistic values toward nature and illustrated little tolerance for the utilitarian value they heard articulated. In light of the questions, the speeches presented and the literature provided by the industries and organizations represented took on the appearance of a public relations campaign. Strategically the speakers would

have been wiser to have acknowledge environmental issues that remain to be tackled by their organizations in addition to enumerating their successes. From the perspective of the planners of the forum, there was a disappointing lack of media coverage; had there been coverage, however, it would have been difficult to avoid reporting the event as political wrangling.

3. Media Coverage of World Environment Day 2000

The United Nation's agenda in establishing and continuing to support World Environment Day is best served with significant positive media coverage of the event. James Carey (1988) and others have long argued that the media circulate meanings for events and issues that are reproduced in social, political and economic actions. How the media reports an issue is conventionalized; the meaning is constructed through the narrative frames that are selected and through the decision that an event or issue is worthy of coverage. The more important the media deem an event, the more coverage it is given. Hence, one way to measure the success of the United Nation's effort to promote environmental awareness is to determine the number of news stories mentioning World Environment Day.

A Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe search using the key term World Environment Day reveals its first mention in 1972-73 (September 1 – August 31 are the reporting dates. The June 5 event is generally out of the news by the end of August and coverage of the anticipated event does not begin until the fall or winter preceding the celebrations). Increasing coverage begins in 1993-94 when there were 25 stories; in 1995-96 there were 43 stories; in 1997-98 there were 66 stories; and in 1999-2000 for the Adelaide celebration there were 139 stories (adjusted to eliminate 17 duplicate stories). In 2000-01 the number of stories fell to 74. Although media attention has increased, for a major United Nations sponsored event the coverage is less extensive than one might have expected. As a comparison I also looked at two single days, June 1 and August 1 to see how many stories were reported using the single term, Environment. In comparison, World Environment Day coverage looks insignificant. For 2000, on June 1 a Lexis-Nexis search reveals 230 stories (only 2 of these stories deal with World Environment Day) and on August 1 there were166 stories reported. As was the case with stories about World Environment Day, stories about the environment have steadily risen since the early nineties. In comparison to routine environmental reporting, World Environment Day garners relatively little media

attention. As a way of generating public interest in the environment by inspiring "thousands of journalists to write and report enthusiastically and critically on the environment" (UNEP Web page), then, World Environment Day is not especially successful.

In the week preceding and following the event–that time when media coverage is most extensive – there were 47 stories (May 29-June 4), and 24 stories between June 6-12. There were 43 stories on June 5. All 114 news accounts were read and coded for (1) how they reflected the established goals; (2) whether they reported public or political events or both; (3) the kind of story written – announcement or report of the proceedings, report of an environmental problem, or report about environmental activism; and (4) the narrative frames and environmental values apparent in the story.

Two goals were articulated in the United Nations announcement of World Environment Day, stimulating world wide awareness of the environment and enhancing political attention and action. Australian Environment Minister Hill added a third, to "show the world that Australia's unique heritage is in good hands." Coverage of the event outside of the Australian media was minimal, only 23 stories were included in the Lexis-Nexis data base. During the week preceding the event 17% of the reported stories were from non-Australian sources. On June 5, 2000, all but 4.6% of the stories came from Australian papers, although more than half of these were designated as either report advertisements or feature advertisements. In the week following the event the thirteen stories from outside Australia constituted 54.2% of the post-event pool.

Global attention does not seem to be generated by the event. Other United Nations environmental events, such as the Earth Summit, have garnered significant attention, more than 600 stories in the week before the summit, slightly more during the summit, and over 200 in the following week. The Environmental Forum, the main working event (political) in Adelaide, was not structured to generate global political attention or action and succeeded in creating divisions rather than consensus among local presenters and participants. Few stories served the third goal of publicizing the host nation's environmental heritage and record; 14.3% praised the nation while 2.6% refuted claims that Australia acted appropriately on environmental issues. Generally, then, media coverage did not support the three main goals of World Environment Day.

Most of the new stories, 57.9%, merely announced the event or recorded the activities, usually the award winners announced during the celebrations. One fourth of the stories mentioned environmental issues that needed to be addressed, and 22.8% mentioned environmental activism. When only 42% of the news stories go beyond an enumeration of events or awards to actually discuss environmental issues, it becomes again apparent that the goals for World Environment Day are not being met through news stories.

4. Media Frames in World Environment Day Stories

When news accounts about the day do report an environmental story, what arguments shape the discussion? The frames that the media select argue for particular approaches to environmental issues, highlight and hide selected issues, events, and orientations, and structure a public understanding of the Environment as a symbolic complex. Schudson (1982) contends that through the media's frames, "the world is incorporated into unquestioned and unnoticed conventions of narration, and then transfigured, no longer a subject for discussion but a premise of any conversation at all" (98). Framing research articulates where and how the media structures public understanding.

Even the definition of something as an event is the result of social construction. Hackett (1984) argues that research on media ideological explores story frames which privilege particular readings of events. "Such framing is not necessarily a conscious process on the part of journalists; it may well be the result of the unconscious absorption of assumptions about the social world in which the news must be embedded in order to be intelligible to its intended audience" (Hackett,1986, 247-248).

Entman's (1993) review of early framing research concludes that "the concept of framing consistently offers a way to describe the power of a communicating text" (51). Collins &Kephart's (1995) review of U.S. media's framing of biodiversity provided the list of frames coded in this project. Thirteen frames were identified in the 48 stories that developed arguments about the environment. Only five frames appear in at least 20% of the news accounts, and these are the frames reported.

The predominate frame, occurring in 66.7% of the stories is Humans as Change Agents. This frame argues that humans applying scientific solutions and modifying their behavior can reduce environmental degradation and sometimes reverse problems of species rarity, endangerment, and extinction. *The Sunday*

Mail wrote a story about one couple's work on their property which "sets the standard for watercourse revegetation in the State" (World Environment Day … Bob's a leading, L05). Human effort is cast as redressing the imbalance in the ecosystem. Stories framed in this way advance the United Nation's agenda. The frame argues that human effort makes a difference; the assumption behind this argumentative stance is that Human Survival depends on environmental health. This is a second frame that occurs in the news accounts of World Environment Day. Given the prevalence of the Humans as Change Agents frame, it is interesting that only 10.4% of the stories articulate this assumption. A third frame is similarly linked to these two, Humans as Culpable. This frame, occurring in 33.3% of the stories, and most frequently employed in the week after the celebrations, places human behavior as central to environmental degradation. Without this link to Humans as Culpable, as causal agents for environmental problems, appeals to Humans as Change Agents relies on altruism; when the two frames are linked, guilt and responsibility serve as additional motivation.

Attention is taken away from environmental problems in the second most frequent frame in the news accounts, Political Wrangling (35.4% of the stories). Political wrangling changes the focus from science to politics and replaces cooperative efforts to solve problems with political infighting between governmental factions or stakeholders. The drama of conflict predominates and diverts the reader's attention away from the environment. For example, a story about environmental problems associated with Australia's Snowy River became a discussion of how the "issue falls on party lines" (Schubert, 2000, 6) and why political alliances are unlikely to be forged across party lines. Focusing environmental stories on political fighting can construct a situation in which the reader will view problems as insolvable and hence make individual efforts seem not worthwhile.

Two frames were used in 20.8% of the stories, Race Against the Clock which suggests that only through immediate action can extinction be prevented, and Interconnectedness of Organisms which links environmental problems in one area to all organisms within the ecosystem. U.S. Media coverage of biodiversity between 1986 and 1992 most frequently focused on the extinction crisis central to the Race Against the Clock frame; Interconnectedness was a seldom employed frame at that time (Collins& Kephart, 1995). The subsequent increase in attention to Interconnectedness and decrease in crisis reporting is a positive trend given the goal of educating the public to how human actions effect the environment.

Media stories that go beyond merely announcing World Environment Day highlight the role of human action in environmental improvement or degradation, even though a third of the time bickering becomes more central than the environmental conditions or solutions that are the ground for the dispute. The media's construction of the Environment Story contributes to the realization of the World Environment Day agenda. This agenda would be further advanced with fewer stories framed as political wrangling, and with more developed environmental stories.

The frames selected by the media shape the public's understanding of World Environment Day and of environmental issues generally. Media conventions and standards such as objectivity mask the power of ideological frames in shaping what is covered, how it is covered, and how news accounts privilege an audience's understanding of the reported events. Hackett (1986) summarizes: "In other words, part of television's ideological work consists precisely in presenting itself as *nonideological*" (Hackett, 1986, 249). The same argument can be extended to other media forms that Hackett applies to television. The more balanced and objective one says one is trying to be, the more powerful are frames which are obscured from critical attention. The media may begin the reporting process with a collection of facts, but these facts are narrated in news accounts: "Narration thus inevitably involves political assumptions, ideology, social values, cultural and racial stereotypes and assumptions as well as specific textual strategies. In other words, journalistic texts are literary constructions that are yet profoundly aligned with viewpoints and values of particular social and economic interest" (Parisi, 1998, 239). In choosing Political Wrangling as a frame, the media reflect their preference for drama and the Political as a symbolic complex that is more important than a scientific discussion of environmental issues. Stories framed as scientific rather than political would better serve the goals of the United Nation's campaign.

In framing World Environment Day as the do, the act is named and given an implicit plotline, cast of characters, and motivation for actions. Kenneth Burke reminds us that as we name something we create boundaries that delimit the thing named, we become subject to the terministic screens we have created. Once named, the particular becomes universal; abstractions are treated as reality. Peer and Ettema warn us,"The process of framing, in other words, becomes invisible, or made to seem natural, precisely because news reporting follows conventional rules" (1998, 257).

There is nothing overtly inappropriate about the media's choice of frames in covering World Environment Day, but those choices limit the public's understanding of the complexity of environmental issues. Science-based frames such as the Importance of Ecosystem Function and Services, which would add clarity to the discussion of environmental problems and solutions, are seldom employed. News conventions to privilege the simple, the dramatic, the personal allow little opportunity for complex, non-dramatic, and abstract discussion, even if that is what the issue demands.

Without stories framed to explore the complexity of environmental issues, the United Nation's goal depends on generating a large number of stories so that at least the public's awareness of the environment is piqued in the short term. If the Untied Nations is to achieve its goal with World Environment Day, significantly more stories will need to be developed in conjunction with the event. As it stands, World Environment Day is good spectacle for the host community and selected other cities globally, but it does not generate the enthusiasm and commitment to the environment that it was designed to engender.

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 – "The Issue" In Argumentation Practice And Theory

1. Introduction

This paper compares metadiscursive uses of "the issue" in two settings (college classroom discussions and public participation in school board meetings), and reflects critically between these empirical cases and the concept of issue in argumentation theory. Our intent is to pursue this critique in both directions; that is, to critique the practical discourse in light of normative argumentation theory while also considering how argumentation theory might be informed by practical considerations. The ultimate goal of our research is a grounded practical theory, a conceptual reconstruction of argumentative discourse that is both rationally warranted and practically useful

(Craig & Tracy, 1995).

Jean Goodwin's (2002) work in the normative pragmatic theory of "Designing Issues" provides an especially useful starting point in argumentation theory. For Goodwin, "an issue is a more or less determinate object of contention that is, under the circumstances, worth arguing about." For the purposes of argumentation theory, the existence of a determinate issue can often be taken for granted as one of the preconditions for arguments to be made. In reality, however, issues are not always well defined, nor do they "simply lie there" waiting to be argued about. "An issue arises when *we make an issue* of it" in practical discourse. Issues exist when arguers successfully design them so as to create the pragmatic conditions for argumentation to occur. "In order to make an issue of some matter, the arguer will have to (a) render it as determinate as required for the particular situation, and (b) show that, under the circumstances, it is worth arguing" (Goodwin, 2002).

To understand how issues are designed in practical discourse becomes, then, a task for argumentation theory. As Goodwin points out, the issue itself is at issue in many controversies, and discursive resources for framing and defining issues play important roles in argumentative practice. The task of a normative pragmatic theory is to explain how issues can be designed so as to induce interlocutors to address them. This requires more than a mere classification of issues, for example as provided by the traditional *stasis* theory of forensic rhetoric. Following Kauffeld (e.g., 1998), Goodwin shows that designing an issue requires the use of available discursive resources to create conditions in which interlocutors will be held responsible for addressing the issue, whether it be an accusation of wrongdoing or a claim about the likely consequences of a policy decision. Although not a direct extension of Goodwin's work, our research extends the broader empirical investigation of issue design in two ways: first, by examining practical discourse in two distinct situational contexts (college classroom discussions and public participation in school board meetings) and second, by focusing on metadiscursive uses of the term issue and related terms. Goodwin (2002) opens her paper with some interesting exploratory observations on metaphors (such as point, terrain, and foundation) that underlie common uses of the term, issue. Taking a slightly different approach (that of grounded practical theory), we analyze pragmatic uses of the issue and related terms in practical discourse in order to identify conceptual features and distinctions and illuminate

their pragmatic functions. The following sections summarize empirical findings in the classroom and school board settings, compare the two cases, and conclude with a brief reflection on the implications for argumentation theory.

