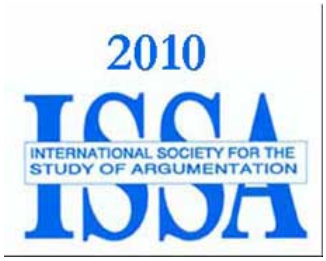
ISSA Proceedings 2010 – Intractable Disputes: The Development Of Attractors



1. Introduction

In this paper an attempt is made to shed some light to a phenomenon that has created problems not only for the theoreticians of conflict resolution, argumentation theories and other various disciplines alike, but for the practitioners as well – the phenomenon of intractable conflicts or disputes. In this paper, I discuss the role played by the "third party" in dealing with disputes of an intractable nature by forming an "attractor" whose gravity is powerful enough to pull inside parties that are engaged in an intractable dispute. This powerful role played by the "third party" will be demonstrated by concentrating on a case study about a conflict in Macedonia between Macedonian governmental forces and Albanian armed groups.

2. Intractable Conflict

According to scholars, like Kriesberg (1999) and Coleman (2003), intractable conflicts are those that persist in a destructive state and seem impossible to resolve. Kriesberg (1999), for example, stresses three dimensions that distinguish intractable from tractable conflicts: their persistence, destructiveness, and resistance to resolution. I would add that conflicts of an intractable nature are the ones when there is a clash of underlying or fundamental principles between the parties engaged in such types of conflicts, or that they lack common knowledge or consensus about various issues. Despite the fact that such conflicts are uncommon, yet they are very important to understand them better because of our survival as species.

According to Coleman (2003), it is complex interactions among multiple factors across different levels of these conflicts over long periods of time that brings them to a state of intractability. Coleman is citing the centuries-old conflict in Northern Ireland as a good example of this multi-level complexity. The complexity of this conflict could be seen not only from the role played by religion, but also from other factors like global affairs, history of international dominance,

economic and other types of inequality, issues of social identity, and the existence of multiple factions within each community. These factors, claims Coleman (2003), have a considerable impact on interpersonal relations and personal functioning. Thus, claims Coleman, long-term patterns of interethnic violence in Northern Ireland are multiply determined. I could cite a similar example that would fit into this category, and that is the example of Former Yugoslavia, where multiple factors were at play that led to a destruction of the highest magnitude. This was true for almost all the republics that were part of Former Yugoslavia.

3. Understanding Intractable Conflicts through Dynamical Systems Theory
According to Coleman, Nowak, Vallacher (2005), the dynamical systems approach provides instruments that allow us to describe in mathematical terms the mechanisms underlying intractable conflicts. According to Lewenstein & Nowak (1994), a dynamical system is a set of elements that interact in time. According to these two scholars, multiple influences between elements of the system can be described with differential or difference equations. In a dynamical system, claim Guckenheimer & Holmes (1983) and Ott (1993), formal mathematical systems consisting of sets of coupled nonlinear ordinary differential equations that have proved valuable in modeling a number of different physical systems, the evolution of the system either reaches a stable state, or a more complex pattern, described by the attractor. For these complex systems, claim scholars, as each element adjusts to the joint influence from other elements, the system evolves and changes in time until it arrives at its attractor. Attempting to move the system out of its attractor promotes forces that restore the system at its attractor.

In trying to relate this phenomenon to psychological and social processes Coleman (2005) claims that the behavior of human beings runs along the same line of thinking. According to Coleman, it might happen that sometimes a very strong influence or information not to have any observable effect whatsoever on our thoughts, feelings, and actions of a person or a group, but that at other times, a seemingly trivial influence of a piece of information can promote a dramatic change in the way people think and groups function. With respect to psychological and social processes, claims Coleman, this means that some patterns of thinking, feeling, and action are deeply embedded in a person or group. Such patterns correspond to attractors, or in other words, they “attract” a wide variety of other thoughts, feelings, and action, so that over time even a highly incongruent thought or action tendency becomes assimilated to the

embedded pattern.

According to Nowak & Vallacher (2007), the properties of attractors have been shown to have clear relevance for social judgment, interpersonal relations, group dynamics, and societal processes. In similar lines, Coleman et al., (2007), believe that the properties of attractors may also be useful for understanding intractable conflicts. According to these scholars, as the time moves, the parties that are engaged in an intractable conflict develop a range of ideas and actions that tend to evolve toward the predominant mental and behavioral pattern characterizing a person, group, or society. This is known as the width of the basin of attraction accumulated through time. On the other hand, the depth of an attractor represents how difficult it is to escape the powerful gravity of evil thoughts and behaviors. When we are faced with such a situation, claim the authors, it requires a considerable effort in moving the parties from one attractor to another more powerful attractor. Sometimes, claim the authors, this effort might be futile because even a small thought or action might pull back parties in the original attractor.

According to Coleman et al., (2007), attractors develop as elements interact and form positive feedback loops. Generally speaking, positive feedback loops are balanced by negative feedback loops, which are a self-regulatory process that prevents a system from spiraling to an extreme state. Therefore, in order for these efforts to be successful there has to be a negative feedback loop that would counter the positive feedback loop that was created for quite some time by the parties themselves or even by external forces. The balance between positive and negative feedback loops is the essence of self-regulation.

4. The Attractor of "Third Party Intervention"

According to Coleman et al., (2007), once a conflict is governed only by positive feedback loops, the resolution of specific issues is unlikely to terminate or even reduce the conflict. Each party's goal is transformed from issue resolution to survival and causing harm to the opposing party. Issues then may come and go, but what remains constant are the negative perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and actions defining the relationship between the parties. From a dynamical perspective, claim Coleman et al., (2007), the maintenance of such negative mental and behavioral patterns can be understood in terms of attractor dynamics. In short, in order to get out of this black hole we have to develop another black hole that is powerful enough to suck in everything we had in the original black

hole. In dealing with intractable conflicts, however, I am proposing an attractor of "third party intervention" as powerful enough to balance the original attractor of being in a state of intractable nature. I believe that this attractor can be the solution for many, if not all, conflicts that are characterized as being of an intractable nature.

The point of departure is that it is not very likely that human beings willingly enter into an intractable conflict. Parties in a conflict will probably not know in advance that they will be locked into an "intractable conflict" and that they will continue to stick to their position no matter what. I believe that parties often seem to be capable of behaving, more or less, according to the ideal conditions presupposed by the critical discussion model of pragma-dialectical approach. Therefore, the analyst is obliged to look more deeply into discourses that are characterized as being in an intractable conflict because of the fact that parties are capable of having a "normal" argumentative exchange. The reason why we are nonetheless faced with such situations where parties are engaged in an intractable conflict can be answered by the fact that this is happening at the first level of engagement, but this is not so at the second level. In short, I believe that situations that are in an "intractable conflict," at least some of them, can be treated as situations that attempt resolution of difference of opinion, if we introduce the concept of "third party."

In order to demonstrate the role of third party in situations that are in an intractable conflict, I am going to refer briefly to a case study from Macedonia. In 2001 Macedonia faced a conflict that lasted about 7-8 months between the Macedonian governmental forces and the Albanian armed groups living in Macedonia. During this period, the media, be that the local or the international one started covering this conflict from the fear that this conflict might have far worse consequences than all other conflicts witnessed throughout the Former Yugoslavia. Both the Macedonian and the Albanian language media, among all other things, were constantly concentrating on the causes of the conflict between the Macedonian governmental forces and the Albanian armed groups. The most noticeable observation in both sides of the media was the huge gap that existed in both camps with regard to the causes of the conflict. When seen from a birds eye perspective, one might be forgiven for claiming that we are talking of a completely two different conflicts. On one hand, the Macedonian language media was constantly claiming that the conflict was caused by the actions of Albanian

people in creating a “Greater Albanian” state. On the other hand, however, the Albanian language media was constantly claiming that the conflict was initiated in order to get “Greater Rights” for the Albanians living in Macedonia. The situation between the Macedonian and the Albanian language media displays precisely the kind of incommensurability of viewpoints that has been discussed until now. The columns presented in the newspapers were incapable of generating resolutions of disagreements. The situation at hand displays an “intractable conflict” of the highest magnitude.

The newspaper columns from both the Macedonian and the Albanian language media generated an intractable dispute of the highest magnitude if taken as a discussion between the Macedonian and the Albanian language media. The discussion can be viewed in this direction due to the fact that the disagreement was between these two sides of the media with regard to what caused the conflict. The Macedonian language media was trying to reach across at the other side by claiming that the conflict started because of the desire for a “Greater Albania.” On the other hand, the Albanian language media was trying to do the same thing by addressing the other side that the conflict started in order to get “Greater Rights.” At this superficial level, there are clear indications that the disagreement is between the Macedonian and the Albanian language media with regard to the causes of the conflict, and that this discussion has generated an intractable conflict.

However, if we go beyond this superficial level, the analyst can reveal that there is a presence of another audience that plays a crucial role in reconstructing the discussion better between the Macedonian and the Albanian language media. This role is played by the “international community” and by the international community is meant the entire West. When we analyze the discussion at the second level, we can see that both the Macedonian and the Albanian language media were not trying to reach at each other, but at the international community. The two sides of the media function as a kind of a bridge in reaching the international community. The Macedonian and the Albanian language media were simply attempting to convince the international community that the conflict started because of “Greater Albania” and not because of “Greater Rights,” respectively, and vice versa.

Having done all this, we can see now that the discourse should be reconstructed as such where the international community is incorporated inside the discussion

between the Macedonian and the Albanian language media. This reconstruction will produce a kind of a triangle where the international community is on top of the discussion playing a role of a "judge." This role meant as if the international community or the West are the only party that can judge the reasonableness of the arguments presented by both the Macedonian and the Albanian language media with regard to the issue of "Greater Albania" and "Greater Rights," respectively. This kind of reconstruction opens the way for defending the claim made earlier with regard to the role of "third party," i.e. the international community in resolving discourses that are stuck in an intractable conflict.

From this superficial analysis, we can see that what was considered as an intractable conflict at the first level, cannot be said the same thing at the second level, when incorporating the "third party" into the same discourse. The intractable conflict that was created in the discussion between the Macedonian and the Albanian language media is non-existent when incorporating the international community or the West into the discourse. At this stage, we can see a "normal" argumentative exchange, to use Fogelin's concept (1985), between the Macedonian and the Albanian language media in relation to the international community. The reasoning of the Macedonian and the Albanian language media is part of the appeal to the common beliefs, values, and starting points in relation to the international community or the West. Therefore, with the incorporation of "third party" into those discourses that are in an intractable conflict, at least some of them, we can have a normal disagreement where parties in a discussion will attempt to resolve it through the use of arguments.

In short, the "international community" here functions as a powerful attractor that pulls together both sides of the conflict, i.e. the Macedonian and the Albanian side. The gravitational force of the "third party" here is so powerful that leaves both parties with no other choice, but addressing constantly this attractor. The basin of attraction is both quite wide and deep that leaves both sides of the divide with no other choice, but remaining inside this attractor for quite some time due to its gravitational force in pulling inside both sides of the media. Speaking from a practical viewpoint, the longer they stay inside this attractor the better it is for both side of the media to get out of this intractable conflict. It will take another powerful attractor in order to move both parties from this original attractor involving the force of the international community. It should be emphasized, however, that in order for the "third party" to play the role of this powerful

attractor, it must first have certain characteristics that would make this party to play this powerful role explained so far. In the following section, therefore, an attempt will be made to introduce some criteria that are of crucial importance of creating such a powerful attractor played by the "third party."

5. Characterizing the "third party" attractor

According to Bitzer (1968), there are two conditions or criteria for recognizing who the "real" audience is that the discourse is referring to. The first criterion, according to Bitzer, is that an audience in a discourse is the one that must be "capable of being influenced." There must be a certain elementary level of regard and openness to the speaker or writer's arguments. For Bitzer, it does not make any sense to try to persuade an audience if that audience is not capable of being persuaded. It is possible, of course, for the discussants in practice not to think in the same way as does Bitzer. Nevertheless, this idea corresponds to what was stated earlier that it would be naïve to suggest that discussants willingly enter into such discussions of intractable disagreement. At the superficial level, it might look like that discussants continue to attempt to persuade even those that seems cannot be persuaded, but at a more deeper level, discussants seem to address those that can be persuaded. If the audience does not have this condition, argues Bitzer, then it would be fruitless or even impossible to try to influence an audience.

This condition simply means that an analyst is supposed to search inside the discourse an audience that can be influenced. This criterion would not allow any discourse of the type of "intractable disagreement" where the parties in a discussion stick to their own position regardless of the strengths of the arguments by the other party. In such a situation, no audience is capable of being influenced. Bringing this criterion to the case study at hand, we would say that according to Bitzer, we have to search for an audience that is capable of being influenced, i.e. the international community, and to ignore the discussion between the Macedonian and Albanian language media because of the fact that both of them stick to their own position without any chance of being influenced by one another.

The second condition, which for the case study at hand is even more important, says that an audience is that group of individuals who have the capacity to act as "mediators of change." According to Bitzer, an audience is that person or group of people that has the capacity to change things. If an audience does not have that capability to change things in favor of the one or the other side, then there is no

need to try to persuade them in the first place. Usually, this type of audience that acts as “mediators of change” is more “powerful” than the one who is directly addressed, or that is physically present during the discussion. In the case study at hand, this particular audience can be recognized quite easily because of the fact that at the time the international community was the only party capable of playing the role of mediators of change because they were powerful enough to play this role. On the other hand, this criterion implies that it does not make any sense to consider the Macedonian or the Albanian language media as if they attempt to persuade each other because none of them had that capacity to play the role of mediators of change. Inferring from Bitzer’s condition, it would be naïve to imply that the Macedonian language media were attempting to convince the Albanian side because this side did not have that capacity to change things. The same thing might be said about the other side as well.

Another condition that is of equal importance for the powerful attractor of the “third party” is the condition of “neutrality.” According to this condition, the “third party” must be neutral or objective in order to be accepted as a party that can play that powerful attractor of pulling together the sides that are engaged in an intractable conflict. The parties engaged in an intractable conflict can redirect their attention to another attractor, provided that that attractor is neutral and objective in dealing with the conflict at hand. When talking about the conflict at hand, the Macedonian and the Albanian side referred to the “third party” as a powerful attractor because both sides believed that the international community was neutral and objective in mediating with the conflict between the Macedonian and the Albanian side.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this modest paper was to shed some light to the already existing debate on the implications of intractable conflicts to both theoreticians and practitioners alike. I tried to summarize most of research done on this topic without any intention to comment on the solutions presented by various scholars to the idea that there is no rational solution to discourses that are stuck in an intractable disagreement. In this paper, an attempt was made to provide another solution by reconstructing the discourse in a more careful way with the introduction of “third party,” as a powerful attractor that can pull inside its gravity both sides that are engaged in an intractable conflict. By working on a case study, albeit very superficially, we tried to show the role played by the

international community in understanding the discourse better. Through this reconstruction, the discourse that at first level was treated as "abnormal," at the second level became "normal" thanks to the role played by the "third party." At the end, we tried to provide some criteria, not meant to be exclusive at all, in helping to identify the role played by the third party, i.e. the international community.

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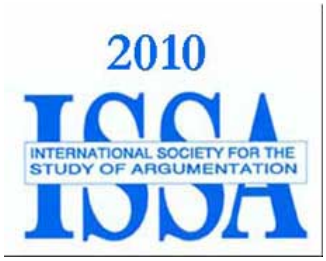
ISSA Proceedings 2010 – Constituting The "Good Patient" – The Effect Of "Clustered Argumentation" In Dutch Personal Healthcare Budget Policy



*1. Introduction***[i]**
Public policy proposals for radical transformations often draw on a large number of premises. In this paper, we show that argumentation is complicated by what we call a "cluster of arguments", of which the parts are not evaluated independently, but seem to be either accepted as a whole or rejected as a whole. Our case study examines one such cluster. The case concerns the introduction of a personal budget for healthcare in the Netherlands. This

implies that, for particular types of treatments, citizens can opt for receiving a budget that is allocated for their case directly to their bank accounts, rather than receiving care “in kind”. Our analysis is based on a study of the key policy reports that constitute this discussion, as well as on a confrontation with the academic literature.

The focus of our analysis is on how the personal budget policy affects how the patient is constituted as a healthcare actor. The patient seems to be attributed a new role. We argue that discussions on this new role in fact aim to constitute a new subject of healthcare, a “good patient”, to use a term that was introduced by the Dutch Public Health Council (RVZ 2007).

We approach this topic by first presenting the interconnected expectations about the subject, its surroundings and the interaction between subject and surroundings. We build on earlier work on expectations in healthcare policy (Mensink & Birrer 2010). We proceed by analysing the argumentation around problems that were raised by actors in the discussion. Many of the types of argumentation we found can in fact be described as what we will call “evading mechanisms”. Evasion does not point at purposeful attempts to mislead other actors. We merely describe mechanisms that can be observed around a particular argumentation cluster. After going over these mechanisms, we unfold how the “argumentation cluster” of this discussion can be understood. We show how the complexity and interconnectedness of premises leads to ineffective handling of criticism by the discussants.

We use Michel Foucault’s work as a starting-point for the discursive constitutions of subjects (see e.g. 1977; 1982; 2008). Acknowledging that a subject is constituted this way counters the modern-liberal idea of the subject as an autonomous free-floating entity. We extend Foucault’s usual approach by including arguments that fall outside the dominant discourse, which puts this discourse in a different light.

On the basis of our analysis, we can first ask whether the subject that is sketched in political discussions surrounding the personal budget is deemed realistic. Secondly, we can assess what clustered argumentation implies for the subject, in the light of normative oppositions between the dominant discourse and the “non-dominant statements” we include.

Because of the nature of our analysis, we translated a substantial set of statements to make this Dutch discourse accessible to an English-speaking audience. By giving a detailed analysis of political argumentation, we try to go beyond popular accounts of the personal budget. The argumentation clusters we identify are not universal. Nevertheless, they provide insights into how governments and industry argue to deal with supply and demand driven models of health care delivery. Furthermore, the notion of subjectivity lies at the heart of critical/cultural, rhetorical, and argumentation-based analyses of health care controversies.

2. The good patient

We start by analysing how a new type of patient was proposed in the policy for a personal healthcare budget. We consider this the dominant discourse in this study.

The personal budget was put on the political agenda in the late 1980s (Tweede Kamer 1988)**[ii]**, by advocates for disability rights and a vice-minster of the liberal conservative party (VVD). In 1995, experiments started for certain types of nursing and care. Soon, the budget was drawn into a broader policy discussion regarding the perceived crisis of ever-rising exceptional medical expenses. It was seen as a wedge to break open this supply-oriented system, by granting force to the demand-side. The scheme was fundamentally revised in 2003, and again in 2007, with the introduction of the new, municipally managed Social Support Act (WMO). The latter mainly connected the budget to the discourse of citizen participation in society.

The initiators aimed to use the budget to 'overcome signalled bottlenecks of organisational nature in the homecare offered to handicapped people, such as insufficiently flexible support, or an excess of care providers' (1988, p. 14). After introducing the scheme, however, argumentation shifted considerably, incorporating more macro-political elements and societal challenges perceived by subsequent governments.

In order to counter these challenges, government used the personal budget as an instrument to attribute a new role to the patient, or citizen. This "new healthcare subject" is expected to bring about the changes that were deemed necessary. We use the Public Health Council's term "the good patient" to denote this new subject. Nevertheless, we point to a broader set of requirements than the council

does. Initially, the term referred to having proper conduct manners, to meet business obligations and to co-operate in treatments (RVZ 2007, p. 7). We draw out the rationale that is provided for the constitution of such a subject, highlighting how this relates to a number of general challenges. The new subject is a rational consumer, who adopts sovereignty over his/her own health. (S)he is supported by government and society in continuously re-evaluating the quality of providers, in order to put pressure on the walls that surround the healthcare institution.

2.1. More control by the citizen on healthcare

The disability rights movement has called for a more influential role of the patient, or citizen. Bulmer, for instance, has formulated the "cash position" most strongly, arguing that 'cash gives choice and dignity whereas welfare systems enslave' (Bulmer 2008, p. 47). Many authors take a similar normative stance (see e.g. Morris 2002; Timonen et al. 2006).

Different ministers positioned the subject as a client of healthcare providers – 'client sovereignty' (2000a, p. 6) – or as a consumer of healthcare products or services – 'consumer sovereignty' (2004a, p. 13). The notion of self-interested sovereignty is central to modern, liberal conception of subjectivity, as Foucault highlighted (Foucault 2008). Already in the 1980s, the then-vice-minister argued that: 'even though [the organisations of people with a handicap] prefer the term "person-bound budget", I will still use the term "client-bound budget", considering the orientation on the person and the community' (1988, p. 14). However, is a budget more focused on the person if it is called "client-bound" rather than "person bound"?

Alternatively, the subject is positioned in the role of employer of healthcare workers (e.g. 1988; 1998d). In the literature, the notion of a citizen-employed personal assistant is often portrayed as an ideal model (e.g. Morris 2002). It seems, however, that employment is seen as a consequence of accepting the responsibility of a personal budget, rather than an objective that was purposefully sought.

Relations to care providers are primarily conceived of as economic in nature (Kremer 2006). Two types of relations need to be distinguished. First, there are those that always had an economic component, i.e. formal care providers offered a product or service to a citizen, in return for a financial reimbursement that was

received from a third party. The change in such relations is that the payment relation changes: the citizen is now handling reimbursement. When it comes to this type of relationship, the main arguments in favour of this new arrangement that are given are: (i) the sense of self-sufficiency and autonomy that it provides (1988; MDW-werkgroep AWBZ 2000b), with a particular focus on choice (1988; 1998c), (ii) the practical possibility of making effective decisions in terms of organising healthcare (1988) and (iii) the expectation that the costs of a personal budget will be lower (1998b).

The second type involves informal care situations, for which, previously, no financial reimbursement was available. When it comes to economising this second category, another set of arguments is provided: (i) informal care is generated on the basis of a 'legitimate need for care' (1997, p. 5), (ii) in part of the cases, more expensive professional care can be avoided because of the availability of informal care (1997e; 1998a; RVZ 2005a), (iii) informal care is highly valued by the patient, and is made attractive by being financially rewarded (Ramakers & Van den Wijngaart 2005b), (iv) paying informal care givers opens up a previously non-existent labour market (2005c), (v) two third of budget holders paying for informal care still receive additional unpaid care from the same providers (Ramakers & Van den Wijngaart 2005a), and (vi) the vice minister stressed that we have to take better care of informal care givers, as there are many known cases of burnouts (2005b). Particularly in the light of the new labour market and the potential of a "free" care surplus, this last issue gains economic relevance: burnouts are expensive for society, as observed in related policy-discussions (TNS NIPO 2004). It is telling that informal carers are described as the "cement of society".

2.2. Replacing supply orientation by demand orientation

Supply-oriented healthcare is perceived as undesirably rigid and ineffective. In international comparison, this qualification is particularly attributed to the Netherlands (Timonen et al. 2006). This second challenge is addressed by positioning the new subjectivity of the patient as an element in the transformation to a demand-oriented system. It is argued that '[t]he personal budget [is] an important instrument to achieve demand-orientation and increasing flexibility in the Exceptional Medical Expense Act' (2000, p. 13). This implies 'the strengthening – in a formal sense – of the position of the client in the chain from demand for care to delivery of care' (Ministerie van VWS 1999, p. 22).

In this role, individual citizens are deemed to be supported by mediating agencies and organisations that represent their interests in discussions with healthcare providers and insurance companies (2001l; MDW-werkgroep AWBZ 2000a). The same is noted internationally (Spandler 2004). With respect to mediating agencies, citizens are attributed the "agent-role" of monitoring the qualities of their services (College Voor Zorgverzekeringen 2009b).

2.3. Reducing the role of government

Bulmer formulates the third challenge as: getting rid of 'long-term, inflexible, public-sector-style contracts' (2008, p. 48). This is done by reshuffling the relation between government and the new subject. Government will do no more than to set the framework conditions within which the citizen interacts with other players in the healthcare system, or market as it is typically called. Government relates to the citizen mainly in terms of providing support, and in terms of taking responsibility for cases that can impossibly be handled by citizens themselves (2005f). This does not imply, however, that government withdraws; government and the active citizen have a relationship of collaboration (2007e), which is based on support, rather than on a form of dependency (2004b, p. 9).

A number of framework conditions are mentioned. First, in order for citizens to be able to monitor price and quality, information should be available (2001k) for the system to be sufficiently transparent (MDW-werkgroep AWBZ 2000c), particularly in the form of benchmarks (2001c; 2004d). Second, sovereignty should be restricted to certain types of care (autism, for instance, is to be excluded) (2000d). A strict demand is that the budget only be used for intended "spending goals" (2001b), and on care providers who meet certain minimal quality criteria (MDW-werkgroep AWBZ 2000d). Ex post evaluation is proposed to assess whether these demands have been met (2001a). Finally, a "money back" policy, or complaint procedure should be created (2004c).

2.4. Reciprocity between citizen and society

Government perceives that it can no longer take full responsibility for steering society, and care in particular. The citizen's responsibility is extended to the macro-level by positioning him/her as an active participant of a wider civil society. First of all, 'citizens and their organisations' are considered the makers of civil society (2004a, p. 9). At the same time, they stand in a reciprocal relation to it: citizens may expect the support of their surroundings in terms of receiving care from, for instance, family members and voluntary community activities, but at the

same time they should return such favours by assuming an active participatory role in these same surroundings (2007d; 2009c). Reciprocity is also expected in relation to government: in return for its support, government expects citizens to adopt what they call 'good patientship', a term coined by the Public Health Council (RVZ), which implies that 'the client bears responsibility: for a healthy lifestyle, for actively participating during his treatment and for judging, and giving feedback on, the care that was consumed' (2004, p. 2).

Ideas about participation are even put into practice by introducing a so-called "participation budget" (2006b), for instance for arranging transportation, education and labour integration. The vice-minister states that government appeals to people's "carrying capacity" (2005, p. 7), and that 'self-organisation, social adhesion and personal responsibility are the starting-point for a stronger social structure' (2005, p. 8).

2.5. Cost containment

The constitution of the subject as specified above is supposed to meet the challenge of cost containment (Kerff 1998; Houtepen & Meulen 2000). Certain studies suggest that direct payments are more cost effective than other financing models (Spandler 2004), for instance because overheads would be lower (Timonen et al. 2006).

The new subject is positioned as a rational economic actor; it is argued that '[r]equesting and managing a personal budget requires entrepreneurship' (2009a, p. 3). In such a role, the citizen is the primary responsible actor when it comes to monitoring price (Ministerie van VWS 2001) and quality (2001h). Demand orientation is introduced on the basis of the general assumption that it 'contributes to quality, effectiveness and efficiency' (2001a, p. 4). The assumption regarding the positive effects of focusing on demand is based on the reliance on incentives, both for those who request and those who supply care. With respect to the latter, the argument is that 'if the individual can decide for him or herself from which provider to purchase a product or service, an incentive arises for the provider to make a better product' (2001b, p. 4). It is expected that 'providers have to compete for the customer's favour on the basis of price and quality' (2001, p. 2). Research reflects this way of thinking (Carmichael & Brown 2002). When it comes to incentives for citizens, the argument is that they will be more restrictive in their spending if they manage the budget themselves.

3. Analysis of critique within the discourse

As noted in the introduction, our approach differs from Foucault's. We also include statements that contradict or criticise the assumptions or expectations that we described in the previous section. The documents that constitute these policy discussions include numerous perceived problems in association with the argumentation highlighted above. We first provide a short overview of the problems that are noted by critics, before exploring the argumentation about them. We examine both criticism by parties that penetrated parliamentary discussions, and academic critique that stayed outside parliamentary circles. Even though we present issues as "singular" problems here, they are in fact interconnected. We return to the "cluster" of problems below.

3.1. Singled-out problems

The main problem for the "good patient", both in the Netherlands and in other countries (Glendinning et al. 2001; Carmichael & Brown 2002; Rummery 2006), is the administrative overload to which (s)he is exposed (2001f), even after fundamental revisions, which were particularly designed to diminish such burdens (2004; 2004k; 2007b). Overload particularly occurs when budget holders formally employ care workers (Van den Wijngaart & Ramakers 2004).