2. Classroom Discussions

The classroom data are drawn from a corpus of student-led discussions of controversial issues in college "critical thinking" classes (Craig, 1997, 1999, 2000; Craig & Sanusi, 2000, 2002). Transcribed from audio- or videotapes, the discussions usually lasted about 40 minutes and involved 18-25 participants, 4-6 of whom had been assigned as a group to select an issue and lead the discussion.

Craig (1999) showed how participants in one such discussion used a theoretically informed concept of the issue as a normative resource for managing the group's interaction. Participants mentioned "the issue" when doing such things as defining a topical focus, supporting or attacking the relevance of an argument, or questioning an assumption. In performing these actions they relied on certain normative attributes of the issue that had been emphasized in this critical thinking class: that critical discussion should focus on an issue; that the issue should be a clear, unitary question; that prescriptive and descriptive issues should not be confused; and that arguments (conclusions supported by reasons and evidence) should be relevant to the issue under discussion. The issue thus served as a metadiscursive device (a way of talking about the ongoing talk) that enabled participants "to conduct their discussion while reflecting on the normative basis of some of the practices by which they conduct their discussion" (p. 27).

In pragmatic terms, the issue is a device for negotiating the topical focus of discussion. Presuming that the issue has a certain normative status – i.e., that discussion *should* focus on the issue – statements of the issue can be used strategically to create a context in which some lines of argument are more relevant than others and therefore easier to pursue. If different statements of the issue favor conflicting lines of argument (e.g., "right to life" versus "right to choose" formulations of the abortion issue), then the issue itself can become the issue, the focus of controversy (cf. Goodwin, 2002).

Craig (2000) showed how certain ambiguities in the issue can "affect its strategic use as a normative standard for what the group should be discussing" (p. 65). "The issue" may refer to the "nominal" (officially announced) issue, the "de facto" (actually being discussed) issue, an issue that "comes up" or is "brought up"

during the discussion, or the "real" issue (the underlying, important, or controversial issue that should be discussed). Participants maneuver strategically among these distinctions in order to influence the topical focus of discussion: "getting back" to the issue, getting down to the "real" issue, pursuing or declining to pursue an issue that has "come up."

Issues that "come up" or are "brought up" in discussion were treated only briefly in Craig (2000). For purposes of comparison with the school board case, it is especially interesting to see how metadiscursive references to such issues were used pragmatically in the classroom discussions.

Three features that characterize the pragmatic context of these classroom discussions should be noted before proceeding. First, the institutional set-up of a critical thinking course invited the participants to couch their discourse in an "argument" frame. Although the discussions actually varied in argumentativeness, often drifted away from the announced topic, and in general were not heavily laden with "argument" terminology (issue, conclusion, reason, assumption, evidence, etc.), the classroom environment and the official purpose of the assignment, which was to exercise critical thinking skills in a 40-minute discussion of a controversial issue, did shape the discourse in certain obvious ways. The institutional set-up supported the presumption that there was an issue, the issue was controversial, and it was appropriate to express opinions and make arguments that addressed the issue.

A second pragmatic characteristic is that the discussions were classroom exercises in which little was at stake beyond the personal skills, knowledge, and opinions of the participants, and, for the leaders, an academic grade. The students were required to discuss an issue but not to resolve or otherwise do anything about it. The classroom is not a public forum or deliberative body, and the students, who tend to be apolitical, did not generally approach it as a site of political struggle even when arguing passionately on different "sides" of the issue. In American culture, the classroom is a relatively low-risk environment for self-expression, interaction, and learning.

A third pragmatic feature of the situation is that the discussion leaders had official authority to announce and interpret the nominal discussion issue, which could then be "mentioned or alluded to by any participant as an authoritative warrant for establishing, clarifying, or criticizing the relevance of statements"

(Craig, 2000, p. 65). Other participants could invoke, question, or challenge the nominal issue, or bring up other issues. Discussion could (and frequently did) drift away from the nominal issue as long as no one intervened to reassert it. The leaders, however, could intervene at any time. The nominal discussion issue, whatever its actual role in the discussion, was nothing but whatever they said it was.

Although only the leaders could announce *the* issue, other issues could *come up* in the discussion, and any participant could *bring up* an issue. Bringing up an issue or noting that an issue had come up were ways of introducing a topic for discussion, thereby authorizing the speaker to express an opinion and/or inviting others to do so. Leaders would often come prepared with lists of discussion questions, which they would bring up throughout the discussion by way of moving on to the "next" or "another" issue. Another common practice was to break the class into small groups for a preliminary exercise or discussion prior to the main class discussion, during which participants might later bring up issues that "came up" in the small groups. Issues were also brought up, apparently spontaneously in response to, or triggered by, something said in the discussion ("that brings up," "another thing," "spinning off of that"), or even out of sheer curiosity.

Regardless of how it was brought up, however, in order for an issue that was brought up to be accepted as a legitimate discussion topic, it needed to be sufficiently relevant, both to the immediate conversational environment and to *the* issue – the nominal discussion topic (for example, as a sub-issue or a larger issue implicated by the nominal issue). Otherwise, a discussion leader or some other participant might challenge it. Speakers, then, in bringing up issues, used a variety of discourse devices to establish their topical relevance, and other participants could accept such an issue (by responding in topically appropriate ways), challenge it, or modify it in some way to negotiate its relevance. On either side, this only occasionally involved labeling the issue explicitly as an issue (using the word "issue" or some equivalent metadiscourse marker) or as being "brought up."

1. CT960410, 732-745 (Symbolism Over Substance)**[i]**:
Mike: (go ahead) (.) yeah (.) go ahead uh::
Barb: oh this is just (.) uh: (.) I kinda (wanted) to go back to big-big business just cuz it's kinda I mean it's kind of little side line but (.) speaking of (.) uh like symbolism over substance (.) I wanna know like (.) I don't really understand that

invisible hand so where is like (.) the substance in this invisible hand (.) magical hand that's gonna come down and help the little people uh:
Sam: well (.) there is not that's just basically John (.) John Adams (.) mentioned that (.) he believed (.) that uh: (.) he said that in the free market there's an invisible hand that'll keep everything balanced out (.) yeah the free … [turn continues]

In (1), Mike, a discussion leader, recognizes Barb, who brings up a challenge to the economic concept of the "invisible hand" that had been mentioned earlier in the discussion. Barb marks her discourse in several ways to indicate that she is bringing up an issue that is only peripherally relevant to the nominal discussion issue ("oh this is just … kind of a little side line") yet sufficiently relevant to earlier discussion and warranted by personal curiosity ("kinda wanted to go back to … I wanna know). Barb's curiosity may be disingenuous, given her ironic and ideologically loaded characterization of the invisible hand ("magical hand that's gonna come down and help the little people"). Raising no challenge to the issue that Barb has brought up, however, Sam's reply straightforwardly addresses the issue by explaining the invisible hand (with a garbled reference to Adam Smith). This example illustrates one way in which an issue can be brought up by a participant, inserted coherently into the ongoing discussion, and implicitly accepted without challenge by other participants as a discussion topic.
Explicit use of the word "issue" as a metadiscourse marker often indicates a challenge or anticipated challenge to an issue that someone is bringing up. (2) – (4) illustrate such uses.

2. CT960426, 944-985 (Capital Punishment):
Sally: I agree th't the law should be changed um just outta curiosity there's one text that says somebody comes into y'r house and attacks you you c'n shoot to kill n you will not face (.) any [6 lines deleted] any things like that
Susan: That's not the issue.
Sally: I figure it wo- it's the same thing though (.)
Fred: nnn I: know 't you'd be less apt to break into a house if you thought you c'd get shot (.) doing it.
[11 lines deleted]
Susan: That makes sense. You know I mean but- but I mean that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about capital punishment for first degree murder.

In this example (which has been condensed for reasons of space), Sally brings up

a law that allows anyone to shoot an intruder in certain circumstances. She marks this topic change as peripherally relevant ("um just out of curiosity"). Although the topic clearly stimulated the group (Fred's comment is illustrative; several other comments or brief interjections have been deleted), Susan, a discussion leader, definitively rejects it as "not the issue" and "not what we're talking about."

3. CT981113, 761-769 (Sexual Attraction in the Workplace):
Jill: what about (.) sexual harassment (.) and uh (.) a role that plays (.) if you don't (.) make any rules in companies (.) an:D (.) a superior is putting pressure on someone (.) about (.) making sexual advances (.) how do you: (.) weigh that (.) because that's how sexual harassment cases start (.) in the first place (.)
Mary: I think they're both (.) two different separate issues (.) one's (consensual) and one's not … [turn continues]

4. CT971203, 139-142 (Smoking Bans):
Marge: … so it was really close. (.) (Jenny?)
Jenny: an issue (.) you have to go outside and smoke by yourself. Don't you think that's an issue.
Marge: right. … [turn continues]

In (3) Jill brings up the issue of sexual harassment, and Mary (not a discussion leader) challenges its relevance by distinguishing it from the nominal issue of romantic relationships in the workplace. Jenny in (4), having been recognized by one of the leaders, seeks confirmation that the topic she has brought up is "an issue." In this case, the issue is explicitly accepted as a topic of discussion. Apparently, so is the issue brought up in (5).

5. CT981120, 391-401 (Capital Punishment)
Linda: What about drunk driving? I mean
John: Yeah.
Linda: If they drank and they drove I mean.
John: What if what if their parents were alcoholics and that's the life that they live. They don't get the death penalty for that.
Beth: Well that brings up an interesting question is when would the death penalty apply, or you know is it for all murders, or is it for if you are a serial killer and that's I think one of the major controversies surrounding the issue.

As we have seen, an issue that has been brought up may be accepted or challenged by other participants. Acceptance is usually implicit, indicated simply by continuing the topic. Challenge more often involves the use of explicit metadiscourse markers (issue, etc.). Sometimes, though, an issue that has been brought up is *explicitly* accepted, usually by a discussion leader, and usually as a prelude to reformulating the issue or changing the topic. In the following example, Linda and John collaboratively bring up the issue of whether a drunk driver who kills someone (or perhaps the alcoholic parents of the drunk driver?) should be subject to the death penalty. Beth, a discussion leader, explicitly accepts the topic ("that brings up an interesting question") but immediately reformulates the issue as the broader question of crimes to which the death penalty should be applied, which she labels "one of the major controversies surrounding the issue." She thus manages to shift the topic back toward the nominal issue while explicitly accepting another issue that has been brought up.

Although much more was going on in the pragmatics of these classroom discussions than can be accounted for by argumentation theory alone, the classroom context did invite the use of an "argument" frame to manage the discourse, and argumentation theory is therefore often quite relevant to a normative evaluation of the discussions (which by that standard too often displayed an abysmal level of argumentative quality). The participants themselves quite often evaluated issues. For example, they asked for clarification of the nominal issue, argued for claims about the real issue, offered warrants for bringing up issues, and commented critically on issues that were brought up. In doing these things, they often displayed an orientation to one or both of the two normative standards defined by Goodwin (2002): that an issue must be sufficiently determinate and worth discussing. The pragmatic context constrained participants to search for issues that were sufficiently clear and controversial to sustain a "good" discussion.

3. Public Participation at School Board Meetings

Tracy's studies of school board meetings (e.g., Tracy, 2002; Tracy & Ashcraft, 2001) provide a useful setting for comparison to the classroom data. In this site, the more common move was for participants to dispute what issue should be the issue. Tracy and Standerfer (in press), for instance, showed how the group's deliberation about what procedures to put in place to select a new school superintendent occurred within the context of a larger implicit issue (the

competence of the Board members and whether they should be re-elected). Tracy and Muller (2001) examined how different labels that could be given to the interactional trouble the group was experiencing led to markedly different assessments of what issue was most pressing for the group to confront. The present study extends these analyses to examine how participants in a controversy that touched on matters of race and fairness, freedom of speech, and age-appropriate school activities sought to argue what the issue "really" was. First a few specifics about the communicative site.

School board meetings in Boulder Valley School District (BVSD), a community in the Western United States, involve an elected board of seven who oversee the staff responsible for educating more than twenty-five thousand children at 50-plus schools. Meetings, which are held twice a month in the district's administrative center, are open to the public and are broadcast over a local cable channel. A typical meeting begins with public participation, a time when community members bring concerns of any type to the board. Then the superintendent and board members offer comments and decisions are made about non-controversial actions (referred to as the "consent grouping"). Finally the school board gives its attention to the day's focal business: discussion of and voting on the policy issues that are on the agenda.

The concerns that garner the board's attention in the discussion-voting segments of the meeting are ones that have made it through an informal nomination and selection process. Although any citizen, staff person or board member may propose items for the agenda, there are many more items (i.e., problems or issues) demanding attention than there is meeting time. One function of public participation, then, is to address the ever-present albeit tacit issue of "what concerns deserve the collective public attention of the board?" Issues that make it onto formal meeting agendas are ones that involve potential differences of opinion; items that are uncontroversial will be put in the consent grouping. Proposals as to what the school board *ought* to be addressing are especially likely following a controversial event.