Another problem is that the support network of representative organisations is not yet in place (2002b). A number of councils that represent insurance clients are hardly functional, if at all (2001j); local organisations are not yet in place (2004m). Also scholars note that, for instance, 'user co-operatives are only likely to work for a small proportion of claimants and would exacerbate a culture in which some claimants are winners at the expense of others who become losers' (Lyon 2005, p. 247). Transparency is considered inadequate, even though it is not concretely specified what is lacking; the vice-minister perceives an 'excess of financial partitions' (2004b), referring to administrative separations between different parts of the healthcare system. In addition, there have been cases in which brokering agencies were criticised for committing fraud, or for offering low service quality (Research voor Beleid 2009). As a result of this, the "countervailing power" that citizens can generate is considered strongly limited (2001i; RVZ 2005b),

Even though the quality of care that was purchased with a personal budget is generally considered high in the Netherlands (2006a), the fact that citizens are made responsible has created an ongoing concern nonetheless (2000c; 2004j;

College Voor Zorgverzekeringen 2004; IBO 2006b). With respect to threats to quality, the literature notes a lack of training of personal assistants (Pickard et al. 2003; Kremer 2006) and a devaluation of professional care and care standards (Knijn & Verhagen 2007). The capability of citizens to behave as rational consumers and assess quality is questioned as well (Kremer 2006; Knijn & Verhagen 2007; Prideaux et al. 2009); at best, they are considered quasi-consumers by some (Glendinning et al. 2001). This goes back to the ambiguous issue of patients' "health literacy", which we mentioned in the introduction (Rubinelli et al. 2009).

Since its inception, the personal budget has become a popular option for funding informal caregivers who had previously been unpaid (1997c; 1998f; 2001e), which has also been noted internationally (Askheim 2005; Kremer 2006). This issue is referred to as the monetisation of informal care (2004i; 2005a; Ramakers & Van den Wijngaart 2005c). This has made public spending grow, which seems to be in direct conflict with one of the original objectives: cost containment. Something similar may be argued when it comes to the risk of fraud or abuse (Askheim 2005; Kremer 2006; Ellis 2007). In the Netherlands, fraud is estimated to occur in 1-5% of the cases (2004h).

A problem that is indirectly related to the empowered role of the subject is the position of care providers (Ungerson 1997; 2004). Scholars have reported bad working conditions and an overwhelming sense of responsibility (Spandler 2004), overburdening and exploitations of informal carers (Kremer 2006; Rummery 2006) and carers being trapped in short-term contracts (Kremer 2006; Leece 2010). In the Netherlands, the topic entered political discussion in the second half of the past decade. The minister acknowledged the problem that many employees of traditional home care organisations lost their jobs (2007c). In addition, many skilled care providers have been forced to accept contracts for unskilled work (2007f).

Even though it is not specifically mentioned as a problem, it is often acknowledged that difference in capacities of the citizen leads to inequality and/or social exclusion. The international literature pays more attention to this issue (e.g. Lyon 2005; Rummery 2006). It is pointed out, for instance, that there are relatively many budget holders with a higher education background (1997b; 2009b). On top of that, the skills of the applicant in terms of formulating the request for care have an influence on the amount that is awarded (1999; IBO

2006a).

It is worth noting that scholars have articulated a number of problematic issues that have played only a minor role in Dutch political discussions, if at all. These issues are of a different nature than the fairly practical points that we addressed above. First, it is argued that, with an individualised set-up like the personal budget, economies of scale are likely to be lost compared to collective service provision (Spandler 2004; Lyon 2005). Second, the notion of the economic nature of the relations that we discussed is problematised. In a much-discussed paper, Ungerson argues that:
‘”empowerment” is becoming two-pronged: the community care legislation gives disabled people *procedural rights* to an assessment, although not to services; the direct payments legislation will give disabled people the means to enter a *market* for care where they can operate *contractual rights*’ (Ungerson 1997, p. 47, original italics).

The Dutch system is particularly mentioned as an example of ‘fully commodified “informal” care’ (Ungerson 2004, p. 197; see also Timonen et al. 2006; Knijn & Verhagen 2007), which is reported to be problematic for part of the users. It is articulated, for instance, how ‘market logic intrudes into family logic’ (Kremer 2006, p. 396). Furthermore, some have pointed out that, in different countries, funding has proven inadequate and that ‘it is vital that the real costs of living with a disability are recognised’ (Carmichael & Brown 2002, p. 807). Particularly market logic is reported to have a detrimental effect on the amount of funding awarded (Spandler 2004; Scourfield 2005). Finally, different scholars have pointed at the ‘consequences of a state that wanted a market of care but at the same time introduced control’ (Kremer 2006, p. 392; see also Ellis 2007; Priestley et al. 2007; Prideaux et al. 2009).

3.2. Argumentative responses to problems

We have found many ways to argue about such problems. Rather than going over every problem one by one, we go over the different argumentative mechanisms. We have mainly observed mechanisms that effectively evaded problems that are noted by actors in this discussion. This does not necessarily imply that such evasion stems from an intention to not address an issue. We do not discuss motivations, only practices.

3.2.1. Stating, rather than solving problems

The most common way of dealing with problems in the documents that constitute the policy discussion is to acknowledge them, establish their importance, and then move on without offering argumentation or solution. All of the problems mentioned above have been handled this way several times over the past years. Particularly the issues of administrative burdens, limited skilfulness of budget holders, quality of care and the lack of a proper infrastructure are dealt with in this manner.

3.2.2. Offering partial, but insufficient solutions

In case suggestions are offered, they are often insufficient. By this, we mean that the problem in question keeps on being signalled. We provide a number of examples. When it comes to administrative overload and the limited, or unequally distributed capacities of budget holders, it has been proposed that a personal budget may be refused (1997a) or that a negative recommendation may be given to a particular applicant (2009a). This approach is not just restricted to the Netherlands (Priestley et al. 2007). Alternatively, a facilitating agency would be formed, of which citizens can make use voluntarily (2001d), and an instructive DVD will be prepared (2009d). The international call for simplifying application procedures (Leece & Leece 2006) is also recognised in the Netherlands (2002a). Monetisation and abuse are to be addressed by creating more objective indications (1997f) and control instruments (2000b), by reclaiming budgets in case of abuse, by obeying informal care providers to show that they have limited other activities for being able to provide (paid) care (2004l). Abuse by agencies is addressed by restricting payment of the personal budget to the budget holder's bank account and by creating a behavioural code for agencies (2009e). In spite of these efforts, we continued to observe subsequent worries about the same issues.

3.2.3. Ambiguity

We understand ambiguity as a vague use of terms. As the Council of State pointed out, for instance, it is fairly unclear what "participation of all citizens" means (2005e). In spite of the vice-minister's clarifications, it remains unclear what is intended exactly. On the one hand, it seems to refer to participation in the care and support process, in the sense of charity or volunteer work (2004n), but often the vaguer concept of participation in society is allured to. Mostly, this is argued to be inspired by values such as empowerment for people with a disability or chronic illness, but also participation in policy making (2005g) and labour participation (2006c) are mentioned. It is noted that local governments, which

will execute this policy, should further specify the definition of participation.

3.2.4. Conditionality

There are many ways in which conditionality plays a role in this policy discussion, not only in the Netherlands (Ellis 2007; Priestley et al. 2007). By conditionality we mean that certain conditions need to be met in order for a policy to be executed. We juxtapose this with the unrestricted adoption of the policy on the basis of the *assumption* that these conditions are met. Most interesting are cases in which certain attributes are described as both a condition and an assumption. Even though it is sometimes acknowledged that positioning an attribute as a condition implies a serious limitation, this does not stop politicians from formulating it as a general assumption as well. With respect to sovereignty, it is argued that the 'starting-point of the personal budget is that the budget owner is reasonably capable of judging the quality of care (consumer sovereignty)' (2004b, p. 13). This statement puts the emphasis very differently from saying that sovereignty is 'not equally applicable to everyone and everything' (2000b, p. 6). The emphasis of the latter formulation is on conditionality, which is lacking in the former. Similarly, it is argued that 'requesting and managing a personal budget requires entrepreneurship' (2009b, p. 3). The question whether this requirement is reasonable was posed in 2009 only, almost 15 years after launching the first experiments. Responsibility is another example. When the personal budget entered the discussion in the late 1980s, the ability to take responsibility was a condition (1988), suggesting that there would be some sort of judgment of this ability. Later on, more emphasis was placed on the argument that accepting a personal budget implies accepting responsibility (1998e), i.e. without a judgment of ability.

3.2.5. Shifting the responsibility for unsolved problems

Another common mechanism is that responsibility for unsolved problems is passed on to another actor; local governments and the individual citizen are the most common candidates for this. In terms of major challenges – inadequate societal participation and excess costs – the Public Health Council posed the question: 'How will we handle this?' The answer given was: '[b]y making the municipality responsible for the societal participation of people with a disability' (RVZ 2005, p. 2). In particular, '[r]ealising a social support infrastructure with adequate societal facilities falls under the responsibility of local government. This responsibility should most certainly remain where it is' (2002, p. 4).

The citizen is first responsible for assessing the amount of budget that it is needed: 'if desired, an applicant for a personal budget for mental disability can try to manage with a lower norm amount than for which he could receive an indication' (1997, p. 7). This implies that (s)he can try to purchase a cheaper treatment than what is deemed necessary by experts. It seems to make sense to measure quality from the citizen's perspective (2004a), but should "client satisfaction" be the main indicator for quality (Van den Wijngaart & Ramakers 2004)? When it comes to administrative burdens, government opted for a procedure that gives more freedom, but more burdens at the same time (2001g). Concerning burdens for care providers, regulations were adapted: 'By this change in the law, the citizen can be confronted with these burdens. This in fact implies a shift of burdens to the right place' (2008, p. 8). Whereas lowering burdens was one of the prime objectives of a major revision of the scheme, in 80% of the cases these remained the same or actually increased (2004e). The conclusion, surprisingly, was that the objective had partially been reached (Van den Wijngaart & Ramakers 2004). As a reply, the vice minister argued that citizens should not only expect taking the benefits, but also the hardships (2004g). Taking into consideration that less skilful citizens not only need to hire consultants to deal with the ever-increasing burdens of complexity, but that, in addition, they are expected to monitor the potentially abusive behaviour of such consultants (College Voor Zorgverzekeringen 2009a), we may wonder how this relates to the freedom that the scheme was meant to promote.

3.2.6. Implicitly contradicting the stated objectives

The introduction of new control mechanisms seems to contradict the original principle of patient sovereignty. Already a couple of years after introducing the scheme, it was stated that 'implementing demand-orientation ought to be accompanied by strengthening the set of supervisory instruments' (2000a). For instance, house visits are proposed as a mechanism of proper coordination (2007g). Cost control has led to the lowering of budgets in later updates of the scheme (Van den Wijngaart & Ramakers 2004), regulations for using personal budgets for paying informal care have been sharpened (2004f) and the part of the budget (€2500) that was previously exempted from evaluation was cancelled (2007a). Using a title like 'Liberating Frameworks' (Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling 2002) for a crucial report in this discourse is telling in this respect.

3.2.7. Leaving underlying arguments unspecified

A final issue relates to not making underlying argumentation explicit; we take the example of monetisation and abuse. Considering that cost containment is always presented as a prime challenge, it seems awkward that few measures are taken to control this. What does the argument look like? First, the negative perception of the issue is downscaled by saying that the scheme is perhaps not 'waterproof' (2004, p. 15), but that abuse only happens on a very limited scale (1-5%). Another option is to establish a favourable definition of monetisation, stating that if a personal budget is awarded in a situation in which informal care was previously delivered unpaid, there is still a 'legitimate need for care' (1997d). The vice-minister's argument was: 'We find it normal to pay care providers for delivered services, then why should we not find it normal to pay informal carers for delivering formally required care' (2005, p. 3). She accepts a narrower definition of monetisation that only considers cases in which the personal budget makes informal caregivers unwilling to continue providing unpaid care (2005d). Even though this is in part speculation, the underlying argument seems to be that new markets may open up and that unpaid care will still be provided on top of paid care.

3.3 Clusters of problems

As said, the "singular" problems are interconnected through measures that are supported by different forms of argumentation. In this section, we provide a few examples to indicate to what extents problems are "clustered". Through a description of these clusters, and the evading mechanisms that surround them, we try to highlight a particular form of discursive formation. We still use the singular problems as an "entry point" to the cluster.

When it comes to *administrative burdens* for the citizen, the existence of the new market for brokering agencies and personal budget consultants is put forward as a *partial solution*. As we have seen, however, this solution raises the problem of potential abuse by such organisations; citizens are now also responsible for *monitoring the quality* of service that they deliver. This new problem is dealt with by two different ways of argumentation: first of all, a *partial solution* is offered by creating a quality mark for such organisations, and secondly, government simply states that it *cannot take responsibility*. The fact that such agencies need to be paid for creates *inequality* between citizens who have the skills to manage a personal budget themselves and citizens who don't. If payment is an issue, assistance of family members is offered as a *partial solution*. Even though issues

of inequality are hardly discussed at all, it is argued that selecting care in kind would be a *solution* for those with limited capacities. This option, however, places the responsibility for deciding on the *quality of care* with the patient, which was considered as an issue of concern in the first place. At this point, government *restates the original ideology* by arguing that this is part of the citizen's responsibility, while remaining *ambiguous* about the question whether capacities for handling responsibility are assumed or considered a condition.

Moving on to the problem of the citizen as the prime responsible for the quality of care as an entry point, the argument is that the receiver of care is the most capable to decide what happens to him or her. As we have seen, the way to do this was to *stage a measuring tool* that used citizen satisfaction as the main indicator of quality. This seems problematic, considering that further medical indicators or long-term perspectives are *not considered directly*. A further argument used is that it is necessary to move the monitoring of quality to the demand side if we want to *move from a supply-oriented to a demand-oriented system*. This brings us back to the earlier question regarding the skills of the citizen. That question evokes the elements of the problem cluster discussed in the previous paragraph.

The question of "system innovation" from supply to demand highlights the lack of a supporting infrastructure. It is *assumed* that self-organisation is the best way to form a stronger social structure. In practice, however, it turns out that citizens neither form collectives, nor are they represented by patient organisations sufficiently. Still, the responsibility for organising this is partially *shifted to the citizen*, even though government states that such an infrastructure is *required* for achieving system change, considering that citizens will not be able to gain sufficient strength otherwise. A partial solution is to *make local governments co-responsible* for creating this infrastructure, while referring to the *ambiguous* term "participation" as a basis for this. However, this applies only to the social support act, which is just a small part of the entire healthcare sector; therefore, this is certainly *not a complete solution*.