3.1. "Barbiegate"

In the first February meeting of 2001 a dismayed dad came to the board meeting to protest the decision of his daughter's elementary school to prohibit the display of her science project as part of her school's science fair. In an emotion-filled speech the father framed the action taken toward his daughter as highly

inappropriate, raising serious issues for the school board. He began by describing his daughter's project and its results: His daughter had done an experiment that presented 30 adults and 30 5th-graders with black and white Barbie dolls wearing dresses of different colors where each person was asked to say which doll was prettier. The adults selected the doll with the purple dress; most of the children selected the white doll. Following his description, the father characterized the reason for his participation:

6. *The Father*: "What I'm gonna cover is the reaction of the school, which was the antithesis of science, it's censorship, it's sweeping racial inji- issues under the rug, it's a violation of your own strategic plan, and it opens the district up to extremely serious legal liability. What the school board does with this is extremely important."

The father's comment drew a sympathetic editorial in the local newspaper, which in turn elicited additional local as well as national coverage, most of which portrayed the school in a negative light.

At the next meeting two weeks later speakers representing different constituencies, as well as each of the board members, offered comments on this event that one board member dubbed "Barbiegate." Speakers during public participation included the father, two representatives from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), a teacher speaking for the staff of the focal elementary school, a parent, the president of the school's parent-teacher organization, and a spokesperson from the Million Man March, an African American group in a nearby large city.

In the public participation and board commentary phases of the meeting, speakers noted that they were "concerned," had "a problem with," wanted "to cover," or "speak to" something; during this hour-long segment the term, "issue" was used 42 times. Worth noting is that usage of an argument frame in school board meetings is uncommon (Tracy & Muller, 2001). By and large the typical practice in the observed meetings, and presumably other deliberative groups, was for speakers to describe an existing bad state of affairs, speaking as if everyone would see the event in the same way. Framed a bit differently we would say that in school board meetings the preferred way to raise an issue was to frame it as a *non-issue* – a problem that all could see in which the only uncertainty concerned what needed to be done to correct it. This, in large measure, was what the father

did in his comments during the first board meeting.

In community groups responsible for developing policy and making decisions about limited resources a first task is to determine what concerns needs to be treated as issues and what can be treated as problems (situations everyone agrees are undesirable). In this context, speakers do everything they can to frame their concerns as being non-controversial, problems rather than issues. Speakers, however, cannot control how others respond and once a good number of others begin weighing in with different opinions, a problem becomes an issue (or set of issues). This is what happened with Barbiegate. With the media attention that the father's comment garnered, it was clear that the school district had a controversy on its hands. But what exactly was the issue? Analysis of the meeting points to three distinct but interlocked kinds of issues animating people's talk.

3.2. Issue Type 1: How Should This Event Be Assessed?

When a controversial event has occurred and parties speak out, their comments can be interrogated and understood as speaking to the issue of how the particular event should be assessed. In this case, then, all comments could be seen as addressing the forensic issue of whether the decision to remove the girl's science project was a good or reasonable one. Of interest is that the only participants who explicitly framed their comments as addressing this issue were those who defended the school's action. Participants who saw the school's action as inappropriate treated the assessment of the event as obvious (it was bad) and explicitly focused their comments on the other kinds of issues. An example of explicitly addressing the forensic issue is displayed in the comment from the teacher representing the school.

7. *Teacher*: "I am a teacher at Mesa Elementary, and I am speaking on behalf of the staff. The staff at Mesa Elementary wants to clarify the information concerning the decision to not display the Barbie doll science fair project [. . . main body of the comments are deleted and then speaker concludes] We must say, however, that there is clearly more than one viewpoint, on whether the project should have been displayed, and we feel our decision was appropriate given the ages of our students, the arena of a grade school science fair, and the district's nondiscrimination policy. The project did not belong in the science fair forum, but the issues it brings up do belong in the classroom in the homes of our students. Thank you."

3.3. Issue Type 2: What Larger Issues Does this Event Raise?

Events that generate controversy generally do so by virtue of tapping into recurring concerns in a society. Yet naming the bigger issue is itself an issue. For the Barbiegate controversy two families of larger issues were flagged. The first focused on freedom of speech and the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Consider a small part of what one of the ACLU representatives said:

8. *ACLU Representative*: " … the ACLU's very concerned about the prohibition of this project, of the display of this science fair project … we haven't heard anything about fear of imminent disruption of education or um of rioting or a history of that sort of thing in the school, of racist incidents at Mesa Elementary, or anything of that that sort … it's ironic that this experiment was suppressed by the school in the name of protection of the rights of the members of minority groups. Because freedom of speech has historically been a bulwark for minority groups and viewpoints against the tyranny of the majority."

But while the ACLU and other speakers treated the Barbiegate event as raising a First Amendment issue, not everyone agreed. This is illustrated by the comments of two participants who spoke after the ACLU representatives.

9. *Million Man March Representative*: " …We believe you are right on this issue. This is not about First Amendment, this is not a First Amendment issue. I'll be the first one to stand up as a Black man and say we stand by the First Amendment."

10. *Elementary School Parent*: "I also don't think that this is a freedom of speech issue. I think that um the project was given the opportunity to be discussed and that was deni- that was um rejected."

The second larger concern raised by Barbiegate, actually more a topic than an issue, was related to race. By virtue of U.S. history any event that connects to treatment or assessment of black Americans easily can become a focus of concern. But what was especially striking with this second "issue" was its vagueness. Barbiegate may have raised the "issue of race" but what exactly that issue meant was not clear. Interestingly it was in this least determinate of contexts that the word "issue" was most used.

11. *Father's comments at second meeting*: "Fourth, race remains a huge *issue* in this country and clearly one that is very difficult to talk about. However, we cannot limit discussion about race merely to the sterile controlled environment of

a set lesson in a classroom."

12. *Teacher Spokesperson*: "This project brings with it much controversy. It carries the issues of sensitivity to race and the freedom of speech."

13. *School Board Member*: "And this *issue* of being sensitive is important. But I don't think that we can always look for a nice controlled environment to talk about these *issues*, and we need to find a way as individuals, as teachers, as human beings to have that moment even outside of that structure. And I truly believe in my heart that this school board and this school district is totally committed to dealing with these *issues*."

More than identifying a determinate object of contention, *issue* was used as a delicate reference to point toward a morally sensitive matter (Bergmann, 1992, 1998). In using the term speakers marked that they regarded the topic in all of its facets as needing to be approached with caution.

3.4. Issue Type 3: What Group-level Policy Should We be Addressing?
Finally, in civic groups such as school boards, speakers are concerned about more than the reasonableness of a past action or a larger issue. If an event has occurred that is evaluated as bad or a larger issue has been raised, it is because the event raises implications about an existing policy or points to the need for a new one. But again, what particular policy issue an event raises is frequently disputed. For Barbiegate, four issues deserving future deliberative attention were flagged. The issues were:
1. whether the district's nondiscrimination policy infringed on freedom of speech;
2. who – the elected officials or the school administrators – should be responsible for making decisions about the handling of "these" types of events;
3. how, if at all, science fair guidelines should be revised so that this kind of event would not occur in the future; and
4. several times labeled the "real issue," what to do about the achievement gap between white and minority students.

We have referred to these four items as deliberative issues. From this group's point of view, however, rather than issues (i.e., matters of controversy), the proposals were formulated as obvious problems that needed to be addressed. And in the intervening time since the Barbiegate controversy, many of them have returned to the group as formal agenda items. But are they problems or issues?

What is the significance of these two discursive frames?
Problems, we would suggest, are foci that a group can cooperatively turn its attention toward; they are objects a group collectively can move forward toward solving.
Issues, on the other hand, are what come up when a problem-solving frame is challenged. Issues occur when there is contention, when a group is "stalled" and arguing about direction. A civic group that is addressing a lot of issues is likely to be a civic group that is ineffective. Deliberative groups will do everything possible to frame what they are doing as solving problems rather than arguing about issues.

4. Comparison of Cases
These two cases offer an interesting contrast. In the classroom case the end goal for talk was to have a lively, focused discussion in which each participant arrived at a more thoughtful, developed understanding of an issue as well as his or her standpoint toward it. In this American classroom the primary dangers that discussion leaders faced were lack of involvement from fellow students or a lack of focus and conversational drift. Although the discussions sometimes became heated, which could be a problem for the leaders to manage, having too little rather than too much heat was the more typical danger. In the school board setting the aims of talk and the dangers were quite different. For citizens the aim was to persuade the board to take seriously a concern they had as well as to address it in a particular manner. For board members the goal was to make timely and reasonable decisions. In addition, board members wanted to do so in a way that showed citizens in the district that they took their concerns seriously. In this context the personal and political stakes for citizens and board members were high: reputations and scarce resources were on the line. Talk that became angry and emotional was a real fear; deadlocking in lengthy discussion was an ever-present danger.

In these two situations, the role for issues was different. In the classroom, having an issue enabled the group to accomplish its goal of having a good critical discussion. An issue provoked controversy and helped the group achieve a livelier, more focused exchange. In the school board context, having an issue was a undesirable. Issues divided the group, keeping it from making decisions or opening the group to charges of making decisions undemocratically. Issues generated negative feelings; they generated questions as to whether the board

leadership was effective. In this context, then, issues were designed as *non*-issues.

A second difference between the two pragmatic contexts is the difference between staying on *the* issue and raising *an* issue. In the classroom context there was a single issue – the issue – to which all talk was expected to be responsive. *The* issue framed what could or could not legitimately be talked about. *The* issue anchored judgments of relevance and provided a normative standard for assessing how people were talking. In contrast, during public participation in school board meetings the job of speakers was to raise *an* issue: either a topic deserving controversy or more frequently an uncontroversial problem warranting action. Although speakers could comment on what others had said, they did not do so frequently. Raising of different issues was legitimate; actual back-and-forth discussion of any of them was not. In this sense civic groups can be seen as building considerable space between the raising of *an* issue and its appearance on the agenda as *the* issue for an extended period of focused discussion. Moreover, the behind-the-scenes design of *the* issues for meeting discussions seeks to strip them of as much controversy as possible.

5. A Brief Reflection on Argumentation Theory

This comparative study of the issue as a metadiscursive device in two pragmatic contexts has revealed important variations in the meaning of the "the issue" and the ways in which participants orient to issues. The "situated ideal" (Craig & Tracy, 1995) of classroom discussion is generally quite compatible with the use of an argument frame to manage the discourse. Issues are matters of controversy, and are ideally designed to be both sufficiently determinate and worth arguing (Goodwin, 2002). The situated ideal of public participation at school board meetings is somewhat different. Participants actively avoid the use of an argument frame. Issues are ideally designed to be *non–issue*s: obviously problematic states of affairs that can be described objectively and resolved cooperatively. Goodwin (2000) points out some related phenomena. She notes, "It is common to find ordinary arguers explicitly bracketing some conflicts of views, making them *non-issues* or *dead issues* for some debate." She also acknowledges that people are not necessarily presupposed to engage in controversy, and calls upon argumentation theory to explain "why, pragmatically speaking, anyone would find it worthwhile to start this sort of discussion at all." These phenomena, although related, do not quite capture the idea that issues, depending on the

pragmatic context, may be designed either to sharpen and stimulate controversy or to smooth it over and minimize it. And as we have seen, "the issue" contains abundant resources of ambiguity with which to pursue either goal or maneuver between them.

NOTES

[i] In examples from the classroom data, the title indicates the date of recording (year, month, day), transcript line numbers, and the discussion topic. Transcripts have been simplified to enhance readability. Speaker names are fictitious. The following special conversation analytic transcription symbols are used: "(.)" = brief untimed pause; ":::" = elongated syllable; "( )" = transcriber uncertainty.

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 – Menace Or Deterrent? The Post-Cold War Debate Concerning American

Nuclear Alert Status

The end of the Cold War presented a powerful exigency for advocates and critics of American nuclear deterrence policies. The transformation of the Soviet Union from America's archenemy to a Russian Federation occupying the role of sometimes strategic partner has altered the justificatory environment for public defenders of Cold War deterrence doctrines. Anti-nuclear advocates from many backgrounds and theoretical perspectives have attempted to capitalize on the fading of the Soviet threat by advancing policy proposals that de-emphasize the role of nuclear weapons in security policy. The successful negotiation of several arms control initiatives, most notably the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties (START), suggests that such proposals have had some effect on the trajectory of American strategic policy. However, a number of critics argue that such vertical disarmament initiatives, which drawdown the number of nuclear weapons, do little to decrease the threat of nuclear annihilation in a world that still has thousands of warheads. Defense analyst Bruce G. Blair and over advocates instead recommend the adoption of horizontal disarmament measures, such as taking nuclear weapons off high alert status, as a means of jump-starting the arms control process.

This essay is divided into two sections. The first discusses the major argument structures articulated by defense analysts and public officials in the ongoing de-alerting controversy. Particular attention is paid to the arguments of Blair, who is the most publicly visible de-alerting advocate, and Dr. Kathleen C. Bailey, who is a vocal critic of de-alerting initiatives. Both of these figures have been called to testify before congress, detailing their perspectives on the relative merits of various de-alerting proposals. The second section provides an assessment of the effectiveness of the campaign to remove American nuclear weapons from high-alert status, analyzing the debate it has unfolded from the perspective of several public sphere theories derived from the work of Jurgen Habermas.This analysis is a part of a larger project concerning the evolving nature of post-Cold War policy debates. The author argues, as an initial preliminary, that although horizontal disarmament measures, such as those articulated by Blair, have considerable merit as policy proposals, their deployment in public debates about nuclear weapons has been largely unsuccessful in altering American nuclear policy

because they have yet to effectively challenge institutional justifications for Cold War era nuclear deterrence doctrines.

1. Hair-Trigger Deterrents

Bruce G. Blair, head of the Center for Defense Information and a former missileer, is arguably the individual most responsible for bringing the potential problems with keeping an arsenal on high alert status to the attention of the public. He has written several books and articles dealing with the subject, and has also been asked to testify before congress on a number of occasions. Blair and other de-alerting advocates, such as General Lee Butler, former head of the Strategic Air Command, claim that adopting lower alert postures, an example of horizontal disarmament policies, is an important supplement to vertical disarmament measures. Despite START I & II and the recently signed Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty, both the United States and Russia will continue to deploy thousands of strategic nuclear warheads for the foreseeable future. De-alerting proposals, they maintain, represent the best way to decrease the risk nuclear war short of total disarmament (Blair 1998). Blair, along with other critics of 'hair-trigger' alert postures, offers several arguments in favor of adopting a less belligerent nuclear policy.

An initial set of claims thematizes the necessity of de-alerting in a changed threat environment. Three observations about global security politics are regularly advanced. First, advocates argue that the end of the Cold War has fundamentally altered the relationship between the United States and Russia. However, the continued prevalence in both nations of launch-on-warning postures indicates that the former rivals "remain stuck in the Cold War logic of 'mutual assured destruction'" (Blair & Nunn 1997: C1). The Clinton/Yeltsin detargeting initiative is described as hollow because missiles can be retargeted in seconds (Blair 1997). The reconciliation between the former rivals, the relative weakness of the Russian military, and the continuing deterioration of the Russian nuclear arsenal dictate that hair-trigger deterrence postures are no longer needed to ensure American security interests (Blair 1995, 1998).

Second de-alerting advocates cite a number of factors indicating that the American and Russian high alert launch policies may actually increase the prospects of an accidental, miscalculated, or unauthorized nuclear strike. Blair argues that high American alert postures compel Russian military planners to adopt a similar stance. A 1997 *Washington Post* editorial by Blair and former

Senator Sam Nunn claims that a severe Russian budget crunch has led to the deterioration of its nuclear arsenal, leaving it unable to ensure second-strike capability in the event of a nuclear attack. The Russian military has thus shifted to a launch-on-warning posture. Unfortunately, this posture exists in an environment where early warning systems are faulty, risking a miscalculated nuclear launch. Likewise, a hair-trigger posture also undermines command and control procedures, increasing the likelihood of an unauthorized or accidental attack. Advocates argue that "the main current threat to our mutual survival stems from the growing risk that weapons on hair-trigger alert will be fired illicitly or accidentally because of technical failure, human error, or internal military and political disintegration" (Rosenberg 1999: A6). A 1998 report, which received considerable press attention, claims that such an event would result in millions of casualties and risk escalation to an all-out nuclear exchange (Forrow et al. 1998). Advocates frequently point to a recent incident as evidence for their concerns (Blair, Feiveson & Von Hippel 1997a). On January 25, 1995, a rocket containing scientific equipment was launched from the coast of Norway. The launch alerted the Russian early warning system as a potential nuclear strike, which was communicated to the political leadership. Several reports indicate that the Russian leaders activated a nuclear suitcase, which is only a step away from initiating a nuclear counter-strike, before they realized the missile was benign (Flam 1997).

Third, advocates of de-alerting argue that rapid-fire nuclear postures in other regions create ominous security concerns. Blair (1998) points to the modernization of Chinese nuclear forces, the development of advanced ballistic missiles by the Indian government, and the likelihood of continued proliferation as evidence that dangerous launch-on-warning postures, modeled on Russian and American doctrines, could become the international norm, increasing vulnerability to nuclear accidents.

Blair (1998) has proposed a long list of policy steps that the United States should take to move away from a launch-on-warning posture, each of which is designed to decrease the ability to launch missiles quickly. Blair & Nunn (1997) argue, "de-alerting would lead to much safer nuclear postures… [and] would greatly reduce the serious dangers associated with the deterioration of Russian nuclear control – as well as relegate to history the already remote threat of first strike" (p. C1). Blair, Feiveson & Von Hippel (1997a) claim that precedent exists for

reciprocal de-alerting between the United States and Russia, pointing to the success of President George Bush in removing American bombers from twenty-four hour alert status in 1991. Von Hippel (1997) claims that American leadership is necessary in this arena, and that START's verification procedures could be readily adapted to ensuring compliance with any de-alerting agreements. Blair (1998) characterizes his de-alerting proposals as occupying a middle ground between the dangers of current force postures and unilateral disarmament.

De-alerting proponents address the obvious concern about the effect of such proposals on American deterrence. Several responses are typically offered. First, they claim that Russia is so weak that it is incapable of threatening American interests, and that the risk of a deliberate attack is quite low (Blair 1998; Blair, Feiveson, & von Hippel 1997b). Second, advocates argue that the United States would still be able to deter any nuclear threats with even a de-alerted arsenal, pointing to the survivability of its submarine and Minuteman III systems (Blair 1998). This system survivability also ensures American security in the event that the Russian government was to shift to a more aggressive launch posture in the future. Third, Blair argues that the advocated de-alerting proposals would not preclude shifting to a higher alert posture in the event of a crisis. Finally, advocates claim that an accidental launch is a much larger threat than a deliberate attack, observing, "the breakdown of control has replaced a breakdown of deterrence as the basic problem of nuclear security" (Blair 1995b: 9).

Dr. Kathleen C. Bailey of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory has been called upon to articulate her views in several congressional hearings. In recent testimony before the Senate Armed Service Committee's Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, Bailey articulates three major sets of arguments against de-alerting the American nuclear arsenal.

First, Bailey (1998) argues that a range of threats necessitate strong American nuclear deterrence. She points to increased Russian reliance upon its nuclear arsenal, embodied in a May 1997 reversal of its long-time no-first-use pledge, and ongoing Russian force modernization as evidence that the United States still faces a substantial strategic nuclear threat. Further, Bailey maintains that the People's Republic of China poses a relatively increasing threat to the United State, citing efforts to expand and modernize its nuclear arsenal and its ballistic missile forces. Bailey also argues that emerging nuclear powers, such as India and North Korea, present a significant threat to American security interests. Finally, she claims that

the worldwide spread of chemical and biological weapons capabilities increases the necessity of a strong U.S. deterrent, a function that can only be served by alerted nuclear weapons.

Second, Bailey (1998) attempts to deflate the purposed risk of a miscalculated, accidental, or unauthorized Russian nuclear attack. She directs attention to ongoing Russian efforts to modernize its nuclear command and control, claiming that Russian warnings of internal instability are "motivated, at least in part, by a desire to increase the amount of U.S. funding to Russia" (para. 46). Bailey further claims that prominent American and Russia defense officials believe that the Russian arsenal is secure, pointing to public statements from Major General Vladimir Dvorkin of the Russian Defense Ministry and General Eugene Habiger, head of the U.S. Strategic Command.

Third, Bailey (1998) echoes other critics in arguing that de-alerting initiatives would undermine the international stability founded on a robust and ready nuclear deterrent. She identifies two potential areas of concern. Initially, Bailey claims that de-alerting would erode the survivability of American retaliatory forces, making a debilitating first strike more likely. This force vulnerability, she contends, would lead to a destabilizing regeneration-of-arms race where nations would streamline the re-alert process, fearing rapid redeployment of de-alerted weapons by enemy countries (Bailey: para. 30). Further, Bailey maintains that de-alerting would erode the credibility of American deterrence postures because it would delay retaliatory capabilities. Dr. Keith B. Payne (1998), a long-time critic of disarmament initiatives, shares this concern, arguing that delaying a nuclear response would increase the likelihood of attack by a potential challenger. Bailey also argues that de-alerting proposals would erode the safety and security of the American nuclear arsenal, claiming that tried-and-true security measures would have to be redesigned. She insists that some initiatives, such as removing warheads from missiles, would increase the risk of theft.

This erosion of the U.S. nuclear deterrent, Bailey (1998) alleges, comes at the price of a potentially unverifiable de-alerting agreement that subverts effective arms control. She asserts that "most proposed de-alerting measures are either unverifiable or only verifiable with low confidence" (Bailey: para. 33). Bailey claims that de-alerting is really an effort to circumvent the arms controls process, observing that many advocates support de-alerting "because they believe that disarmament is not moving quickly in the post-Cold War era" (para. 34). She

cautions that engaging in de-alerting proposals outside of the arms control framework may compromise American security interests.

2. De-alerting, the Technical Sphere, and Institutional Argument

Rhetorical scholar Gordon R. Mitchell explores an emerging collaboration between communication and international relations scholarship in a forthcoming book review essay in Argumentation and Advocacy. Mitchell cites recent developments in German international relations theory and American public sphere scholarship as evidence that the study of foreign policy debates can be enhanced by the application of contemporary argument theories. Mitchell turns our attention to a recent article in the journal *International Organization* by Thomas Risse (2000) of the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, which argues that the argumentation theories of Jurgen Habermas and other public sphere scholars have considerable applicability to the study of foreign policy controversies. Risse claims that Habermas' theories of argument may prove useful in addressing empirical questions in both global and domestic politics by offering an alternative to the endless debate between social constructionist and rational choice international relations theorists. Risse posits that focusing on argumentation in analyzing international politics is fruitful for two reasons. First, it expands the understanding of how actors develop common knowledge relating to defining a communicative situation and determining the underlying 'rules of the game' that permit such interaction in the first place. Echoing Habermas, Risse argues that argumentation is a vehicle for problem solving that directs actors in controversies toward a consensus aimed at overcoming collective action problems. Second, argumentative rationality is linked to the constitutive, rather than regulative, role of communication, permitting an analysis of how actors explore and contest validity claims concerning those norms. Risse maintains that public controversies can be analyzed descriptively in terms of what type of communicative behavior, strategic, rhetorical, or argumentative, is evident. A normative critique of foreign policy debates is also possible based upon the degree of inclusiveness, transparency, and commitment to reaching a consensus apparent in the deliberations. Risse ends his essay with a call for American international relations scholars to reconsider contemporary political controversies in light of argumentation theory.

Although Risse largely ignores the utilization of theories of communicative rationality by a number of American public sphere theorists (see Goodnight 1982;

Goodnight & Farrell 1981), his arguments about the utility of argumentation theory merit our consideration. A recent book review by Goodnight & Hingstman (1997) describes public sphere theory as being "at the center of lively discussions crossing academic disciplines, local communities, social institutions and international borders" (1997: 351). A frequently cited essay in this tradition is Goodnight's (1982) description of the differences between personal, technical, and public spheres of argument and the challenges that arise when the communicative norms of the technical and personal spheres replace public deliberative norms. Goodnight cautions that the technical norms of expression that increasingly dominate contemporary public policy debates constrain the capacity for public debate. These emerging technical norms privilege a rigid orthodoxy of communication and acceptable forms of justification that are exclusive of the rules of thumb and sensitivity to the contingency of knowledge and judgment that have traditionally characterized public debates, substituting "the semblance of deliberative discourse for actual deliberation, thereby diminishing public life" (Goodnight: 220). The subversion of the public sphere by technical discourses in both domestic and foreign policy contexts has been described by many scholars, including Goodnight & Farrell's 1981 discussion of the public debate about the Three Mile Island accident, Goodnight's 1986 analysis of Ronald Reagan's 'Zero Option,' 'Evil Empire,' and 'Star Wars' speeches, and more recently in Doxtader's 1997 dissertation dealing with Cold War deterrence debates, to name but a few. These and other studies detail the prevalence of what Risse would describe as bargaining or rhetorical behavior in a broad array of public policy debates.

Doxtader (1995, 1997) also claims that Habermas' argumentation theories can inform potent critiques of institutional arguments in nuclear and other public policy deliberations. He argues that institutions utilize argumentation to "interpret public interest in order to define, articulate, and support the norms that sustain public life," and cautions that institutional arguments about the public good frequently use instrumental rationalities that erode the ability of advocates to articulate visions of collective interest running counter to those advanced by institutions (Doxtader 1997: 29-31; see also Habermas 1984: 322-9). Doxtader advises that institutional argument analysis can serve two purposes. First, because argumentation is used to perpetuate rationalizing systems, studying institutional justifications permits an examination of how communicative practices and structures perpetuate norms of truth and control in perpetuating

particular visions of the public interest. Definitions of public interest "are important because they reveal how institutions conceptualize the value of public participation relative to the process of policy making. In other words, institutional arguments betray how management systems constellate pluralistic interest formation" (Doxtader 1995: Lifeworld section para. 15). Second, institutional argument norms can be evaluated to determine if they "invite reciprocal participation or if they enact a form of violence in which opportunities for deliberation are foreclosed" (Doxtader 1997: 30). Analysis of public debates reveals "how institutions enter into, structure, and perhaps take over public debate" (Doxtader 1995: Lifeworld section para. 16).