If we look at the issue of monetisation, we have seen that the basic argument was that informal care is provided on the basis of a *legitimate* demand of care. This is based on *redefining* what monetisation is, thereby *downscaling* the number of cases that meet the definition. Still, it seems problematic from the point of view of government's objective of *cost containment*. Even though it is not clearly articulated, it seems there is an *underlying argumentation*, i.e. paying informal

care has positive economic effects as well. Whether these benefits outweigh expenditures remains *ambiguous*, however. The notion that monetisation might grow in the future is not articulated. The *solution* that is offered is to increase supervision to single out cases in which monetisation ought to be considered abuse, in line with the new definition. Such an increase in control is again *at odds with the original principle of sovereignty*. The argument here, however, is that this should be regarded as part of new "liberating frameworks", a fairly *ambiguous* term.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Even though our main focus has been on the problems that we have identified, it needs to be said that several of these issues have been contested or relativised in the literature. A few examples: first, training has been effective in handling administrative overload. In addition, many receivers of direct payments have voiced the opinion that they gladly accept this load, compared to the downsides of the previous system (Carmichael & Brown 2002). Third, quality of care has definitely improved in certain respects (Carmichael & Brown 2002); satisfaction is obviously not completely unrelated to quality. Similarly, there are many known cases of care workers that were happily employed by holders of a personal budget (Kremer 2006; Leece 2010). Just as market logic has a potential "dark side", so does "family logic": '[f]amily care may be based on "warmth", but it is parochial and arbitrary at the same time' (Knijn & Verhagen 2007, p. 468). With respect to the issue of monetisation, finally, it is suggested by some that informal carers do not in fact change their behaviour because of the financial benefit, but that they appreciate their increase in income and recognition nonetheless (Ungerson 2004).

Personalised healthcare is not a black and white issue. Our conclusion is similar to what other have argued with respect to the question of attributing "skills" to the patient (Rubinelli et al. 2009). On the one hand, "health literacy" is promoted in the framework of patient empowerment. On the other hand, critics argue that it may be undesirable for the patient to take place on the doctor's chair. We do not suggest that personal budgets be cancelled because of the problems we found. Rather, it makes sense to investigate how to better deal with criticism in complex and interconnected arguments. On the basis of our analysis, we conclude that "clustered argumentation" is associated with mechanisms that evade problems that are raised. This would provide an interesting, but ambiguous case for theorists and practitioners working on the basis of the notion of political

responsibility. How could we deal with the question of accountability in such cases?

Returning to the question we posed in the introduction: it seems reasonable to question how realistic the subject is that is portrayed in the dominant discourse. The use of the "cluster of argumentation" and "evading mechanisms" concepts highlights more than just the question of how realistic a particular subject is. We have tried to make clear that clustered argumentation is a discursive formation that makes certain things transparent and others opaque. Even though we do not comment on the question of intentionality, we have tried to highlight how clusters are accompanied by mechanisms that effectively imply that criticism is evaded. We may wonder whether the new subject will really be a "good patient". Is (s)he indeed a cash-supported, rational sovereign, who constantly shuffles relations with care givers and is putting pressure to break rigid healthcare institutions? On the basis of the problems that participants in the policy discussion raised, another image of the patient-subject appears. It could also be an overburdened individual, constantly involved in unequal power relations, suspect in the eyes of government and society, and, therefore, increasingly constrained. This points at an entirely different type of subject, a "problematised subject", so to say. This forms an interesting reflection on Foucault's work on subjectivity.

NOTES

[i] Translations of Dutch documents were performed by the authors

[ii] Most documents analysed in this study are (vice-)ministerial statements to the Dutch assembly; references in which we do not specify an author or organisational author should be considered as such (Tweede Kamer)

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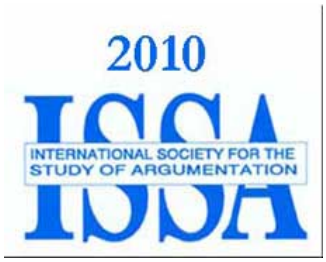

1. Introduction

Modality has to do with communicating about possibilities rather than about the actual world, with construing alternative scenarios and with assessing the relationships between scenarios. This mode of communication has obvious affinities with argumentation, a communicative activity in which speakers compare and evaluate alternative views, exploring their relationships with beliefs and known facts. That is why linguistic expressions happen to have both modal and argumentative functions, as shows the example of negation markers, used to mark states of affairs as non-real, but also to disagree (cf. among others Anscombre & Ducrot 1983). In other words, modal expressions – among which negation markers, mood, conditional constructions and modal verbs as well as other expressions of possibility and necessity – happen to function as "argumentative indicators" (cf. Snoeck Henkemans 1997, van Eemeren et al. 2007).

According to the pragmatic-dialectical approach to argumentative indicators, the range of possible argumentative functions of linguistic expressions covers the content level, the level of discourse relations, the level of speech act types and illocutionary force, as well as the discursive-sequential level of signaling particular argumentative moves or discussion stages. Within this framework, considerable attention has been paid to pragmatic and dialogical aspects, i.e. to indicators that are useful to reconstruct stages and moves in a critical discussion (cf. also, among others, Tseronis 2009). As to modal expressions, they have been analyzed first and foremost as markers of the degree of commitment to a standpoint (Snoeck Henkemans 1997, p. 108-117).

A slightly different approach is adopted by Rocci (2008, 2010) in his investigation of Italian possibility and necessity modals as argumentative indicators. His analysis draws on a "stratified account of arguing" (Rocci 2010, p. 585-588), following Rigotti (2005) and Rocci (2005b), and taking into account earlier work by James B. Freeman (Freeman 1991) on modal expressions of probability as relational operators. It investigates the modals' functions zooming in on the act of arguing for a standpoint and on the structure of enthymemic reasoning, including *loci*, i.e. the underlying ontological relations warranting the inference of the standpoint from premises (e.g. cause-effect, authority etc.).

The research conducted by Rocci (2008, 2010), which is based on the careful semantic analysis of a series of attested and constructed examples, suggests that modal verbs have argumentative functions that are partly similar to those of argumentative connectives, contributing to the construction of argument-conclusion relations. At the same time, it draws the attention to an analytical difficulty that is relevant for a large range of argumentative indicators, i.e. their highly polysemous nature. The polysemy of modal expressions, especially of modal verbs, is well-known in the field of research on modality (cf. also section 2 below). Rocci (2008, 2010) sustains that it is argumentatively relevant, i.e. that differences in meaning correspond to differences in argumentative functions. In particular, it is claimed that inferential and non-inferential readings of the modals differ as to the relations they signal.

In this paper, a corpus-based approach will be adopted to further investigate the kinds of relations indicated by modal verbs and to lend empirical support to the idea according to which the distinction between the modals' inferential and non-inferential readings is highly relevant for the organization of argumentative discourse. I will examine a particular highly frequent modal expression in Italian, *potrebbe*, which is the conditional form of the possibility modal *potere* and roughly corresponds to English *could* or *might*. Combining insights from semantics, pragmatics, text linguistics and argumentation theory, this form will first be analyzed as a polysemous expression corresponding to different construction types, which involve different readings of the verb *potere* and of the conditional mood (section 2). In section 3, I will formulate specific hypotheses about the argumentative functions of the construction types in question, which will then be examined by analyzing a corpus of economic-financial newspaper articles**[i]**.

2. Preliminary considerations on the semantics of potrebbe

2.1. The modal verb potere

Italian has two modal verbs conveying the notions of possibility and necessity, respectively, i.e. *potere* (engl. 'can', 'may'; when nominalized: 'power') and *dovere* ('must', 'should'; when nominalized: 'duty'). These may be considered the partly grammaticalized core of a larger semantic field of lexical expressions of modality and evidentiality. The two verbs are polysemous. The meanings of *dovere* include at least need, obligation, agent-oriented (Bybee et al. 1994) and non agent-oriented ontological necessity, and different kinds of inference. Those of *potere* include at least

– ability (e.g. *Il re può decidere del destino dei suoi sudditi* 'The king has the power to decide on his subjects' destiny');
– permission (e.g. *Puoi andare adesso* 'You may go now');
– agent-oriented ontological possibility (e.g. *Qui puoi tornare a destra – la strada è sbloccata* 'You can turn right here – the street is not blocked anymore');
– non agent-oriented ontological possibility in generalized statements (e.g. *Un computer può rompersi* 'A computer can crash');
– sporadicity (cf. Kleiber 1983) (*A volte le telecronache possono essere noiose* 'TV news can sometimes be boring');
– inference (e.g. *Perché non è venuto? – Può aver dimenticato il nostro appuntamento* 'Why didn't he show up? – He may have forgotten our appointment').

In order to describe the interrelations between the modals and their polysemous semantics, it is useful to consider them as relational predicates with invariant and variable components.

An influential approach to the polysemy of modals, which has been adopted in the works by Rocci (2008, 2010) cited above, is the one outlined by Kratzer (1981). In Kratzer's view, modals are seen as operators relating a proposition to a set of propositions called *conversational background* or *modal base*. According to this author, possibility modals express the proposition's compatibility with the conversational background, whereas necessity modals indicate that the proposition is entailed by the conversational background. The differences between the modals' various uses are accounted for by assuming different types of conversational backgrounds. So in the case of *potere* (cf. Rocci 2008), the ability reading implies a conversational background containing propositions

concerning an agent's faculties; the deontic reading of permission implies a conversational background consisting of laws, norms or rules; ontological possibility is equivalent to compatibility with a relevant set of circumstances (a "realistic background", in Kratzer's terms); sporadicity may be analyzed as compatibility with a relevant set of experienced past events; and the inferential meaning amounts to compatibility with an epistemic conversational background, i.e. with a set of propositions known to the speaker.

A slightly different view is advocated by cognitive linguists, who postulate an underlying force-dynamic schema (Talmy 1988), implying a basic concept of causality which is present already in precursory work inspired by generative semantics, e.g. in Sueur's (1979) idea of different types of "causatifs" underlying the various readings of French *pouvoir*. In these approaches, the relation signaled by the modal is supposed to hold between a presupposed *modal source* and a state of affairs or proposition influenced in some way by the modal source (e.g. Diewald 2000). According to this view, the various readings of the modals differ both as to the types of entities involved as arguments of the relational predicate and as to the type of relation that holds between them. *Potere* conveys the idea that a modal source brings about a situation in which some relevant conditions for the realization of a state of affairs are fulfilled (in non-inferential uses), or puts the speaker into the position to claim that a certain conclusion might be true (inferential uses).

For the sake of the present analysis, I will adopt the cognitivist frame-semantic perspective, in particular the idea that the modals' non-inferential and inferential readings differ as to the kind of entities involved. To refer to these entities, the model of clause structure proposed in Functional Grammar (Dik 1989) will be used, distinguishing four layers of utterance meaning: predications (predicate-argument attributions not situated in time/space), states of affairs (situations and events in the discourse world), propositions (mental constructs concerning states of affairs, which can be true or false), and speech acts. Combining this model with the lexical semantic perspective sketched above, we may say that the modals' different readings function as operators on different layers of the clause, a main difference being that between inferential readings, which have scope over propositions as mental constructs, and non-inferential readings having scope over states of affairs.

2.2. Inferential readings of potere *and the context dependence of modals*

When analyzing modal verbs, it is important to acknowledge that the various readings of a modal depend to a certain degree on context. The distinction between inferential and non-inferential readings of *potere*, in particular, cannot always be drawn in a straightforward way. If it is signaled clearly by construction types in some co-texts, such as with past events (*può aver visto* 'she may have seen' vs. *ha potuto vedere* 'she was able to see / it was possible for her to see', cf. Rocci 2010, p. 600), in other cases pragmatic considerations contribute to decide whether an inferential meaning is intended or not.

This is the case with future events, the dominant context of use of *potere* in the economic-financial news under analysis in this paper, as will become clear in section 3. Consider the following example:
(1) Il forte ipervenduto *può* innescare un rimbalzo tecnico ma prima di *poter* tentare una reazione di una certa consistenza è necessaria la costruzione di una solida base accumulativa. (MF 26-4-2006, doc. 51)
The strong oversold situation may trigger a technical bounce, but before having the possibility to venture a clear reaction it is necessary [for the obligation market] to form a solid accumulation base.

In this economic forecast, a future development of obligation prices is envisaged, referred to first as "a technical bounce [of prices]", then as "a clear reaction [of the markets]".

In the second part of the utterance, this future development is modalized by *potere* in the infinitive and presented as dependent on a necessary condition (the generation of a solid accumulation base). The most plausible meaning of this instance of *potere* is agent-oriented ontological possibility, the agent being personalized markets, as often encountered in economic discourse, and the modal source being a set of economic circumstances – more precisely, the generation of a solid accumulation base. Evidence in this direction is both the presence of a verb implying an agent (*tentare* 'venture') and the syntactic embedding of the infinitive clause under a temporal connective (*prima* 'before'), which as a typical operator on the level of states of affairs excludes an interpretation of the infinitive clause as an inferred proposition.

The first part of the utterance, on the other hand, is potentially ambiguous between several readings:
a) A first possibility is a metaphorical ability reading by which the oversold

situation is attributed the semantic role of a Force (cf. Dik 1989, p. 101), comparable e.g. to natural phenomena such as earthquakes, capable of causing changes. According to this interpretation, the modal source consists in a set of properties of the actual oversold situation. Reference to a possibility in the future is not expressed explicitly but is entailed (it cannot be excluded that the oversold will cause the effects it is capable of causing).
b) A second possibility consists in interpreting the modal as an operator that takes scope over a complex state of affairs consisting of two causally linked events (the actual oversold situation triggering a future technical bounce). The modal source would then have to be identified with factual economic circumstances other than the oversold situation itself, which create conditions making it possible for this complex state of affairs to occur. In this case, too, future reference is entailed rather than expressed explicitly.
c) The third possible interpretation is an inferential one, in which a conjecture about the future is directly expressed. An inferential reading can be paraphrased by "one may hypothesize that [the oversold will trigger a technical bounce]$_p$", p being a proposition, not a state of affairs. What functions as a modal source, in this case, is a reasoning process based on different types of premises.

If with respect to the second part of example (1) an inferential interpretation of the infinitive *potere* can be ruled out on co-textual grounds, it is difficult to definitely rule out any of the interpretations sketched above for the first part of the example. In particular, even if there is strong evidence for the relevance of causality and thus ontological possibility (facts in the world making possible / not impeding other facts), the inferential interpretation, which implies the mobilization of wider and more general knowledge of the speaker and focuses on the guess made as to the probability that a specific event will take place, is clearly communicatively relevant in the context of economic forecasts. A plausible solution is to assume inference based on causal reasoning, in which the relevant causal relations function as premises. So in example (1), we can assume that the premises leading the speaker to infer that there could be a technical bounce centrally include knowledge about oversold situations and the circumstances under which they influence the movement of prices, according to economic laws and experience.