The controversy surrounding de-alerting is fascinating in its own right. However, the case is also useful in illustrating several points about the continuities and divergences between post- and Cold War deliberations about the purpose of nuclear weapons. In particular, analyzing the de-alerting debate permits an assessment of whether the rhetorical strategies advocating horizontal disarmament, as currently deployed, are effective in challenging institutional claims justifying nuclear deterrence. The author begins by detailing several important differences in the argument choices of both critics and proponents of de-alerting as they move between deliberative spaces. Four elements of the argument structures in the debate are then offered as prospective explanations for the relative lack of success experienced by de-alerting advocates. First, government officials utilize inflated threats as a means of justifying the existence of nuclear deterrence. Once deterrence is accepted as a necessity, it becomes much more difficult for de-alerting advocates to sustain criticism of current retaliatory postures. Second, the tendency of de-alerting proponents to isolate accident risks within Russia as the primary justification for changing hair-trigger alert status forecloses upon important opportunities to foster public dialogue about the dangers inherent in American nuclear postures and the appropriate place of nuclear weapons in American policy. Third, the failure of de-alerting proponents to strongly challenge governmental assumptions about the necessity of nuclear deterrence and American international predominance shift the terms of the debate to technical questions that are dominated by representatives of the nuclear establishment. Blair's (1998) efforts to occupy the middle ground between nuclear abolition and nuclear recklessness are ineffective because they play into the illusion, perpetuated by pro-nuclear discourses, that institutions can control nuclear weapons. Finally, recent efforts by the Bush administration to co-

opt the discourses of de-alerting and other anti-nuclear advocates threaten to quash any meaningful public debate about the role of nuclear weapons in post-Cold War American security policy.

There are a number of distinctions between the framing and content of arguments made in different communicative settings by pro- and anti-nuclear advocates that warrant attention. Initially, Blair (1998) chooses to not seriously discuss the potentially horrific effects of an accidental Russian strike in his congressional testimony, despite the fact that many of his public statements include an extensive discussion of the millions of casualties expected in the event of an accidental attack. Additionally, Blair's testimony is largely concerned with questions of verification, the probability and effect of the 're-alerting' of Russian weapons, and the effect of various de-alerting proposals on the deterrence capabilities of the American arsenal, subjects that warrant only brief discussion in newspaper editorials he has authored (see Blair & Nunn: 1997; Blair, Feiveson & Von Hippel: 1997). Blair apparently judges that these concerns merit little attention in his efforts to persuade the general public as to the necessity of taking the American arsenal off of high-alert status. The shift in the tenor and focus of Blair's justifications for de-alerting suggests that the setting of the congressional hearing, where advocates purportedly hope to persuade members of congress, places different argumentative demands upon advocates. Specifically, the congressional debate is focused on technical questions concerning verification and deterrence, whereas public discussions about de-alerting are more likely to emphasize questioning basic assumptions about the merits of deterrence postures.

Advocates of robust deterrence adopt a more pejorative stance when discussing de-alerting proposals in public forums, such as the pages of the nation's newspapers. For example Frank Gaffney (1998), the head of the Center for Security Policy, has described de-alerting as a plot by liberals to denuclearize American security policy. Gaffney portrays de-alerting initiatives as "wooly-headed delusions whose only certain result will be nuclear disarmament" (p. A14). Gaffney argues that nuclear weapons and the necessity of deterrence are facts of life, and that efforts to de-emphasize nuclear weapons will only undermine important American security interests. Gaffney outlines a seemingly improbable scenario in a 1997 *Washington Times* newspaper editorial, where he argues that weakening the U.S. deterrent would embolden Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein to

attack his neighbors, leading to a region-wide conflict involving the use of unconventional weapons. This argument not only exhibits a noteworthy degree of threat inflation, but also demonstrates the willingness of deterrence advocates to inflame public fears about new security threats as a means of sustaining support for Cold War era deterrence postures. In contrast Bailey (1998) and other de-alerting opponents only vaguely sketch potential threats when speaking before congress, allowing the audience to reach their own, potentially ominous, conclusions about the grave nuclear dangers facing the United States.

So why have de-alerting advocates been relatively unsuccessful in both the opinion- and will-formation public spheres? The number of purported threats to particular notions of the public interest certainly plays a role. Previous work by Doxtader (1995, 1997) and Goodnight & Farrell (1981) suggests that contestation over different constructions of the public interest is an important element in determining the outcome of policy controversies. The opposing sides in the de-alerting debate evidence markedly different perspectives on how nuclear weapons intersect with public goods. Blair and other de-alerting advocates argue that nuclear weapons, particularly those on high-alert status, play a mixed role in protecting the American people. Although they concede that nuclear weapons may serve some valuable function as an existential deterrent, they argue that current nuclear postures risk an accident that would result in potentially millions of casualties. Blair (1998) in particular argues that the end of the Cold War has fundamentally altered the role of nuclear weapons in advancing the common good. Such weapons are no longer necessary to deter an intentional Soviet attack. Instead, the weapons increase the danger that a Russian attack will occur by accident. Blair claims that the public interest would thus be best served by moving away from Cold War era launch-on-warning doctrines, which he claims make no sense in the post-Cold War world. The strong public response to de-alerting consciousness-raising campaigns, such as "Back from the Brink," as well as initial overwhelming support for the 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty, indicates that many Americans are ready to reconsider the role of nuclear weapons in national security policy (Graham 2000; Traynor 2002).

An analysis of the arguments of Bailey (1998) and other critics of de-alerting proposals reveals a very different understanding of how nuclear weapons affect public life. Although Bailey acknowledges the geopolitical changes resulting from the collapse of the Soviet Union, she argues that the central role of nuclear

deterrence remains unchanged. One tactic frequently deployed by defenders of aggressive nuclear postures is the inflation of nuclear and other non-conventional threats facing the United States. Old threats prevalent during the Cold War, such as a deliberate attack from the Russian Federation, are now combined with new, 'emerging' threats from 'states of concern' such as Iraq, North Korea, Iran and Syria, and new rivals such as the People's Republic of China. Bailey's testimony underscores how shifting the debate about nuclear policy from the desirability of deterrence in and of itself to an analysis of purported threats can effectively short-circuit public debate. The positing of prima facie threat privileges pro-nuclear arguments by placing the United States in a position of weakness and vulnerability, justifying an aggressive nuclear posture as an act of self-defense. Although the cast of characters in the list of new threats changes on a regular basis, the fact remains that so-called states of concern are a powerful rhetorical resource for pro-nuclear advocates. Like Bailey, Payne (1998) concludes that nuclear weapons are now more important than ever before in guaranteeing American security interests.

This argumentative move leaves anti-nuclear advocates with two, equally undesirable, responses. One available strategy is to argue that the threats themselves are exaggerated, but rendering this a persuasive position is difficult because of information gaps between institutional and outsider speakers. These gaps allow pro-nuclear advocates to claim that they have superior, often classified, intelligence proving the existence of the alleged threat. The second approach is to concede the existence of the threat but argue that nuclear weapons are incapable advancing American security interests. Blair and other de-alerting advocates typically utilize a mix of the two options, arguing that the risk of an intentional Russian launch is low and that the new international belligerents are not particularly threatening. De-alerting proponents effectively thematize the threat of Russian accidents and miscalculation, but are unable to make similarly effective claims about other rivals to American power. Unfortunately, this hybrid approach is unable to challenge the assumed desirability of at least some level of deterrence, and Blair (1998) concedes in his testimony that nuclear weapons may be necessary to deter some future nuclear threats. The acknowledgement of the inevitability of deterrence runs counter to beliefs Blair has expressed in other forums. The use of exaggerated threats by pro-nuclear advocates thus structures the public debate about de-alerting towards an outcome that accepts and justifies the existence of deterrence doctrines.

A second shortcoming of de-alerting advocacies is the strong tendency to foreground Russian weakness and nuclear instability as a justification for taking weapons off high-alert status, while U.S. nuclear force instabilities are often only cursorily mentioned. Examples of this phenomenon abound in the literature. Journalist Ira Shorr (1999) describes Russia as "a blind man in a dark room who has a gun and is afraid he is going to be attacked" (para. 2). Blair & Gaddy (1999) characterize the Russian missile force as "crippled," while policy analyst Arjun Makhijani (1999) argues that the nation is plagued by a "deteriorating nuclear weapons command-and-control infrastructure" (p. 20). Other news reports outline numerous "nightmare scenarios" for a Russian attack, including theft, miscalculation, and civil war (Nelan 1997; Rosenberg 1999). Potential problems with the United States' arsenal, on the other hand, are less often discussed, despite extensive earlier work by Blair (1985, 1993) on the subject. Although the widely covered *New England Journal of Medicine* (1998) study contained a section describing accident risks within the U.S. arsenal, press coverage focused almost exclusively on the effects and probability of a Russian accidental attack. Although Blair's 1998 testimony references problems with the American arsenal, his case for de-alerting rests firmly on Russian nuclear instability.

Not only does focusing on the Russian arsenal unnecessarily overlook serious problems with American nuclear posture, but it also weakens the persuasive force of de-alerting justifications for at least two reasons. First, this strategy distances responsibility for accident risks from federal institutions. Instead of arguing that millions of Americans are threatened by the reliance of the U.S. government on faulty nuclear security systems, de-alerting advocates place the blame firmly on the Russian government. Although advocates link Russia's launch-on-warning posture to U.S. retaliatory policy, defenders of deterrence still have ground to argue that responsibility for accident risks rests with the Russians. Further, this stance lends credibility to the claim made by de-alerting opponents that Russian internal instabilities justify an aggressive American deterrence posture designed to protect the U.S. from rogue Russian commanders. Just as importantly, centering justification for de-alerting on Russian instability shifts the focus of the debate to whether the Russian government would reciprocate any American de-alerting initiatives. De-alerting advocates would be more effective in generating a general outcry about the issue if they foregrounded problems with the American arsenal, bringing the U.S.'s long history of nuclear near-accidents to the attention of the public. Publicizing U.S. safety concerns would be more likely to cultivate a

public debate about the necessity of nuclear deterrence in light of its inherent dangers. Second, the strategy of focusing on Russian instability while ignoring safety problem with the American arsenal leaves the impression that some arsenals, namely the U.S.'s, are safe. Failing to emphasize domestic safety problems lends public credibility to the claims of Bailey (1998) and Habiger (1998) that the American arsenal is secure. Constructing Russian incompetence as the problem supports claims of safety and expertise advanced by the nuclear establishment.

Third, Blair's (1998) claim that de-alerting is a preferable policy alternative because it occupies a middle ground between dangerous deterrence policies and complete abolition is more than a simple argument fallacy. Blair's claim is particularly odd because he has frequently argued that de-alerting is a step towards eventual disarmament.

The middle ground argument allows pro-nuclear advocates to shift the grounds the de-alerting debate from public questions about the morality and necessity of deterrence to a technical debate about whether particular de-alerting initiatives undermine American deterrence. Blair's middle ground concedes that deterrence is necessary, allowing institutional advocates to draw upon powerful Cold War arguments detailing the necessity of high alert postures. Likewise, Blair's claim that de-alerted weapons could be put back on alert status in the event of a crisis reinforces institutional arguments about the substantial international threats that justify an aggressive deterrence posture in the first place. The debate thus concentrates on the consequences of de-alerting proposals for the public good of nuclear deterrence. Deliberations become dominated by what Cohen (1987a, 1987b) describes as technostrategic argument. The claims to privileged knowledge advanced by official defenders of nuclear deterrence doctrines are used to exaggerate threats to the American public and minimize the dangers of high alert status. Lifton and Falk (1982) similarly maintain that deliberating over how to create the best deterrent obfuscates the fundamental irrationality of nuclear deterrence. Cohen argues that technostrategic discourse removes the horrific consequences of deterrence failure from the public view by creating a false sense of control over nuclear weapons.

De-alerting advocates may experience greater success by foregrounding Makhijani's (1999) argument that American deterrence postures are themselves responsible for the bulk of threats facing the United States, not just those posed

by a deteriorating Russian arsenal. He argues that U.S. de-alerting initiatives will be ineffective in reaching an international consensus because these steps will not mitigate the threat posed to other nations by American conventional and nuclear superiority. Bailey (1998) and Gaffney (1997) frequently claim that Russia, China, and other nuclear states would never follow American de-alerting moves. This claim is very effective as a public argument, as evidenced by the positive response from several senators. The difficulty posed by proving that other nations would agree to de-alert their weapons suggests that criticism of hair-trigger alert postures needs to be combined with an honest assessment of the risks posed by the growing international resentment toward American foreign policy arrogance. William D. Hartung (2001) of the World Policy Institute argues that we are witnessing the emergence of American "nuclear unilateralism," where foreign policy conservatives use ballistic missile defenses and aggressive nuclear postures as a means to expand American power.

Finally, despite generating considerable press coverage, de-alerting advocates were unsuccessful in affecting a change in American security policy during the Clinton administration. However, in a surprise move during a May 23, 2000 campaign speech designed to outline a vision for American security policy, then-presidential candidate George W. Bush pledged to "remove as many weapons as possible from high alert, hair-trigger status" noting that "keeping so many weapons on high alert may cerate unacceptable risks of accidental or unauthorized launch" (Remove 2001: A11). Despite rumblings of an imminent de-alerting agreement during the last several meetings between President Bush and Russian President Putin, the Bush administration has yet to carry through with the campaign promise. The administration's recent Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), as analyzed by the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), decreases the number of high-alert weapons but does not recommend any concrete steps towards the de-alerting of the American nuclear arsenal. The NRDC report (2002) argues that the nuclear drawdown projected by the NPR and codified in the recently signed Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty does not necessitate the destruction of any strategic weapons. Instead, warheads slated for removal from high-alert delivery platforms will be 'de-mated,' separated from their delivery devices and put into storage. These weapons will then be available to use in the event of a crisis. Therefore, although SORT may claim to decrease the size of the Russian and American arsenals, the total number of strategic weapons available to each nation remains largely unaltered. The administration's move represents

an attempt to use a de-alerting initiative as a justification for circumventing meaningful arms control. 'Horizontal' disarmament initiatives may be vulnerable to co-option by nuclear institutions. This is an example of what Dr. Hugh Gusterson (2001) has described as the Bush administration's program to create a "radical shift in our discourse about nuclear weapons" (p. 65). He argues that the White House is hijacking the arguments of the anti-nuclear movement in an attempt to bolster public support for ballistic missile defenses, the development of a new generation of 'usable' nuclear weapons, and the militarization of space (p. 66). Gusterson concludes that the anti-nuclear movement faces the difficult task of articulating a new justification for disarmament; else the Bush administration's vision of American nuclear hegemony will dominate public discourse.

Blair and other de-alerting advocates are probably correct in arguing that hair-trigger alert deterrence postures pose a grave threat to the public interest. Further, their message has been effective in garnering support for de-alerting initiatives from a substantial portion of the American public. However, an initial assessment of de-alerting advocacy in public discourse suggests that current strategies are only partially effective in overcoming institutional justifications for nuclear deterrence. Additional study in this area promises to not only reveal how the nuclear establishment has adapted its institutional rationalities to the post-Cold War era, but may also suggest new argument strategies that can effectively challenge official nuclear discourses.

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 – Public Sphere: The Problem Of Access And The Problem Of Quality

The public sphere has been an important category in rhetoric and argumentation research as it describes a socio-discursive space that is both widely accessible to participants and one in which arguments invented and delivered by individual speaking agents can impact decisions which affect all (Habermas, 1989; Kaufer & Butler, 1996; Kennedy, 1991; Murphy, 1983; Katula, 1983). Still, the particular role and shape of the public sphere in theories of argumentation and rhetoric remains and important and open research question (van Eemeren, Grootendorst, et.al., 1996, 211). Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, the starting point for much of the work in this area, emphasizes the importance of both access and quality in an effort to delineate an authentic public sphere both theoretically and historically.

A number of commentators (Fraser, 1993; Negt & Kluge, 1993) have challenged the Habermasian model delivered in *Structural Transformation* on grounds that it reinforces the exclusion of socially and politically marginalized parties. The project has been criticized for its failure to articulate the conditions of "actually existing" conditions of democracy with their historic exclusions from public life (Fraser, 1993). These arguments emphasize the problem of access, critiquing specific historical and political public spheres on the basis of their exclusions of traditionally marginalized identities. In this paper, I will argue that 1) Habermas'

conception of the public sphere is best understood as both a metonym for a set of qualities or critical criteria and as a material domain or social group, and that 2) this project, a prescriptive one, does not necessarily stand in contradiction to descriptive projects that aim to broaden access to historically specific "public" decision making forums by calling attention to exclusions. Following this distinction between the public sphere as a place or a body and the public sphere as a set of conditions, I argue that while the problem of broadening access to specific decision making bodies is important, the problem of discursive quality is a distinct but complementary investigation. At stake is the relationship between the public abstraction and the empirical particularities of social groups. In investigations of the public sphere, what is the most fruitful way to characterize this relationship? The following are the key points on which Habermas' conceptualization of the public sphere has been challenged:
– the unitary nature of the public sphere
– the bracketing of power in the public sphere
– the bracketing of culture, class, and historical specificity in the public sphere

Many of those who have criticized Habermas' *Structural Transformation* for its faith in bourgeois social arrangements and in Enlightenment principles have stressed the specifically historical and material shape of the public sphere that he outlines in that work. While there can be no question that Habermas makes historical and material claims in *Structural Transformation*, in light of his later work in discourse ethics and communicative action, it is most productive to view his conception of the public sphere not as an historical and material space burdened with a telos of Enlightenment, but instead as a specific quality of discussion grounded in pragmatics.

A common solution that emerges from the critiques of Habermas' perspective is a pluralizing of the public or public sphere (Fraser 1993, Negt & Kluge 1993, Hauser 1999; Gal & Woolard, 1995) as a way to account for heterogeneous identity formations. This solution is a response to the problem accounting for the diverse identifications and interests of those "actually existing" individuals who comprise public. Fraser argues for a plural model on the basis of the historically exclusionary character of public. Negt and Kluge argue for a plurality of publics based on class and Gans (1974) describes "taste publics" that represent a variety of aesthetic identifications. Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984) has an aim similar to Gans'. Hauser argues for a plural model that focuses on many smaller spheres of

publicity as an antidote to a counterfactual unitary public sphere.

The plural public models parallel theories of multiculturalism and identity politics, where questions about who is included and who is excluded dominate the discussion. As in the case of those theories, to which a number of commentators have raised important questions concerning problems of authenticity and other limitations (Spivak & Gunew, 1993; Hall, 1991; Taylor, 1992; Readings, 1996), plural public models tend to rest on our ability to unproblematically identify and authorize individuals who represent cultural, discursive, ethnic, gender, and class categories.

In *Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy*, Fraser replaces the public sphere with "subaltern counterpublics", emphasizing the need for a model of identity and interest conflict:
I propose to call these *subaltern counterpublics* in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, so as to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs (14).

Fraser wants to solve the problem of equitable representation of marginalized identities by imagining a plurality of publics which form constituencies for those identity formations. In this move, she attacks the unitary public sphere for its historic exclusions and challenges its claim to represent general interest.

In *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, Negt & Kluge bifurcate the public sphere into bourgeois and proletarian counterparts on grounds that the "classical bourgeois public sphere's" requirements of capital and education (cf. "Language Barriers", p. 45) systematically exclude the working class. They note that historically, in the bourgeois public sphere, the sphere of the factory and any attendant organizing or negotiating activity is considered private and therefore not admissible to public discourse (50). Like Fraser and others, Negt& Kluge critique the counterfactual nature of the unitary public sphere:

The only antidotes to the production of the illusory public sphere are the counter-products of a proletarian public sphere: idea against idea, product against product, production sector against production sector. It is impossible to grasp in

any other way the permanently changing forms that social power takes on in its fluctuations between capitalist production, illusory public sphere, and public power monopoly (Negt & Kluge, 1993, 80).

Negt & Kluge also draw strong distinctions between their "proletarian public sphere" and the bourgeois public sphere on empirical grounds, suggesting that while all public spheres risk becoming illusion (even a proletarian one), the authentic public sphere would be strongly empirically grounded:

The proletarian public sphere is itself a matter of the future, but at the same time it is the only opportunity available for putting historical ground under one's feet and for structuring experience in historical temporal sequences. Only on this solid basis of real mass experience does the proletarian public sphere have the weight it needs to be able to bring the movements of the bourgeois illusory public sphere, which are scurrying in every direction, to a halt. It itself, however, has the tendency to construct illusory public spheres as soon as it is not firmly anchored in the experiences of the masses and in history (Negt & Kluge, 1993, 80n).

In *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres*, Hauser develops a plural publics model he calls "the reticulate public sphere". He writes, "Whenever private citizens exchange views on a public concern, some portion of the Public Sphere is made manifest in their conversation" (64). For Hauser, as with others, a central problem with a unitary public sphere is its counterfactuality. As an antidote to this problem, Hauser prescribes, what he calls, a "rhetorical model":

A rhetorical model would require openness to those conditions that produce a plurality of spheres within the Public Sphere… A rhetorical model of public spheres not only expects participants to have interests but regards them as essential for the exercise of prudent judgments on public problems. It supplants disinterestedness with accommodation of conflicting interests as a mark of a well-functioning public sphere. . . . [A rhetorical model's] concern is for how the dialogue within any given public sphere mounts appeals that lead participants to understand their interests and make prudent judgments. Finally, a rhetorical model recognizes that civil society's defining conditions of interdependence and diversity require that communicative partners share a common reference world (Hauser, 1999, 55-56).

Unlike Fraser, who focuses on specific identities marginalized by a unitary public sphere, Hauser criticizes the counterfactual assumptions of disinterest and role

taking implied by it. Working with a model of rhetoric where strategic self-interest is axiomatic, Hauser recommends his alternative on the grounds that it focuses on the empirical interests at work in a given communication situation.

Fraser, Negt & Kluge, and Hauser all propose variants of a plural public model as a solution to problems that they have found with the conception of a unitary public sphere. Counterfactuality is primary among these, warranted by heterogeneous identity formations, class-based exclusions, or principles of epistemology. While these descriptive approaches are valuable as an investigation of the many interests at work in a given social context, when they aim for a more authentic and accurate empirical account of public, they mistakes a useful abstraction for something that ought to be canvassed and enumerated. The critical and political value of challenging the exclusion of specific interests from specific representations of public is clear. This challenge, however, addresses a problem that is different from the one that aims to theorize public abstractions or understand problems of discourse ethics. One asks "Who or what interests are included or excluded in a given representation of the public?" and the other asks, "What are the conditions of public discourse?" Although some have noted that counterfactuality complaints fundamentally misconstrue the motive of Habermas' research (Farrell, 1993), we could say that, at minimum, they seem to address a problem that is different from the one that has concerned Habermas.

Habermas himself notes that both the problem of quality and access present themselves in concepts of the public sphere, and he has defended his focus on the problem of quality that emerges in his communication theory (e.g. Habermas, 1982). Even in *Structural Transformation*, he discusses the Janus-faced problem of the public sphere. While he is explicit about the historical origins of the bourgeois public sphere under analysis, with its notable exclusions based on class, he suggests that the principle of publicity itself that emerges from this specific, and admittedly exclusionary, historical moment has value as an as-yet-unredeemed critical standard:

The identification of the public of 'property owners' with that of 'common human beings' could be accomplished all the more easily, as the social status of the bourgeois private persons in any event usually combined the characteristic attributes of ownership and education. The acceptance of the fiction of the *one* public, however, was facilitated above all by the fact that it actually had positive functions in the context of the political emancipation of civil society from

mercantilist rule and from absolutistic regimentation in general (Habermas, 1989, 56).

Note that Habermas acknowledges that the notion of a single and unified public body is a fiction; however, rather than concluding that this disqualifies the notion, he investigates the potential of the principle of publicity as a critical standard. Later in *Structural Transformation,* he defends the choice to take the principle of publicity seriously rather than disqualifying it:

Bourgeois culture was not mere ideology. The rational-critical debate of private people in the *salons*, clubs, and reading societies was not directly subject to the cycle of production and consumption, that is, to the dictates of life's necessities. Even in its merely literary form (of self-elucidation of the novel experiences of subjectivity) it possessed instead a "political" character in the Greek sense of being emancipated from the constraints of survival requirements. It was for these reasons alone the idea that later degenerated into mere ideology (namely: humanity) could develop at all (Habermas, 1989, 160).

For the Habermas of *Structural Transformation*, the exemplary value of the emergent bourgeois public sphere of the eighteenth century is in its relative insulation from "life's necessities" and its attendant priority on arguments among interlocutors as decisive. This focus is the one, of course, that he later develops in his communication theory. The fact that the bourgeois public sphere of the eighteenth century rested on exclusions that were contrary to its own principles ought not necessarily lead us to the conclusion that the principles themselves are without merit.

Habermas' notions of the public sphere from *Structural Transformation* can be traced through the rest of his work, with his *Theory of Communicative Action* and his work in discourse ethics being of particular concern to theorists of communication. Though less historical than *Structural Transformation*, his communication theory depends on the possibility of rarefied communicative space in which power is bracketed, akin to his conceptualization of the public sphere. While more sociological than historical, the *Theory of Communicative Action* develops a model to account for the continuous regeneration of "lifeworld" in its tense but symbiotic relationship to "system". For Habermas, "system" is a reified outgrowth of moments or parts of the "lifeworld", which is itself dynamic and admits argumentative challenges to norms. Habermas narrates the growth of modern economic and administrative forms of power by measuring its impact and

relationship to the "lifeworld." Modern totalizing ideologies such as Nazism and Stalinism are, according to Habermas, "modern manifestations of withdrawal and deprivation – that is to say, deficits inflicted upon the lifeworld by societal modernization" (1987:354). He terms the process by which this deprivation takes place, the "colonization of the lifeworld" (1987:355).

Whereas in *Structural Transformation* he provides an historical account of socio-discursive space of bourgeois public sphere of the eighteenth century, in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas builds a model of a rarefied discursive space as the basis for his social theory, what he calls the "context-forming horizon." Habermas imagines argumentation as a shared communicative process in which speakers could rationally test any validity claim, and based on this process of communicative action, construct and reconstruct their shared lifeworld (1987). His notion of the "linguistification of the sacred" (1987:77) highlights the role of language in rationalizing the lifeworld, in providing the possibility of testing validity claims for even the most tacit understandings. He writes,

The lifeworld that members construct from common cultural traditions is coextensive with society. It draws all societal processes into the searchlight of cooperative processes of interpretation. It lends to everything that happens in society the transparency of something about which one can speak – even if one does not (yet) understand it (1987, 149).