2.3. The conditional mood
The Italian conditional mood (COND) is, like *potere*, a polysemous relational

operator (cf. Miecznikowski 2008a, 2009 Ms). Its core meaning is to signal that a state of affairs or a proposition
i) stands in a sequential or consequential relation of some type with what I will call a reference point, in analogy with Reichenbach's (1947) model for the description of tenses;
ii) that the reference point contrasts with a further entity, which is mostly an aspect of the speech situation (the speaker's *hic et nunc*, or *origo*, in Bühler's 1934 terms), but can also correspond, in some readings, to a different co-textually salient entity.

This core meaning gives rise to different readings of the form and different relation types depending on which type of reference point is involved. The Italian COND has three canonical meanings acknowledged by most traditional and contemporary grammarians, among which the first one requires the composed form of the COND:
– posteriority of a state of affairs with respect to a past state of affairs (the reference point is a moment in time and is construed as distant from the *origo*): *Ha annunciato che sarebbe arrivato in ritardo* 'She announced that she would be late');
– a hypothetical condition-consequence relation between states of affairs (the reference point is a non-factual – possible or counterfactual – state of affairs, contrasting with what is the case in the actual world): *Se tu ci aiutassi, ce la faremmo facilmente* 'If you helped us, we would manage easily');
– report, i.e. the evidential qualification of a proposition as originating in a discourse different from the speaker's: *Secondo lui sarebbe colpa di Mario* 'According to him, it is Mario's fault').

These three main meanings strongly presuppose the reference point in question. If, differently from the examples given above, no co-textual antecedent is given, this presupposition will be accommodated, i.e. hearers will use all available information to make a hypothesis about which reading of the COND is the good one and to infer the reference point accordingly (cf. e.g. *io non mi lamenterei* 'I wouldn't complain', an instance of the hypothetical COND in which an implicit counterfactual condition 'if I were you/X' has to be inferred to make the COND interpretable).

In contrast, the COND has a fourth class of uses, traditionally called "attenuating", which occurs mainly with a range of modal or evidential verbs and

with performatively used verbs of saying (cf. Miecznikowski 2009). It differs from the temporal and the hypothetical use in that it has no effect on the level of propositional content. Furthermore, it differs from all canonical meanings by the fact that the reference point corresponds to an element closely related to the semantics of the immediate co-text, especially the verb the COND is attached to. More specifically, thanks to a kind of semantic merger, the attenuating COND finds its reference points in propositions forming the background of the "scene" construed by the semantic frame of the modal/evidential/performative verb or larger construction the verb is part of; propositions which in the indicative form acquire the pragmatic status of presuppositions, whereas the attenuating COND cancels their presupposed, taken for granted status, construing them as non-factual, unknown, or controversial.

Consider the following example:
(2) *Vorrei un panino* 'I want$_{cond}$ (≈ 'would like') a sandwich'.

The use of the COND in (2) differs from the hypothetical use of this mood by the fact that the state of affairs of the speaker's desiring a sandwich is neither dependent on another state of affairs nor can it be interpreted as non-factual; there can be no doubt about the speaker's desiring the sandwich. In contrast, the utterance conveys doubt about an implicit proposition, i.e. about the possibility for the speaker to get her desire realized. This doubt differentiates examples like (2) from their counterpart in the indicative, in which an attitude and intention of the speaker towards a non-factual state of affairs is asserted taking for granted that the necessary conditions to get the latter realized are fulfilled; a difference, by the way, which in the context of requests, in which those necessary conditions include the hearer's plans of action, regularly acquires politeness functions.

2.4. Potrebbe*: interaction with the hypothetical and the attenuating COND*
The conditional form of the modal *potere*, *potrebbe*, is frequently used both hypothetically and in an attenuating way. In the former case, the form raises problems of scope that interact with the readings of *potere* involved. In the latter case, no variation of scope occurs, since modal and mood combine to form a single complex operator; what does vary, in function of the reading of the modal activated, is the set of presuppositions modalized by the attenuating COND. In what follows, I will briefly consider the four most frequent construction types encountered:

– first type: hypothetical COND with scope over non-inferential *potere*;
– second type: inferential *potere* with scope over hypothetical COND (conditional conjecture);
– third type: the attenuating COND form of *potere* expressing agent-oriented ontological possibility;
– fourth type: the attenuating COND form of inferential *potere* (simple conjecture).

In the first construction type, *potere* has an apodosis of a conditional construction in its scope. Since the hypothetical COND relates states of affairs and not propositions, the apodosis has the status of a state of affairs, and *potere* has always a non-inferential reading. The speech act performed is the assertion of an if-then-relation opposing possible and impossible scenarios ('only if p, is q possible'; 'if p, then only q is possible'; 'if p, then q is not possible'). This case is illustrated by example (3) with deontic *potere* and a protasis establishing a necessary condition:
3) *Se Maria avesse dieci anni compiuti, potrebbe partecipare al concorso* ('If Maria had already reached the age of ten years, she could participate at the contest').

In the second construction type with the hypothetical conditional, *potere* undergoes raising and takes scope over the conditional construction. Since the if-then construction as a whole is a proposition and not a state of affairs, *potere* then necessarily acquires inferential meaning. The resulting speech act is a conjecture about a possible consequence of a non-factual state of affairs (*conditional conjecture*). Accordingly, *potrebbe* can be paraphrased by raised impersonal *può darsi che*, which has always inferential meaning (cf. Rocci 2005a) – a paraphrase that would be inadequate in the assertive construction type discussed above. (4) is an example of this:
4) *Se la domanda continuasse ad aumentare i prezzi potrebbero salire* ('if demand continued to increase prices could rise').

Possible paraphrase: *Può darsi che se continuasse ad aumentare la domanda i prezzi salirebbero* ('It is quite possible that if demand continued to increase prices would rise').

The third type involves the attenuating COND and the agent-oriented use of *potere*. The latter is the only non-inferential reading of *potere* that can be used in

the attenuating COND, whereas the ability reading as well as generalized and sporadic statements are not interpretable in the attenuating COND. The reason for this special status of agent-oriented modality is probably that it involves practical reasoning, i.e. options of action are evaluated with regard to the agent's goals, providing a possible reference point of the COND. By default, the indicative use of *potere*, when referred to a possibility of action, presupposes that the realization of the action in question is part of the agent's goals. It is the content of this presupposition that functions as a reference point for the attenuating COND: the latter form signals that the issue of which goals the agent has is open. This contrast is illustrated by the following two examples:
5) *Domani è festa; possiamo andare a vedere i nonni.* 'Tomorrow is a holiday; we can go and see the grandparents'.
6) *Domani è festa; potremmo andare a vedere i nonni.* 'Tomorrow is a holiday; we could go and see the grandparents'.

In (5), the speaker takes for granted that seeing the grandparents is part of the goals and wishes of the group referred to by the first person plural.
In (6), this presupposition is cancelled. Seeing the grandparents could be an option nobody has thought of, or there could be doubts or controversy about the desirability of the action.

The fourth construction type are simple conjectures. As with the present tense of *potere*, these can concern both past events and possible future events:
7) *Che cosa è successo a Piero? – Ha una brutta ferita; potrebbe essere stato morso.* 'What has happened to Piero? – He has a ragged wound; he may have been bitten'.
8) *Attenti: il cane potrebbe mordere* 'Watch out: the dog could/might bite'.

In this type, the modal source of *potere* is a reasoning process which leads the speaker to privilege one possible hypothesis without excluding others. The COND's reference point can be identified with major premises activated in enthymemic reasoning, e.g. that dogs sometimes bite, that ragged wounds happen to be caused by bites, or that what has been observed in the past has a certain likelihood of occurring again. Such premises are construed as taken for granted when using the indicative form of *potere* inferentially. The attenuating COND suggests that they are either unknown to the hearer (e.g. when utterances such as (7) and (8) are addressed to non-experts such as children) or controversial, or of doubtful reliability/relevance. In all cases, the COND's

contrastive feature is relevant (cf. (ii) mentioned in section 2.3. above), which gives alternative outcomes of the reasoning process greater relevance than *potere* used in the present tense. Moreover, an important function of the attenuating COND is to foreground the reasoning process itself as a mental effort to apply general knowledge to a concrete case. This has an important disambiguating and particularizing effect with respect to *potere* used in the indicative. When no agent-oriented modality is relevant, attenuating *potrebbe* is indeed clearly inferential and applied to a specific case, whereas the use of non agent-oriented *può* in the present tense centrally includes generalizing interpretations, and the inferential reading is context-dependent to a much larger extent, as we have seen discussing example (1) above (cf. section 2.2.).

3. Argumentative functions of potrebbe *in a corpus of economic-financial news articles*

3.1. Hypotheses

According to the semantic analysis of modals proposed by Rocci (2008, 2010) (cf. 1. above), all modals contribute to the construction of argument-conclusion relations. One important claim made is that argumentative functions are present both in inferential and non-inferential uses of the modals, albeit on different levels of argumentation. On the one hand, by referring to distinct types of conversational backgrounds (in a Kratzerian perspective), all types of modals guide the receiver in the reconstruction of *loci*. On the other hand, when used inferentially, modals may function more specifically as direct argumentative indicators signaling that a standpoint is being advanced with a certain degree of commitment, and that premises allowing to infer that standpoint are to be found in the context (Rocci 2010, p. 614).

According to this approach, inferential modals signal that the speaker is engaged in a process of reasoning; they do not only guide the reconstruction of premises, but prompt their phorical recovery in the first place. In example 7 given above, for instance, *potrebbe* may be analyzed as an indicator of a conjectural (weak) standpoint, combined with an instruction to look for premises. The latter instruction facilitates the retrieval of both unexpressed premises and textually given premises (*ha una brutta ferita* 'he has a ragged wound'), supporting text coherence and reinforcing relations of text cohesion between explicit premises and the conclusion.

I will start out from these considerations to investigate *potrebbe*'s functions a of

argumentatively relevant discourse relations. I will assume that in the case of *potrebbe*, argumentative functions vary according to the construction type, and that the type of reading of *potere* – inferential or not – is highly relevant at this regard. I hypothesize, in particular, that the second and the fourth construction type (conditional and simple conjectures) are more likely to contribute to discourse cohesion at an argumentative level than the first and the third type. Moreover, since the fourth type (simple conjectures in the attenuating COND) is a particularly explicit marker of inference, we might expect, following Rocci (2008, 2010), that this type behaves most clearly of all four types as a pointer to premises.

These hypotheses can be verified empirically in written texts in a number of ways. The method I have adopted in the present paper is that of examining all occurrences of *potrebbe* in a text corpus, treating them, by default, as standpoints and looking for arguments given in the text to support them. What we may expect is that in the case of clearly inferential constructions, we regularly find argument-conclusion relations, which may be varied and span over larger portions of text. In contrast, in non-inferential or less clearly inferential constructions, eventual discourse relations between the modal and portions of co-text are expected to hold at the level of propositional content; explicitly expressed arguments are likely to be rarer, less varied and more closely related to the modal source in question (ability, circumstantial causes, laws and norms).

3.2. Data

For the present analysis, a corpus of 65 articles taken from two Italian economic-financial newspapers (*Sole 24 Ore, Milano Finanza*) has been used, part of the larger corpus studied in the project *Modality in argumentation. A semantico-argumentative study of predictions in Italian economic-financial newspapers* (cf. footnote 1).

Sections of *Il sole 24 ore*	number of texts	Sections of *Milano Finanza*	number of texts
Economia italiana	10	*Analisi tecnica*	4
Mondo e mercati	10	*Banche e banchieri*	3
Finanza e Mercati	13	*Media marketing & finanza*	3

Finanza	8	*Mercati globali*	7
		first page	7
Total	41		24

Table 1. Composition of the corpus.

3.3. Construction types

in the sub-corpus studied here, 63 tokens of *potrebbe(ro)* have been identified. These occur almost exclusively in predictions of future economic developments, a finding that is hardly surprising, given the key role predictions play in economic-financial argumentation (cf. Rocci, Miecznikowski & Zlatkova in press). Most of these 63 tokens are simple conjectures (33 tokens), followed by conditional conjectures (21 tokens), assertions of a necessity relation with *potere* in the scope of the hypothetical COND (6 tokens) and agent-oriented *potere* in the attenuating COND (2 tokens). This distribution of construction types is highly genre-specific. In particular, the low frequency of agent-oriented attenuated *potrebbe* contrasts with the high frequency of this type in other contexts such as informal and formal spoken interactions (cf. Miecznikowski 2009, Ms.).

The two most frequent types are illustrated by the examples 9 (construction type 2: conditional conjecture) and 10 (construction type 4: simple conjecture):

9) In caso di violazione di area 44,50 quindi il titolo *potrebbe* puntare verso 42,00/42,50. (Sole 24 Ore, doc. 166)

In the case of a violation of the 44,50 region, the price could *therefore target 42,00/42,50.*

10) Nell'intero 2006 l'espansione *potrebbe* essere del 3,6 per cento. (Sole 11-4-2006, doc. 258)

In 2006, on the whole, growth could/might *be 3,6 per cent.*

Example (11), finally, is an instance of the somewhat rarer construction type 1: *potere* is placed within the apodosis of a conditional construction preceded by a nominalized protasis ("a drop below 14 euro" may be paraphrased as 'only if prices dropped below 14 euro'):

11) […] solo una discesa sotto 14 euro *potrebbe* seriamente deteriorare l'attuale dinamica rialzista. (MF 5-4-2006, doc. 2)

[…] only a drop below 14 euro could *jeopardize the actual upward trend.*

3.4. The textual expression of arguments in predictions containing potrebbe

In what follows, I will concentrate on the three most frequent construction types, neglecting agent-oriented attenuated *potere*. The instances of these types can be considered weak predictions of future events. In many cases, and especially with conditional constructions (construction types 1 and 2), these weak predictions are composite: the asserted content centrally regards an association of events (if p then q) and implies a weak prediction of both single events (p, q).

Among the various possible argument-conclusion configurations that occur in the texts examined, it is useful to distinguish two main types: on the one hand, causal relations between states of affairs, expressed by means of an event noun and a causative verb within the proposition containing *potrebbe*; on the other hand, arguments expressed outside the scope of the construction type containing *potrebbe*.

Proposition-internal causality is exemplified by (9) above (event noun: "una discesa sotto 14 euro"; causative verb: "deteriorare"). It is present also in the first and the third instance of *potrebbe* in (12) below. The first instance (causative verb: "determinare") is a simple conjecture with an event noun referring to a factual state of affairs ("il raggiungimento di un riferimento grafico di tale rilevanza"); the third instance (causative verb: "favorire") is a conditional conjecture with an event noun referring to a non-factual state of affairs ("un rapido pull-back verso l'area 5.150-5.135 punti"):
12) […] il benchmark tedesco ha superato l'importante soglia psicologica a 6.000 punti, rilanciando quella tendenza rialzista che lo sostiene ormai da cinque mesi. Nel breve, proprio il raggiungimento di un riferimento grafico di tale rilevanza *potrebbe* determinare una salutare pausa di consolidamento, con le quotazioni che *potrebbero* così ricoprire il gap rimasto aperto attorno a quota 5.920 prima di provare una nuova accelerazione. Una dinamica molto simile ha premiato anche l'indice francese, con i corsi che hanno strappato fino a 5.250 punti, lasciando aperto un analogo gap attorno a 5.190: in questo senso, un rapido pull-back verso l'area 5.150-5.135 punti *potrebbe* favorire un utile alleggerimento dell'ipercomprato di breve, creando i presupposti migliori per un successivo, nuovo allungo. (MF 5-4-2006, doc. 1)
[…] the German benchmark has exceeded the important psychological threshold of 6000 points, reinforcing the upward trend that has held for the last five months. In short terms, precisely the fact that such an important graphical reference has been reached could *lead to a healthy pause of consolidation; stock*

prices could *fill the gap opened around 5.920 points before trying to accelerate again. A very similar development can be observed on the French stock market, where prices have jumped to the 5.250 level, opening an analogous gap around 5.190 points: in this sense, a rapid pull-back towards the 5.150-5.135 region* could *favor a useful decrease of short-term oversold, creating ideal conditions for a subsequent long-lasting recovery.*

The presence of a causative verb relating two events p and q directs the attention of the reader towards causal chains of states of affairs. On the argumentative level, it suggests that the inference of a possible or necessary association between p and q, as well as the inference of q itself, are justified by relations of economic causality – similarly to example (1) discussed earlier, which contains in fact an analogous causative construction.

When *potrebbe*-predictions are justified by arguments that are given in the preceding or in the following co-text, these are quite varied.

On the one hand, argumentation often includes causal reasoning of a more complex kind, with multiple causes and hints towards *endoxa*. In (12), for example, the journalist does not only name a cause (i.e. reaching 6000 points) that could lead to a healthy short-term pause, but provides further reasons to justify this expectation. In particular, he activates *endoxa* that are typical for the kind of economic forecast in (12), i.e. for so-called technical analysis. He starts out by introducing the *terminus medius* "psychological threshold", which is then, in the first *potrebbe*-prediction, referred to anaphorically by "un riferimento grafico di tale rilevanza" ("proprio il raggiungimento di un riferimento grafico di tale rilevanza *potrebbe* determinare una salutare pausa di consolidamento"). The second part of the prediction ("con le quotazioni che *potrebbero* così ricoprire il gap rimasto aperto attorno a quota 5.920 prima di provare una nuova accelerazione") is construed as a further development of the initiated reasoning process: not only is it tightly linked to the preceding co-text by a special type of subordination ('*with* NP + relative clause') and by the causal-argumentative connective *così* ('in this manner', 'thus'), but it contains, moreover, a further hint towards *endoxa* related to technical analysis, namely the metaphor of a "gap" left open in the graph representing the development of stock prices, which is likely to subsequently be "filled" by the line of the curve.

On the other hand, argumentation may be other than causal. In (12), for instance,

the third *potrebbe*-prediction, introduced by the connective “in questo senso” (‘in this sense’), combines causal argumentation and argumentation from analogy: it follows from the same line of reasoning as the predictions before, and this line of reasoning is reinforced by the similarity (“una dinamica molto simile”, “un analogo gap”) between the German and the French situation. In other cases, causal argumentation is supported by arguments from authority, referring explicitly to economic-financial theories and approaches, to experts and analysts, or to opinions and announcements of key economic actors.

The analysis of all 63 tokens of *potrebbe* in the corpus examined suggests that the choice of an argument-conclusion configuration – proposition internal causal argumentation or proposition externally given arguments of various kinds – is closely related to the choice of a particular construction type, and thus to the degree of inferentiality of the *potrebbe*-construction (see table 2 below), matching quite well the semantic properties of the construction types identified in section 2 of this paper. These results are compatible with Rocci’s (2008, 2010) hypothesis stating a close relationship between the type of argumentative relation signaled by a modal and the presence vs. absence of the feature /inferential/.

Construction type	Total number of tokens	event noun + causative verb	arguments present in co-text
potere in the scope of COND (type 1)	6	6	0
Conditional conjecture (type 2)	21	10	17
Agent-oriented possibility (type 3)	2	0	1
Simple conjecture (type 4)	33	5	29
Total	63		

Table 2. Arguments given proposition-internally and proposition-externally with different construction types of potrebbe.

Type 1 is always combined with a causative construction, whereas it is never accompanied by arguments or hints to further premises given in the surrounding

co-text. Causal verb constructions seem to converge with non-inferential *potere* in the construction of relations between specific states of affairs on the level of propositional content.

As to type 2, conditional conjectures, *potrebbe* combines both with causal verbs (present in about half of the tokens) and, very regularly, with arguments given in the larger co-text (present in 17 out of 21 tokens). It can be argued that these various elements converge in locating the modal source of inferential *potere* in a process of primarily causal reasoning.

Simple conjectures, in turn, in which the attenuating COND foregrounds and reinforces the inferential interpretation of *potere*, are even more often accompanied by arguments and hints given in the larger co-text (such arguments lack in only 4 out of 33 cases), whereas causative verbs are present in as little as 5 out of 33 tokens. This finding is compatible with the hypothesis that inferential *potrebbe* in simple conjectures indicates primarily an argumentative premise-conclusion relation, and not a relation on the level of propositional content. In the reasoning process, causal relations may play an important role, but primarily as instances of more general patterns, and in combination with other argumentative resources the speaker mobilizes.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, inferential and non-inferential construction types of the Italian modal *potere* in its conditional form (*potrebbe*) have been distinguished on semantic grounds and have been examined as to their distribution in a corpus of economic-financial news.

The corpus study, which has focused on problems of text coherence and cohesion, has shown a regular co-occurrence of inferential constructions with portions of the immediate co-text that are interpretable as premises in an argumentation. This distribution supports the analysis of these modals as relational operators presupposing a reasoning process. According to this analysis, the relation between co-textually expressed premises and the modal is in fact not one of mere co-occurrence, but an anaphoric link between an argument slot presupposed by the modal's semantic frame – the modal source – and suitable textual antecedents that partially fill this argument slot. Which kinds of textual antecedents occur and in which range of co-text (proposition-internal vs. external) depends on the construction type. If we find textually expressed partial antecedents for the modal

source in all cases, these are different in simple conjectures, in conditional conjectures and in non-inferential modal constructions.

Modals differ from connectives such as *therefore* by the fact that, like other presupposition triggers (cf. Van der Sandt 1989, Sbisà 2007, as well as the discussion, in 2.3. above, of presuppositions triggered by the COND's canonical readings), they do not obligatorily require textually given antecedents matching the presuppositions in question; presuppositions may be entirely or partially accommodated. Moreover, as the *potrebbe* example shows clearly, modals interact with morphology and syntax in even more complex ways than lexicalized connectives, whose polysemy and context dependency is widely acknowledged in the field of discourse marker studies (cf. e.g. Bazzanella 2006 and Miecznikowski et al. 2009). Despite these differences, the small corpus study presented here confirms the proximity between modals and argumentative connectives. It suggests that at least in the written text genres examined, the reasoning process presupposed by inferential modals is quite regularly made partially explicit, such that *de facto* textual antecedents are present and cohesive links between different portions of the argumentative texts are established.

NOTES

[i] The corpus is part of the larger text corpus currently studied in the project *Modality in argumentation. A semantico-argumentative study of predictions in Italian economic-financial newspapers* (Swiss National Foundation grant n° 100012-120740), directed by Andrea Rocci at the Università della Svizzera italiana (Lugano).

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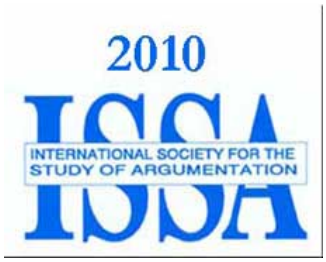
ISSA Proceedings 2010 – "Crisis" And Argument By Definition In The Modern American Presidency



Definitional argumentation theory remains a subject of significant study, primarily through the examination of argument *about* definition (Schiappa, 1993) and argument *from* definition (Schiappa, McGee, 1999). Although Zarefsky (1997) has briefly surveyed argument *by* definition, attention to this perspective remains anorexic. This essay begins to rectify that oversight by illuminating argument *by* definition through an analysis of modern presidential crisis rhetoric. This essay posits that argument *from* definition has as its locus the definition itself but argument *by* definition resituates that locus to the definition's user or creator. This essay first differentiates and clarifies argument *by* definition from argument *from* definition before examining five areas of "concerns" about argument *by* definition by argumentation scholars through the lens of the modern American presidency and the word *crisis*. This essay suggests that words like crisis contain core elements germane to any crisis situation but are flexible and modifiable depending on the user, the user's definition, and the crisis event. It also identifies several issues arising of out presidential definitional usage, including time, ethos, intent, strategies and audience as well as the need for additional crisis rhetoric essays examined from an argumentative perspective. The essay concludes with a call for additional studies encompassing several crises within a specific presidency as well as more attention devoted to the notion of *time*. In addition, I suggest that scholars should incorporate more primary research into their analyses, an approach fully embraced by other branches of academe.

1. Argument from Definition versus Argument by Definition

Schiappa (1993, p. 404) contends that argument *from* definition arises from Weaver's (1953, pp. 55-114) position that "arguments reason from a premise about the nature of a thing." Expanding Weaver, Schiappa argues that argument *from* definition occurs with "well-established and uncontroversial definitions." Zarefsky (1997, p. 5) extends Schiappa by examining three sets of examples that he deems exemplar of argument *by* definition. Zarefsky asserts that argument *by* definition means "the key definitional move is simply stipulated, as if it were a natural step along the way of justifying some other claim." Schiappa (2003, p. 130) concurs, stating that orators using argument *by* definition "simply posit that X is Y and move on."

Although both scholars acknowledge the presence of a definition as well as its

user, the theoretical implications of definitional shifts from the first to the second remain unexcavated. This essay extends definitional argumentation theory works by claiming that while argument *from* definition has as its primary locus the definition itself or the words that are used to define what Walton and Macagno (2009, p. 83) call a "fragment of reality," argument *by* definition shifts that locus to the definition's *user*. Individuals who define (create) or redefine (modify) a word or phrase when engaging in argument *by* definition often garner significant power and control that could become problematic if left unchecked.

1.1 Illustrating Argument by *Definition*

Zarefsky (1997, p. 2) illuminates the definitional shift from argument *from* definition to argument *by* definition in his discussion of the affirmative action debate. Zarefsky notes that the original definition of affirmative action shifted when Allan Bakke claimed reverse discrimination in his lawsuit against the University of California at Davis when he was denied entrance to their medical school. Zarefsky states, "Affirmative action, now meaning quotas and racial preferences, was redefined as 'reverse discrimination' against white males…" In other words, the original locus of the debate was the initial affirmative action definition itself, or what I would call argument *from* definition. When Bakke redefined affirmative action, his redefinition shifted the locus from the affirmative action definition (quotas and racial preferences) to the Bakke, the user (reverse discrimination), or what I see as argument *by* definition. *From* focuses on the definition; *By* focuses on the user.

Williams and Young's (2005, pp. 100-102) essay examining Bush's and Putin's use of the word *democracy* further illustrates the difference between argument *from* and *by* definition. They claim that Bush was able to define and subsequently discuss *democracy* from a position of argument *from* definition based on the word's ideographic nature. In comparison, Putin initially had to resituate the concept of democracy via argument *by* definition to make it more compatible with Russian history, ideology, principles, institutions, and practices before he could employ his own *democracy* argument *from* definition. In other words, while traditional notions of democracy afforded Bush the opportunity to argue *from* definition, the same notions could not be employed by Putin without some intentional redefinition, thus forcing him to first argue *by* definition before he could draw level with Bush through his own argument *from* definition.

As such, argument *from* definition has as its center the definition that is selected

and utilized to describe a fragment of reality. Argument *by* definition, on the other hand, shifts that center to the word's *user.* Subsequently, the user advances an argument based on their definition or redefinition of a situation and thus becomes the second, but primary, component of a controversy.

1.2 Schemes

Walton and Macagno (2009, pp. 84-85) diagram Schiappa's "two main schemes relative to definition." They claim his argument *from* definition is akin to the categorical syllogism: "All X are Z; Y is an X; therefore Y is Z." In turn, they diagram Schiappa's argument *by* definition as: "X is Y (therefore R)," where "X" is named as "Y" and "R" is a provoked emotion. It is the user who re(names)"X" into "Y" to draw an emotive response.

Schiappa (1993, p. 413; 2000, p. 18; 2003, p. 45) argues at length that the "What is X?" question is problematic for it implies the real or true "X" claims a metaphysical absolutism based on "facts of essence" or information that describes what "X" "really is" (2003, p. 6). Instead, Schiappa suggests we ask "'How *ought* we use the word X?' or 'What should be described by the word X?'" I would argue that his position is acceptable for argument *from* definition, but argument *by* definition necessitates the "What is X?" question.

The position of re-definition presupposes that "X" has been defined by the user. But what happens if X goes undefined? I include both definition and redefinition in my position about argument *by* definition because in some instances, "X" has evolved into a commonplace usage in everyday dialogue that does not prima facially prompt a definition. Words like *terrorism* and *corruption*, for example, are employed by various audiences without much significant thought about its meaning. The assumption is that audiences will have a basic, general understanding of these words, so definitions or its users are not challenged. But as Palczewski (2001, p. 6) indicates, unarticulated or poorly expressed definitions harm "dialectical engagement." In addition, "for redefinition to occur, engagement with existing meanings is necessary." Palczewski's claim underscores my position that for redefinition to occur, an initial definition of "X" must exist, even if that definition is unarticulated. As such, with argument *by* definition, the "What is X?" must be asked.

Also, the question of "What is X?" is necessary because it establishes a comparative and evaluative standard for examining a user's employment of "X."