Habermas joins this idea of lifeworld, a space that is regenerated by communicative action, with the notion of system, a consideration of the relationship between the communicative action of individuals and the systems of the modern administrative state, the economy and government administration.

In his communication theory, Habermas focuses on the problem of quality, developing idealizations as necessary standards of critique. This concern with argumentative prerequisites has its root in *Structural Transformation*, where his critique of the "refeudalized" public sphere rests on a standard of openness, both in terms of *accessibility by persons* and *priority of argument*.

Central to Habermas' theory is a commitment to the possibility and preservation of contingency in communication. By insisting on a model of communication in which the validity of statements, even and perhaps especially those carrying the weight of norms, can be challenged with reasons demanded, as articulated in the *Theory of Communicative Action* and in his conceptualization of Universal

Pragmatics, Habermas illustrates his commitment to not only a highly rationalized understanding of communication, but also one that is adamantly open, dynamic, and resistant to totalizing discourse. This is why, in part, even those who find serious problems with his willingness to entertain idealizations like the "ideal speech situation," and his comfort with Enlightenment principles have reasons to acknowledge the importance of his project.

Fraser, who challenges Habermas on the basis of class and gender exclusion and proposes a plural public model, opens her challenge by writing, "I am going to take as a basic premise for this essay that something like Habermas's idea of the public sphere is indispensable to critical social theory and to democratic political practice" (3). Although she focuses on the problem of access, she acknowledges the import of the problem of quality in understanding the public sphere.
Fraser and others criticize specific deployments of the public abstraction (e.g. the bourgeois ideal of the 18th century, the Athenian ideal) as a way of challenging the very existence and validity of the public abstraction itself. Fraser and others are concerned with a problem of access to adequate political representation for marginalized groups in specific societies, yet it is not clear how the complaint that specific public abstractions exclude certain parties represents a challenge to the existence and validity of the public abstraction as a regulative ideal. Fraser herself acknowledges that a regulative ideal of a unitary public sphere "is indispensable to critical social theory an to democratic political practice" (3), yet later concludes that "the idea of an egalitarian, multicultural society makes sense only if we suppose a plurality of public arenas in which groups with diverse values and rhetorics participate" (17). Fraser is wrestling with the tension between the empirical particularities of societies and the public abstraction that glosses them. The question that is smuggled in with Fraser's argument asks how can we simultaneously acknowledge the empirical particularities hidden in a public abstraction without sacrificing the principles of publicity (open access and priority of argument) that it offers?

Naturally, a public abstraction that posits a "universally accessible and communicable" space (Kaufer & Butler, 1996) or that engages the "fiction of the *one* public" (Habermas, 1989) will consistently fail when measured against the "actually existing" conditions of social and political practice (Fraser, 1993). Yet Fraser seems to want to maintain both the principles of open communication represented by the public abstraction while at the same time indicting it for

failing to describe empirical particularities (especially political exclusions).
The plural public solution (Fraser, 1993; Negt & Kluge, 1993; Hauser,1999; Bourdieu, 1984; Gans,1974) seems to provide a way to account for problems of historic exclusions from political participation, but it trades empirical accuracy for the principles of universal access and communicability that form the basis of the public abstraction of a unified public sphere. The plural publics solution overemphasizes the sense of public as a body (Who?) at the expense of the sense of public as a set of qualities (What conditions?). Without its sense as universal and open, the public abstraction loses its normative and prescriptive content and is reduced to a way of referring to a social group, constituency, or identity. Gans' notion of "taste publics" for instance, divides the world into groups based on their aesthetic sensibilities. While this shift carries a valuable lesson about the divergent positions and sensibilities unified under the public abstraction, positions and sensibilities that may have suffered historic exclusions, its use of the language of "public" is a misnomer. Erasing the notion of generality from public subtracts its minimum semantic distinction.

Rather than asking Fraser's question, demanding to know how to square empirical particularities with the public abstraction, we should ask the question that it begs: Is there a relationship between the public abstraction and the empirical particularities of social groups, and if so, what is the best way to describe it?

One solution to Fraser's problem is to surrender the language of "public" in descriptive projects, investigations of specific interests in specific societies. This move resigns public to its role as a regulative ideal in discourse and frees descriptive projects from the overly ambitious demand of squaring the ideal to the "actually existing" conditions of a given society.
Negt and Kluge, who have been considered critics of Habermas, themselves acknowledge the importance of the difference between the problem that concerns them and that concerns Habermas. Alexander Kluge suggests in an interview that his and Negt's project is not so much in opposition to Habermas' but is operating with different aims:
SL: The notion of Offentlichkeit was, I believe, introduced by Habermas in his book *Strukturwandel der Offentlichkeit*. Your and Negt's notion of Offentlichkeit, however, is opposed to, or at least significantly different from Habermas.
AK: It is not really opposed. It is a response as part of a process of discussion. We

quite agree with him about the necessity of the process of enlightenment, of the need for a new encyclopedia (Liebman, 1988, 41-42).
When Kluge is asked if he and Negt disagree with Habermas, he says, “No, we have no objections, but we have a different field of employment… If he would work in our field, I am convinced he would have the same results” (Liebman, 1988, 42).

Many of those who have challenged Habermas’ *Structural Transformation* have done so on the basis of its historical method, and the Kantian assumptions about class and freedom that he builds from. Accused of making the rising bourgeois class of the 18th century an historical ideal, Habermas has been charged with developing a special origin that few historiographers would accept on methodological grounds. Still theorists such as Negt & Kluge and Fraser, and Hauser who aim to address these problems by imagining plural public spheres where class, ethnic, and gender identities are represented have not challenged the basic import of the problem of quality.
Plural public models aim to solve the problem of access by conceptualizing a mezzanine where the singular, unified public sphere, deemed merely ideological, and a notion of radically fragmented sphere are both avoided. What is sacrificed in this solution is attention to the problem of the quality of discussion in socio-discursive space. Despite its counterfactual status, the singular and unitary public sphere carries vital normative value that can be redeemed in a critical stance. Habermas notes the “fiction of the *one* public” as a way of focusing attention on the valuable principles of publicity that emerge from it. Plural models have emphasized the public body and its heterogeneous identity formations at the cost of considering conditions and standards of public discourse. Critiquing the public abstraction, the “fiction of the one public”, as inconsistent with the many identities that it glosses does not erase the effectiveness of the public abstraction in discourse (Kaufer & Butler, 1996), or its importance as a critical standard (Habermas, 1989).

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 – Spectacle And Trauma: An Analysis Of The Media Coverage Of The Oklahoma City Bombing

The headlines in the days and weeks following the Oklahoma City Bombing tell a tragic story of lost lives and harrowing escapes. Storytellers who told of the devastation painted a grim picture of the horror that occurred in the Alfred P. Murrah Building on April 19, 1995. The media translated the spectacle of trauma, individuals suffering from injury, and the loss of family and friends into best selling stories. The Oklahoma City Bombing coverage included dozens of narratives of the private pain and suffering that individuals experienced. Trauma was positioned at the center of the political experience of domestic terrorism. It is my belief that the media commodified the disaster as an event for public consumption and positioned the audience as a spectator or watcher. If my contention is correct then it poses a serious problem for the body politic because a spectator that merely watches is disengaged from active participation and does not have the same critical capacities as an involved citizen. In this essay I will advance the thesis that the use of trauma narratives and the spectacle of bodies

in pain calls into being an audience that voyeuristically watches a disaster without becoming critically engaged.

It is too easy and perhaps arrogant to cry foul against the media for perverting and commodifying people's suffering for profit. After all, they are providing coverage that public wants to watch, wants to listen to, and wants to read. In addition, there are plenty of alternative media sources for those who wish to critically engage the issues. I do not wish to focus my attention in this essay simply on criticizing the media. Instead I believe it is more fruitful to examine the arguments that become embedded in trauma narratives. Argumentation theorists such as Goodnight (1982, 215) and Zarefsky (1992, 411) have both brought into question the state of public deliberation. Their work has done much to highlight the problems that plague the public sphere. Trauma narratives run the risk of furthering damaging the spaces available for critical interrogation of public issues. However, there are plenty of examples of the productive use of spectacle and of trauma narratives that have been used to mobilize an engaged and critical citizenry. Some of the best examples come from the Civil Rights Movement. Images of the Freedom Riders, Dr. Martin Luther King, and Rosa Parks did not stifle public action but instead acted as public arguments for justice. The sharing of their trauma mobilized a nation to act. While the problems of racism persist in the United States, few would suggest that the work of these individuals was in vain. So that begs the question of how to determine whether or not a trauma narrative will aid or harm the public sphere. I believe the litmus test for answering this question hinges on the whether the trauma narrative calls into being a critical citizen or a spectator that is disengaged and watches the spectacle for entertainment.

Some of the main stories told in the days and weeks following the Oklahoma City Bombing are recaptured in brief in the headlines repeated here:
"Trapped Woman's Leg Cut Without Full Anesthetic" (Dana Bradley's Story),
"Survivor Struck by Amazing Luck" (The accounts of Jack Gobin and Randy Ledger),
"Survivor Hid Under Table: 'I've Got to Get Out of Here' " (Brian Espe),
"In Oklahoma City and Beyond, Shadow of Fear Grows" (Volunteer Mary Skinner),
"All I Saw Were Bright Lights" (Daina Bradley),
"Black Oklahoma Lawyer Recalls His Narrow Escape From Federal Building"

(Kevin Cox),
"April Mourning" (the children of the America's Kids Day Care Center),
"Answers to a Prayer" (Jim Denny's two children found alive),
"Doctors Sacrifice a Leg to Save a Life" (Daina Bradley),
"The Last Life Saved" (Surgeons save Brandy Ligons).

A photograph carried on front pages around the world showed firefighter Chris Fields carrying the burned body of Baylee Almon. Viewing pain and agony can be a very emotional experience and sometimes the images of trauma compel the public to act. It is not my intent to suggest that these stories should not have been told. Rather, I seek to understand how the stories displaced or collapsed the space for critical coverage of the issue of domestic terrorism. While these stories gave us heroes (and then villains) somewhere in the mix they failed to act as a catalyst for serious dialogue about domestic terrorism in the United States. This essay seeks to find an answer for how and why that happened.

1. The Proclivity to Seek Ethics in Argumentation Studies

In his landmark Essay The Second Persona, Edwin Black advances the argument that a discourse implies a certain type of auditor and that this condition makes an evaluation of the ethics of the rhetor possible (1970, 109-119). By examining the audience a discourse calls into being, Black suggests a model for evaluating the ethics of the argument advanced. The central thrust of making appraisals and judgments provides a useful method for examining whether the presentation of a trauma narrative is conducive to an active and critical citizenry or whether it calls into being a spectator. Working from the audience called into being, it is possible to make delineations between effective and valuable uses of spectacle and uses which collapse public space for critical engagement of the issues by examining the auditors their narratives call into being.

What is missing from Black's model is an analysis of the Other that is not present. Philip Wander (1999, 370) provides an important modification to Black's initial model by including a third persona: the being not present. So the model offered now includes a first persona that represents the author/rhetor, a second persona that is the audience the author calls into being, and a third persona who is the being the audience is told not to become. In order to analyze the narratives of trauma that emerged after the Oklahoma City Bombing it is necessary to tease out the second and third persona implied in the discourse. By examining the trauma narratives it becomes possible to identify the audience envisioned.

Interestingly, the search for the second and third persona is problematized by the fact that the audience called into being is not necessarily an active one. The messages do not suggest who the audience should be or not be. Instead, the audience is displaced as outside observers. The indignation that is felt by the audience is not channeled into a dialogue about the issue of domestic terrorism. Rather, domestic terrorism is highlighted as an issue that the government should manage. Like a movie, the authorities are cast in the role of the protagonist and are expected to bring the villains to justice and create safety for the community. The public is left with a marginal role (at best) of unconditional support in bringing the villains to justice and in supporting whatever policies are created to stop the atrocity from being repeated in the future. No sustained dialogue or debate is called for and domestic terrorism is relegated to the government as a problem to be handled.

Coverage of the Oklahoma City Bombing included more than just trauma narratives and some of the messages called for an active community to send aid to those in distress. Other calls to action were seriously misguided and played on stereotypes and rumors. For example, in the immediate aftermath of the bombing a Reuter's dispatch said that the suspects were of Middle East descent and had dark hair and beards (Lattin, 1995, 16A). This message placed many innocent citizens in the United States who happened to be of Middle Eastern descent at risk of violence. In addition, the message created an inside for Americans and an outside for Middle Easterners that fosters and perpetuates the idea that the followers of Islam are fundamentalist terrorists. Luc Boltanski (1999, 58) suggests that the identification of the persecutor as a 'foreigner' often allows collective fault to be placed on a scapegoat and this process taps into xenophobic impulses in the audience. In this case, even if the identification had been correct it would be problematic. While the authors may not intentionally be looking to cast blame on all persons of Middle Eastern descent or Islamic belief, the audience they envision will be active in preventing Middle Easterners from acting to hurt the community in the future. The audience envisioned is called upon to be xenophobic and to lay blame on the individuals and groups responsible. This message does not isolate the suspects as individuals but rather openly identifies a group membership as the most salient part of identifying them.