Without the question, some presidential crisis rhetoric studies claiming false, inappropriate, or unethical crisis definitions and descriptions (see Hahn, 1980; Johannesen, 1986; Bostdorff, 1991; Bostdorff and O'Rourke, 1997) cannot be made. While I am not advocating "X" be absolutely defined, I do think a reasonable construct of "X," one originally accepted by audiences, is necessary when argument *by* definition is enacted.

McGee (1989, p. 412) neatly sums up the difference between argument *from* definition and argument *by* definition: "While the argument from definition reasons from an uncontroversial definition concerning the nature of thing, the argument by definition is employed when a controversial definition is advanced in support of a claim for purposes of framing that claim to the advantage of the rhetor."

2. The Modern American Presidency and "Crisis"

Although little scholarship about argument *by* definition exists, argumentation scholars' occasional direct or indirect references can be generally categorized into five areas of *user* concern: 1). Definition and Redefinition; 2). Definitional Power; 3). Institutional Legitimacy; 4). User Manipulation; and 5). User Justification.

While the shift from *from* to *by* may initially seem insignificant, subsequent analysis in a comparable area reveals important information about a definition's user. As such, examining argument *by* definition through the lens of the modern American presidency offers a fresh perspective toward presidential crisis rhetoric for it spotlights a unique, analytical approach of an individual who traditionally enjoys strong definitional power due to his position and stature.

2.1 Definition and Redefinition

Schwarze (2002, pp. 134; 140) notes that words and phrases like "feasible" and "traditional activities" are ambiguous and can have multiple interpretations. The word "crisis" is an additional, problematic word. Like others in a position of power, the American president rarely defines "crisis" in his public oratory, instead favoring emotive words that describe or allude to its nature. Perhaps the executive branch's assumption of "crisis" is akin to Justice Potter Stewart's claim about obscenity in cinema in *Jacobellis v Ohio* (1964): "I know it when I see it." Everyone knows about it, but not everyone can provide even a general consensus of what it means, much less a narrow, strict, dictionary definition.

Presidents also use additional words like “urgent” or “emergency” to describe their perceptions of situations. These additional words pose a problem with regards to the notion of *time*. Time, like crisis, is an elusive, ambiguous, vague term that typically is not defined. But the notion of time, as in length, is present in all three words. For example, the word “urgent” could imply “immediacy” or “as soon as possible.” The seemingly synonymous word “emergency” may not be the same as “urgent.” To me, an “emergency” has a longer time element than “urgent.” Others may argue the opposite. When “crisis” is added to the temporal continuum, some may agree that an even greater sense or notion of time is present. As such, the element of time arguably identifies an event’s intensity or force.

Returning to Schiappa’s “What is X?” question, how then are Reagan’s Lebanon and Grenada crises, Carter’s Iranian Hostage crisis, and Nixon’s Watergate crisis all considered to be “crises?” The notion of time varies in each one yet all are labeled a “crisis.” Zarefsky (1997, p. 5) offers a clue toward an answer when he argues that definitions “are not claims supported by reasons and intended to justify adherence by critical listeners. Instead they are simply proclaimed as if they were indisputable facts.” Words vary based on user and use, but all seem to initially understand certain commonplace words like “crisis.” As such, “crisis” and other words appear modular in the sense that they are flexible, movable, interchangeable, and adaptable to a situation. They are like linguistic rubber bands, modifiable to each crisis event regardless of time. The bands contain core elements germane to all crisis events, but also possess additional elements that make each crisis situation unique.

Schiappa (2003, p. 30) offers a second clue when he states that persuasion “may be simple and direct or complicated and time consuming.” His time observation suggests that presidential definitional conception and acceptance of a “crisis” could vary due to the length of time it takes to convince interested parties that the crisis exists. This could also explain why the above crises all contain the same “naming” word.

Schiappa’s “How *ought* we use the word X?” question thus prompts the identification of the core elements of “crisis” as a word. An amalgamation of political science and communication studies essays (see Genovese 1986; Graber 1980; Nacos 1990; Edelman 1977, 1988; Head, Short and McFarlane 1978; Pratt 1971; Church 1977; Bostdorff 1992; Dow 1989; Windt 1973) initially suggests

seven core elements: 1). a rhetorical construction of reality that 2). is created by decision-makers, the mass media and/or the public and 3). describes a situation as an emergency marked by a sense of urgency; 4). the exigency or climate is unstable and includes heightened tensions; 5). immediate action is necessary; 6). decision-makers are under pressure, and 7). time for decision-making is short.

These core elements embrace Schiappa's preferred position of a pragmatic definitional approach while avoiding the metaphysical absolutism generated by the "What is X?" question. The elements also illustrate how some words act like linguistic rubber bands by functioning with semantic flexibility. When the core elements are applied to presidential crisis oratory, the executive's individuality is highlighted as well as the varying subjects and the situations that foster crises.

It would behoove rhetorical scholars to play closer attention to their definitional analyses when examining an example of an argument *by* definition. For example, some critics have inconsistently examined presidential crisis definitions. Several scholars (see Church 1977; Bostdorff 1992; Kiewe, 1994; Medhurst, 1994) interject an external crisis definition in their analyses, what Walton (2001, pp. 124-125) and others call "essentialism" that subsequently exemplify Schiappa's concerns about the "What is X?" question. The interjection results in scholars imposing their *own* crisis definitions, thus arguably invalidly intervening in the analytic process. In effect, they questionably add themselves into the examination process as a third element beyond definition and user. Such intervention shifts argument *by* definition away from the user to the critic which may produce flawed conclusions. If scholars have a reason to "intervene," then their reasoning for such intervention should be explained in their respective works.

2.2 Definitional Power

Schiappa (2001, p. 26) asks two provocative questions regarding definition and power: who has the right to define "X" and which institution has the power to make such a determination. In terms of crisis and the modern American presidency, the answers initially are the president and the executive branch. But do they have the right and is their branch the most suitable one? Titsworth (1999, p. 181) argues that definitions utilized in public arguments are ideological in nature and "enable arguers to establish power." Zarefsky (1986, p. 1) claims further that presidents who have the power to define in effect have the power to persuade.

Numerous essays examine a president's persuasive definitional appeal (for example, see Newman, 1970; Windt, 1990) but Medhurst's (1998, pp. 58-59) essay about Truman and the Soviet Union uniquely illuminates definitional failure during times of presidential reticence (see also Ritter, 1994). Medhurst claims that by remaining silent about Soviet-American relations for nearly 24 months, Truman gave away one of the most important weapons of his rhetorical presidency – the ability to define a situation and shape public perception. Instead, Truman allowed others to define the situation and subsequently fill in "information gaps" for the American public. Medhurst's conclusion attests to the significant import of presidential definition and the power it embodies. It also illuminates the idea that definitional power does not reside solely in public oratory: it is also present in times of presidential silence, thus introducing an important new area for future analysis.

The body of presidential crisis rhetoric literature initially yields four general sub-categories of executive definitional power: 1). Ethos; 2). Intent; 3). Strategies; and 4). Audience.

2.2.1 Ethos

Ethos, in the classic Aristotelian sense, refers to the credibility and goodwill of an orator. Young and Launer (1988, p. 272) state that a crisis occurs suddenly for the American public, resulting in the creation of audience reaction and response problems. As a result, they claim that the public relies on government officials to provide meaning to a crisis event. In times of significant domestic or foreign crises, typically that government official is the president.

Zarefsky (2004, p. 611) argues that "because of his prominent political position and his access to the means of communication, the president, by defining a situation, might be able to shape the context in which events or proposals are viewed by the public." In other words, the president's *ethos* is invoked, in addition to the *ethos* of the office he holds. Ethos is typically granted to the office and its holder because of the connotations associated with both: Commander-in-Chief, the "most powerful leader of the free world," etc. Presidents are expected to be fully abreast of crisis developments and are assumed to have the most knowledge and information possible as well as the best means of response. They are also generally given approval for their crisis resolution decisions. Scholars note that a president could employ ethos strategically, consciously and selectively (Medhurst, 1994, p. 22), particularly for image reframing and repair (King, 1985,

pp.291-296).

From an argument *by* definition standpoint, the president enjoys an initial position of argumentative superiority because his ethos in a crisis is not always questioned. But when the question "What is X?" is posed or audiences begin to question "X," ethos questions also arise. Audiences, discussed more fully elsewhere, begin to disagree with how the president frames a crisis or its resolution. Bush's 2003 Iraqi invasion is exemplar. Several audiences initially accepted Bush's crisis definition but over time began to question it as well as his ethos. In a crisis event, audiences generally accept a president's definition of a crisis situation until information suggests otherwise. The importance of time is illuminated again as the amount of time between the crisis event itself and the release of information that contradicts a president's crisis definition varies by crisis. This, in turn, could provide an additional answer as to why crises of differing lengths and substance all carry the same "crisis" name.

Presidents, in times of crisis, need to ensure they are defining the event ethically and act according to avoid doubt or tarnish the reputation of themselves or the executive branch. Because of ethos, both are held to higher standards that, to the best of their ability, they are expected honestly and ethically fulfill. As Walton (2001, pp. 117, 119) notes, the power that accompanies persuasive definition encompasses strategic political and legal argumentation with significant financial, public, and national policy implications.

2.2.2 Intent

A second sub-area is the *purpose* of and *interest* in public definitional arguments (Schiappa, 2001, p. 25). In times of crises, the president's primary responsibility is to discuss, respond and resolve. Presidential crisis rhetoric studies identify two additional reasons of intent: image and motives.

Presidents use argument *by* definition during crises to cultivate, magnify, refine or alter their public image, or enhance the ethos of themselves and/or their office. As Goldzwig and Dionisopoulos (1989, p.195) point out, the president will be concerned with the grave personal, political and social consequences of their crisis decision-making. For example, Goncher and Hahn (1971, p. 3; 1973, pp. 29-42) claim that Nixon took a highly personalized view of the presidency, perpetuating a moralist/benevolent myth attempting to demonstrate he was America's confident, personal and moral leader who represented America's past

and future and could unify the country while moving her forward. Vartabedian (1985, pp. 366-381) argues that Nixon, during the Vietnam crisis, depicted himself as a victim of circumstances who was a hero sympathetic to others. In addition, he highlights Nixon's claim of exemplifying the Puritan work ethic when he chose to pursue the more difficult path to resolve the Vietnam conflict for he recognized the greater sense of obligation to world peace and freedom. These and other essays (for example, see Cherwitz, 1980; Blair and Houck, 1994) aptly demonstrate presidential crisis definitions being employed strategically for image purposes.

Presidents also use argument *by* definition to bolster their respective motives in a crisis situation. Typically that motive is political benefit. Exerting situational control (see Hahn and Gonchar, 1980), garnering public support (see Cherwitz, 1978; Bostdorff, 1987), and deflecting attention from other presidential problems (Bostdorff and O'Rourke, 1987) are three primary ways presidents utilize argument *by* definition for political gain. Manipulation, a fourth strategy identified by argumentation scholars as critical, is discussed separately below.

Presidents define events as crises for personal reasons too, as was the case with Carter and Nixon. Strong (1986, pp. 636-650) notes that Carter intentionally redefined the energy crisis from a political to a moral and personal one due to his audience's lack of faith. Nixon, argues Blair and Houck (1994, p. 108), went one step further by misrepresenting crisis claims for personal gain, particularly his popularity, ideology, and status in office. They argue that the resulting Nixon crises were not genuine ones for the American public. Blair and Houck's conclusions raise an interesting question that extends Schiappa's *interest* position: *Who* is a crisis for? Current presidential crisis rhetoric scholarship focuses primarily on the president, but additional studies may reveal alternative, interested parties.

2.2.3 Strategies

A substantial number of presidential crisis rhetoric essays examine presidential crisis strategy. As a result of their collective works, crisis scholars have identified numerous successful or failed rhetorical strategies that can be categorized three ways: the crisis event, presidential rhetoric, and audience. The first category includes crisis management and crisis manipulation/promotion. Crisis management strategies include shifting crisis attention (Windt, 1990; Bostdorff, 1987), situating crisis in a continuum (Young, 1992; Zagacki, 1992), levels of

crisis personalization (Gonchar and Hahn, 1973; Blair and Houck, 1994) and levels of presidential and personal responsibility (Strong, 1986). Crisis promotion or manipulation strategies include direct presidential manipulation (see Hahn, 1980; Dowling and Marraro, 1986; Bostdorff, 1991; Bostdorff and O'Rourke, 1997); demonstration of political leadership (King, 1985) and promotion of American values and ideologies (Zarefsky, 1983; Heisey, 1986; Bostdorff, 1992).

The second category, presidential rhetoric strategies, includes rhetorical consistency (Cherwitz, 1980; Kay, 1988) or rhetorical dichotomy, shifts, and distancing (for example, see King and Anderson, 1971; Newman, 1992). By far, the most popular form of study encompasses stylistic devices like narrative and metaphor, and various Burkean elements, including apologia (for example, see Bass, 1985; Klope, 1986; Birdsell, 1987).

Audience strategies, the third category, includes examinations of public support levels (see Newman, 1970; Cherwitz, 1978), creation of national unity (Windt, 1973; Cherwitz and Zagacki, 1986) and media manipulation (Benson, 2004). Audience, as a separate sub-category of definitional power, is discussed in the next section. Overall, very few essays focus explicitly on argumentation structure (Stelzner, 1971; Hill, 1972; Dowling and Marraro, 1986) or theory, so there is clearly more room for expansion.

2.2.4 Audience

Argument *by* definition is contingent on audiences. Definitional argumentation theory examines definitions by an orator as well as competing definitions by various publics. Walton (2001, p. 131) states that persuasive definitions place the burden of proof on the user when s/he redefines. In addition, he asserts that the audience has the right to refute the redefinition and "retain existing usage" of the original definition "if it seems to them to better represent their views on the matter." The definition's user, like a president, therefore, has a powerful political tool in his or her hands that could favorably shape public perception and garner support as long as the definition resonates with listeners. Misreading audience perceptions or reactions, though, could result in definitional failure and subsequent claims of crisis mismanagement or nonsuccess.

The importance of audience reaction to crisis oratory is a common thread in presidential crisis rhetoric studies, including the responses by American citizens, allies and other opponents as well as media commentary. Many essays identify

some type of public reaction to a crisis message as a measure of its success or failure (for example, see Rowland and Rademacher, 1990; Wilson, 1976) and the media's impact on audience reception of a crisis (Goldzwig and Dionisopoulos, 1989). Newman (1970), Smith (1998), and Pauley (1998) emphatically insist that rhetorical scholars examine the role of audience, particularly multiple audiences, as part of their analyses.