As significant as the Reuter's dispatch was in analyzing media coverage of the Oklahoma City Bombing, the other stories of pain and suffering were also

immensely significant in terms of the audience they would call into being. Boltanski (1999, 20) distinguishes between the spectator who is called to speak out against suffering and the spectator who gets pleasure from the internal states of arousal that viewing suffering brings to some people. Fascination and horror are states of emotional arousal. When we view others in states of suffering and no direct action is immediately possible it is possible to become an audience that is anaesthetized to the pain and who gets a perverse sense of involvement in the suffering. The ethics of crafting a disaster into a series of stories can be judged on the basis of the position of the spectator. If as Bolstanski suggests, the spectator is called upon to speak then there is great potential for a productive politics of spectacle. If the spectator is meant only to watch the story unfold and be entertained by the drama then the position of the body politic will likely rapidly deteriorate.

2. Trauma Narratives of the Oklahoma City Bombing

The language used in many of the stories that were produced about the victims of the Oklahoma City Bombing was emotionally charged. The coverage of Time Magazine included a story by Nancy Gibbs entitled "The Blood of Innocents: In the Aftermath, Tales of Horror and Heroism" that discussed in detail the America's Kids Day Center and the rescue efforts. Gibbs wrote:

The sobs from inside the rubble told rescue workers instantly that children were still in the building, still alive. They plunged into the debris, turning over cribs and furniture, hoping to find signs of life, catching their breath at the sight of babies burned beyond recognition. "We started moving bricks and rocks," said police sergeant John Avera, "and we found two babies." Firemen tenderly carried the infants, as paramedics wrapped them in long white gauze like christening dresses. Several toddlers were found wandering around the underground parking lot, searching for parents. The parents in turn scrambled through the chaos, frantic to find their children. "You haven't seen my daughter, have you?" one woman asked everyone as she passed. Nurse Shirley Moser began tagging dead children. "Their faces had been blown off," she says. "They found a child without a head." Children from the Day Care Center across the street who survived the explosion tumbled into the street, sliced by flying glass. They looked for parents and were scooped up by strangers, fearful of more tragedies.

The article goes on to discuss many of the children who perished in the bombing and where their parents and families were and how they responded to their loss.

Debbie Almon, the grandmother of Baylee Almon is quoted asking for the funeral to be kept private saying “We just don’t want this to be a circus.”
The coverage of Newsweek Magazine included a similar story about the rescue of Daina Bradley written by Marc Peyser. With the title “Survivor: ‘All I Saw Were Bright Lights’ the story told of Dr. Andy Sullivan’s amputation of Daina Bradley’s leg:
When the rescuers finally reached Bradley, she saw that falling debris had boxed her into a coffin-size cave. A concrete chunk had stopped tumbling just 18 inches above her face. The rescue team freed her arm, but they could not remove the massive slab that had crushed her leg. When the emergency team’s doctors first said they would have to cut off her leg above the knee to save her life, she resisted. But when doctors left her for forty-five minutes during a second bomb scare that interrupted the rescue, she realized she might not escape at all. That made up her mind: “I was like, ‘I wanna get outta here. Do whatever you have to do to get me out’.” It wasn’t easy. Dr. Andy Sullivan, the smallest doctor on the scene, had to climb headfirst into the hole where Bradley was wedged. With no room for a saw, Sullivan used several scalpels for the amputation. It took ten minutes.
Bradley lost both of her children and her mother in the explosion. Her story was told in hundreds of newspapers and dozens of magazines.

The many stories and narratives of what happened at Oklahoma City have a surreal quality to them. One almost feels like they are watching a movie or reading a book. The heavy use of adjectives seems designed to capture and keep the audience’s interest. It seems parallel to an automobile accident that causes massive traffic congestion as passers by slow to a crawl to try to get a look at the wreckage and those injured. In the days following the bombing news stations show pictures of the frame of the Murrah Building and of the rescue efforts. The lines between news and entertainment are blurred together and the stories are crafted for maximum emotional effect. Why were these stories and dozens of others like them told in this fashion? Certainly the parents, families, and friends of the victims took no comfort in these stories of their loved one’s suffering being shared with the world. The cynic would offer the idea that the media has shared the information as a commodity that the public has a right to consume. I believe that the reason for these narratives being shared might also have to do with a set of arguments embedded within the discourse of the stories that functions at two levels. First, while the stories might not fit traditional molds for what constitutes

an argument, they certain include a vision of the world by defining the heroes, villains, and victims. Second, the messages seem to have an underlying message about the community coming together and the need for our nation to collectively heal. Having a sense of the devastation seems to be tied to mending the fabric of the body politic. In order to get a sense for each of the two premises it is useful to return to the text of the examples.

Gibb's vocabulary in describing the trauma of what happened at the America's Kids day care center and the day care center across the street is at once eloquent and brutal. Images evoked by the description of the burned bodies of children wrapped in white gauze like christening gowns are intense. White has traditionally been a color associated with innocence and purity. In stark contrast to a picture of a child brought before God and family in a celebration, Gibb's reveals the nightmarish and dissonant image of what happened. Any parent has an instinctive fear of their infant toddler being in danger and I believe can sense the terror of being alone and in trauma. Using two passages, Gibb's covers the fears of the children and their sense of confusion and pain. The scene of the story then turns grim and the harsh transition to a nurse tagging dead children reminds the audience that this a tragedy and there will be no happy ending to this tale. In short and terrible sentences, Gibb's tells us that children have had their faces off and one infant is found decapitated. Through this very brief story there is both a vision of the world that represents an argument and there are hints of a call to community. Beginning with the vision of the world, it is helpful to directly articulate the heroes, victims, and villains. The heroes are the fire fighters and paramedics who put their own lives in jeopardy to rescue those who have survived and to carry out the bodies of those slain so they might be properly buried. The children are the guiltless and blameless victims. Though not unmasked or identified in the narrative, we are also given an impression of what the villains are like. Carrying the front-page photo of fire fighter Chris Fields and the burned body of infant Baylee Almon, the New York Post ran the headline 'Evil Cowards'. Gibb's does not have to decry this to get the same message to her audience. The visual imagery of blowing up innocent children accomplished the same effect. While there is no direct and clear textual evidence, I also believe that a part of the reason for sharing these stories was to try to bind the community together in a time of pain and agony. In times of great tragedy and trauma, appeals to patriotism and nationalism are often common and there seems to be the unspoken agreement that the narratives of what happened are a warrant for unity in the

face of great evil. The message of uniting against a common enemy informs the stories and the idea of a community suffering and then healing together resonates across the coverage.

Peyser's account of the interview with Daina Bradley takes a similar if more subdued tone. Also, the fact that Daina agreed to give the interview seems to slightly alter the relationship between the victim, the storyteller, and the audience. Peyser does play on a common fear in an initial description of what happened. Likening the hole that Bradley fell into to a coffin certainly must draw an emotional response from anyone reading the story that suffers from claustrophobia. The thought of being trapped in a coffin underground is terrifying and I imagine the description was meant to trigger an emotional response. No one would want to lose their leg and the discussion of Daina thinking about escape versus survival while the doctors were forced to evacuate because of the fear of another explosion must have also been frightening. The article closes by revealing that Daina lost her mother and two children in the blast. Daina tells us to treat everything like china because it may someday be gone. Peyser closes by writing, "Sometimes, in a flash." Again we have heroes and a victim along with a behind the scenes villain. Our heroes are the doctors and more importantly Daina herself. In the face of death and devastation she made a difficult decision that saved her life. In addition, we continue to have a call to community that resonates around the story. The closing sequence seems to argue that the world is a dangerous place and we must place value on our families, friends, and communities because they can be taken from us by evils lurking all around us.

Drawing a distinction between news, entertainment, and argumentation is a rather difficult task. Media sources attempt to let the public know when an important event has happened. As blurred as the line is between information and entertainment, I suspect the lines between news and argumentation are even more compromised. Hollihan and Baaske (1994, 19) believe that virtually all arguments can be evaluated as stories. The reverse also seems to be the case: All stories can be evaluated as arguments. There are persuasive and constitutive elements in virtually every story ever told and how stories are told often also entails additional arguments about how the world should be. The arguments embedded within narratives of trauma about the Oklahoma City Bombing position the audience as a spectator to suffering but also include some basic arguments about life. In drawing a distinction between simplistic and unquestioned

assumptions about how life should be in contrast to a call for a critical and invested public a judgment can be made that works from Black's model of the Second Persona. Because the audience envisioned by the narratives is not a critical one, the messages should be problematized.

3. Judgment and the Critical Capacity of Active Citizens

The ability to make decisions and judgments about public affairs is considered instrumental to maintaining a successful democracy. Hicks and Langsdorf (2000, 1), working in agreement with Frans van Eemeren, note that argumentation is the lifeblood of a democracy. They write:

Absent a radically democratic political culture and well-educated citizenry, a 'deliberative democracy' could easily become a 'formalist' simulation of democracy. Hence, an adequate proceduralist account of democratic deliberation must attend to the material conditions of its existence – including and especially, the formation of arguers imbued with a democratic ethos. (2000, 10)

This move does not presuppose already existing rational agents, but instead offers the experience of deliberation as a means to foster and inculcate a commitment to democratic norms of governance and a democratic ethos of critical scrutiny.

Making judgments of discourse on the basis of the audience invoked provides a useful means to evaluate a rhetor and when coupled or conjoined with the question of how a narrative opens or forecloses space for democratic ethics I believe an argumentation scholar is provided with a useful tool for assessing the worth of a discourse. The effects of a public discourse on the body politic can have serious ramifications for the types of thought and questioning the discourse produces or calls into being. In order to trace or map out the implications envisioned within a discourse it is necessary to examine the political subjectivity of the audience as seen by the rhetor. While political subjectivity is not fixed and is radically contingent, the discourse a rhetor uses produces an image of what an audience's subjectivity should be and that image is worth analyzing. Traditional approaches to rhetorical analysis have either eschewed questions of political subjectivity or have positioned the audience as those persons capable of being influenced by a message (see Bitzer, 1999[1964], 221). In stark contrast to this model, Barbara Biesecker (1999, 243) offers a thematic of difference that draws for the work of Jacques Derrida to argue that rhetorical discourses are processes that discursively produce audiences. So in many ways, the audience a discourse envisions is often constituted by the discourse. If a discourse calls for a critical

citizenry to test ideas and arguments for their merit then the discourse is productive and induces democratic behaviors. If the discourse makes the audience spectators who are expected to blindly accept simple premises then the discourse is especially dangerous and should be cautiously examined.

Coverage of the Oklahoma City Bombing has a decidedly problematic feel. The recipients of the message are never expected to critically engage the issue of domestic terrorism. While I am principally concerned with the diminishing of the critical capacities of citizens in our democracy, the politics of the media also seem to have a rightward and conservative drift. While trauma narratives incite strong emotions, in this case they do little to activate the critical capacities of the audience. To explain this point it is helpful to return to examples of productive uses of spectacle. The strength of examples from the Civil Rights Movement illustrates the radical difference between spectacle aimed at activating an audience and spectacle that generates apathy. In the case of Rosa Parks, we have a spectacle that is intrinsically tied to a question of justice. Even if the spectacle was not tied to a boycott of public transportation, her story makes demands of an audience. Like Mahatma Gandhi, Civil Rights leaders in the United States used images of trauma to collectively demand change. The collective image of America was challenged and ruptured. No longer could citizens believe unquestioningly that the United States was the land of the free and the home of the brave in the face of the massive unmasking of racism in the 1950s and 1960s. Even though racism persists today, the spectacle of trauma generated by the Civil Rights Movement has made a lasting and democratic change in our country by challenging dominant assumptions and norms.

I do not think targeting the media as the agent responsible for the lack of deliberation on the subject of domestic terrorism is either entirely fair or entirely unfounded. There is certainly evidence that the media has selected a format for telling stories that sells their product. My own political bent makes me suspicious of the politics forwarded by stories that do not call for direct action and deliberation. And I believe irrespective of what side of the political spectrum one is on, that most of us can be in agreement that a public divested of involvement in public issues is at risk. So I think it is worthwhile at this point to ask the rather broad question of what types of coverage would have better invested the audience with critical capacities and awareness about domestic terrorism. This is not an easy question that can be summed up in a closing paragraph. I think an important

first start is to make the audience aware of how they have been positioned within discourse. If the audience is separated from the issue then they will always remain a spectator. If the audience is imbued with critical faculties then they are encouraged to join in and weigh in on the issues in the future. In the time following the Oklahoma City Bombing there was a great deal of public condemnation of fringe right wing militia groups. Coupled with the retelling of trauma narratives, the media also offered coverage of the national memorial. At the same time Congress rushed to pass anti-terrorism legislation and deliberated about domestic terrorism in the United States. The deliberations about how to make our country safe and what steps are appropriate and what steps go to far should have been the focus of media coverage. Instead, the use of dramatic stories left the public with fleeting images of intense pain and trauma and no deep knowledge or investment in the direction our country should take. As argumentation scholars, it is important that we question and interrogate messages that call for complacent and disengaged publics. The need for investment in collective life is immense and by engaging the public to deliberate and to reason publicly about domestic terrorism we can perhaps call into being a public that represents a democracy. When Congress passes legislation concerning domestic terrorism and the vast majority of the public has no idea about the content of the new laws then we truly have an impoverished body politic. To reconcile this dilemma it is not a bad idea to start with a discourse that calls into being a critical citizenry.

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