2.3 Institutional Legitimacy

Institutional legitimacy, or the power of institutions to advance definitions, is well noted in argumentation scholarship. Referencing competing definitions of "X," Schwarze (2002, 139) argues that, in addition to persuasion and coercion, "in the realm of public policy, the empowerment of a definition is dependent on the *legitimacy* of the institution authorized to define the term" and that "institutional arguments justify the acceptance or rejection of a particular definition" (p. 143). Titsworth (1999, p. 183) notes the power resulting from public institutional definitions "'privilege[s] the perspectives of those in power,' resulting in not only a legitimization of those perspectives, but also becomes a 'mechanism of hegemony where institutional power over the individual [is] expanded.'" Institutional legitimacy has also been addressed in crisis literature, including power (Windt, 1973; Young, 1992), institutional failure (Zagacki, 1992; Brummert, 1975), and presidential personalization of and blending with institution (see Gonchar and Hahn, 1971, 1973; Gibson and Felkins, 1974).

Three critical observations subsequently arise. First, the mythical power of the office of the presidency as an institution substantially contributes to presidential pressure. Zagacki (1992, p. 53) claims that "institutions are so molded by underlying myths of American superiority, presidents cannot handle failure for it would imply they are incapable of reconciling the nation to its ultimate historical purpose." Second, personal presidential perspective of "X" is also important. Brummert (1975, p. 256) argues that Nixon's institutional definitional approach of deflecting criticism and personal attacks depicted the president seeing himself as *reacting* to evil and not part of the evil family. Brummert's observation of presidential self-perception identifies a concept that has been studied sporadically by rhetorical scholars. Third, Kiewe (1994, p. xxxiii) notes that the presidency, as an institution, typically ignores the long term impacts of the occupant's crisis rhetoric, preferring its enactment to garner immediate image considerations and to secure quick policy goals. States Kiewe, "The modern presidency, with some

exception, does not seem to appreciate the limits of its own crisis rhetoric." If Zagacki is correct, it can be argued that presidential failure is a paramount concern which may contribute to a president's preference for short-term gains over long-term goals, as Kiewe suggests. Perhaps presidents need some formal crisis training as well as instruction on definitional argumentation. Collectively, these observations suggest that further analysis of the institution's role in definitional argument is necessary, both from the institutional office holder as well as the institutional point-of-view.

2.4 User Manipulation

A major concern arising out of definitional argumentation scholarship is user manipulation, including concealing the user's ideological assumptions behind definitional usage (Titsworth 1999, p. 182), user commitments (Walton and Macagno, 2009, p. 82), and information concealment (Titsworth, p.182) that results in audience "duping" (Walton, 2001, pp. 130-131). Walton and Macagno (2009, pp. 87-88) argue further that the meaning of an abstract word may not be shared by all involved parties by signifying "two contradictory concepts, and thereby manipulate communication" possibly resulting with the emergence of several fallacies.

The largest body of work examining crisis manipulation is exaggerated, promoted, or manufactured crises (for example, see Cherwitz, 1980; Hahn, 1980; Dow, 1989). The authors claim that presidents embellish or manipulate and defend crisis situations for political or personal gain for themselves or their office. Beyond crisis promotion, there are several individual essays examining different cases of definition manipulation, including the manipulative appeal to the "American Dream" (Goldzwig and Dionisopoulos, 1989, p. 194), strategic crisis address (Windt, 1990, pp. 95-96), and media manipulation (Benson, 2004).

Kiewe (1994, p. xxxiii) suggests that most modern presidents miscalculate crisis construction, especially their initial response, often in favor of immediate rewards. This parallels his earlier observation of institutional manipulation for short-term gains. There is room for additional works examining the theoretical or philosophical nature that compels a president to define a situation as a crisis. While Schiappa (2001, p. 26) warns of a "potentially dangerous ideology" arising from the "What is X?" question, studies of "X" are pertinent when examining argument *by* definition for without it, the above studies would not be possible.

2.5 User Justification

McGee (1999, p. 154) states that arguments *from* definition have "the advantage of seeming to be grounded in a fact or set of facts that must be taken as a given and cannot be disputed," yet when a dispute occurs, "the other party or parties are placed at a disadvantage" and "the rhetorical advantage of the argument from definition neutralized." McGee claims that orators must justify their definition choice and provide reasons for the unsubstantiated claims that benefit definers. When a definition is disputed, the argumentation shifts *from* words to the user. Further, the definition's rhetorical advantage remains neutralized until one party's definition eventually presides over the other. If an agreement cannot be reached, then neutralization occurs. McGee is correct in demanding that users offer justifications for their word choices, a demand often unheeded when the user is the American president.

Plentiful crisis studies examining user justification exist to adequately review here, but a few are worthy of a quick glance. A series of works from the 1970s and 1980s (see Rasmussen, 1973; Zarefsky, 1983; Cherwitz and Zagacki, 1986) investigated consummatory and justificatory rhetoric before Medhurst (1994), perhaps prematurely, suggested scholars direct their attention elsewhere. Dow's (1989, p. 296) claim of consummatory discourse as crisis-responding and justificatory discourse as crisis-creating matches Graber's (2002, pp. 137-158) identification of a "public" crisis as either natural or man-made, with the latter accruing her "pseudo-crisis" label. Both distinctions suggest that some crises are purposefully created and manipulated to achieve a desired goal.

Dowling and Marraro (1986, p. 350), offering a rare examination of definitional argumentation, examine Reagan's Grenada crisis oratory and determine that he acted unethically: "He apparently ignored, suppressed, distorted, created, and (in a sense) destroyed relevant evidence. In addition, Reagan withheld, ignored, and/or misrepresented crucial arguments raised to support and oppose the invasion." Subsequently, they claim that a presidency should employ four "democratic ethical standards" and engage in transparency when engaging in political oratory: 1). all information needs to be revealed; 2). all arguments need to be made clearly and be understood by listeners; 3). individuals have the ability to make rational, well-informed decisions; and 4). presidents should use appropriate emotion. Paradoxically, Rowland and Rademacher (1990, pp. 331, 335) claim Reagan's Superfund crisis oratory was successful because his passive

approach did not require an apathetic audience to be familiar with his overall rhetoric regarding the environmental and political crisis. In turn, Dowling and Marraro's call for ethical standards assume an involved constituency, a presumption Rowland and Rademacher's conclusion contradicts. As such, additional work in this area is prudent.

3. Implications for Scholars Conducting Presidential Crisis Rhetoric Analyses
The preceding section suggests that some areas of definitional argumentation have been robustly explored, some remain neglected, and new ones are emerging. Collectively, two significant sets of implications for presidential crisis rhetoric scholars arise: Critics should play closer attention to their arguments as well as the role of argument *by* definition.

Regarding critic arguments, I pose two suggestions: individual case studies should be avoided and scholars need to contemplate crisis "time." Walton (2001, p. 132) argues that the study of persuasive definitions could yield fruitful results if a case-based approach is employed. I disagree. How a president defines a crisis in one situation may not be the same in another, as Windt (1990) discovered with Kennedy. In addition, there could be potential differences within a presidential approach, characterization, management and resolution of domestic *and* foreign crises. Since foreign crisis rhetoric dominates the communication literature landscape, additional domestic crisis rhetoric studies are necessary before a definitional comparison can be made. In addition, scholars would be better informed if they examine a president's crisis life cycle, which in turn would lead to better conclusions.

Second, scholars need to contemplate the notion of "time" in a crisis. Not only should they analyze crisis length, they should examine how much time is available before and during a crisis, its effects on the decision-making process, how time shapes a crisis response's content and form, and how time affects a president as he moves from one crisis to another. This exploration may also offer clarity to the "What is X" question. In addition, scholars also need to avoid unintentional critic intervention by employing *their* definition that shifts the analysis from the original orator as user to the scholarly critic as user.

Medhurst (1994) and Young (1992) provide two possible remedies. Medhurst contends that scholars should study a crisis's history as part of their analyses to examine how "X" has been viewed by past presidents and if the current

incarnation is consistent or different. Schiappa (2003, p. 176) supports this historical approach, suggesting that careful analysis would identify "what has been constant and what has changed about 'X' and would give reasons when changes have occurred." Young's position that scholars should examine presidential crisis rhetoric in a continuum suggests that that a comprehensive analysis of a president's foreign *and* domestic crisis oratory would assist with the discernment of common topics, features, approaches, or elements that could better inform understanding of a president's crisis conception.

A second error regards the critic's analytical framework. Several methodologies are employed to examine presidential crisis rhetoric, include close textual analysis, apologia, tragedy, myth and other various Burkean terminology, and genre (both rhetorical and literary), resulting with the identification of multiple rhetorical strategies (noted earlier).

Yet some scholars neglect a president's post-crisis thoughts and opinions. Instead, they primarily focus attention on his public oratory as it occurred, resulting in occasional critic error. For example, Goldzwig and Dionisopoulos (1989) claim that Kennedy's September 30, 1962 Oxford, Mississippi civil rights speech addressed a crisis situation. Conversely, Windt (1990) finds that the same address did not. The dilemma stems from varying critical approaches. Goldzwig and Dionisopoulos utilize a combination of situational and historical methodologies whereas Windt's approach employs a public presidential announcement of a crisis situation. Windt (1973, p. 7) claims, "Situations do not create crises. Rather, the President's perceptions of the situation and the rhetoric he uses to describe it mark an event as a crisis," a rationale that serves as a foundation for his approach.

While Windt's methodology contains its own problems, it does possess some currency. One way to potentially adjudicate critic error is for scholars to analyze president's post-crisis and opinions, primarily from their public presidential papers. This approach is widely uses in other academic fields but remains underused within communication studies. Scholar examination of documents that were generated "in the moment" would likely be more "truthful" and revealing since they describe factually the crisis's who, what, where, when, how and why as that moment was occurring. They would also reveal the sentiments of the players involved, identify what options were available for crisis resolution, and illuminate other competing presidential activities. They are also not subject to post-

presidential revisionist history like presidential memoirs. Such analyses would yield valuable insight into a crisis comprehensively, the president's decision-making approach and style, and prevent potential "What is X?" mistakes.

4. Conclusion

Little-studied argument *by* definition shifts argument *from* definition's locus from words to the user, thus adding the definer as a strategic element in the definitional process. As such, Schiappa's "What is X?" question becomes a necessary one for analysis. Blending definitional argumentation theory with the study of the modern American president's use of the word "crisis" generates five areas of concern: (re)definition, power (including ethos, intent, strategies, and audience), institutional legitimacy, manipulation, and justification. Presidential crisis rhetoric literature has addressed some of these concerns and neglected others while posing new areas for research. In addition, it has raised issues regarding critic arguments and methodological approaches that warrant further scholarly attention. Incorporation of materials like a president's public papers into future scholarly analyses should provide scholars with unique information that could better inform their examinations and conclusions as such documents arise out of the crisis moment and are not subject to post-presidential revision.

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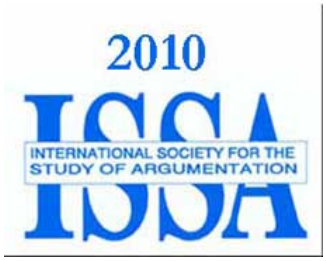
ISSA Proceedings 2010 – The Reasonableness Of Responding To Criticism With Accusations Of Inconsistency



1. Introduction

Responding with accusations of inconsistency to criticism is an interesting way of strategic manoeuvring in public political confrontations. In this way of manoeuvring, a politician who is confronted with a critical point of view replies that the criticism advanced is inconsistent with another position of the critic. The accusation of inconsistency is usually intended to have the criticism retracted, as a way of eliminating the alleged inconsistency, sparing the politician the difficulty of refuting the criticism. On the one hand, one may think that pointing out an inconsistency in the position of an arguer and urging him to eliminate it is a perfectly legitimate response. After all, arguers should not assume mutually inconsistent positions simultaneously. On the other hand, however, pointing out that the criticism advanced is inconsistent with another position of the critic is often used by politicians as a way to silence their critics.

In this paper I shall investigate the reasonableness of the kinds of responses in which an arguer replies to critical points of view by means of accusations of inconsistency. I use the theory of strategic manoeuvring (van Eemeren, 2010; van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2002b, 2007) to analyse the responses as instances of a particular way of confrontational strategic manoeuvring; and I attempt to formulate conditions for their dialectical soundness. In line with van Eemeren and Houtlosser, I consider an instance of strategic manoeuvring to be reasonable as long as the critical testing procedure is not hindered by the accuser's attempt to direct the discussion towards a favourable outcome.

2. Accusations of inconsistency as a response to criticism

When a politician who is confronted with a critical point of view points out that the criticism advanced is inconsistent with another position of the critic, the politician is appealing to a reasonable principle, namely that an arguer cannot be committed to two mutually inconsistent positions simultaneously, in order to reach a favourable situation, namely that the critic retracts his criticism. The exchange below, between David Cameron, the British Prime Minister and the leader of the Conservative Party, and Harriet Harman, the Member of Parliament (MP) and the acting leader of the Labour Party, is an example. The exchange takes place in the parliamentary session of Question Time of 16 June 2010; it is about the budget of the new Government. In her question, Ms. Harman criticises the Government for planning cuts that will 'hit the poorest' and 'throw people out of work'. In his answer, Mr. Cameron responds by pointing out that Ms. Harman's criticism of the planned cuts is inconsistent with her Party's plans to cut £50 billion, in an attempt to direct her towards retracting her criticism.

Harriet Harman (MP, Labour):

[…] We all agree that the deficit needs to come down, but will he promise that in the Budget next week he will not hit the poorest and he will not throw people out of work? Does he agree with us that unemployment is never a price worth paying?

David Cameron (Prime Minister, Conservative Party):

[…] before the election, her Government set out £50 billion of cuts […]. Before she starts challenging us about cuts, they should first of all apologise for the mess they have left; second of all, tell us where the cuts were going to come to under their Government; and third of all, recognise that the responsible party, in coalition, is dealing with the deficit and the mess that they left behind.
(House of Commons official report, 2010)

Attempts to direct the argumentative confrontation towards a favourable outcome in what is in principle a reasonable way, such as the above, can be best captured by the concept of strategic manoeuvring. Strategic manoeuvring refers to the attempts of arguers to reconcile aiming for rhetorical effectiveness with maintaining dialectical standards of reasonableness (Van Eemeren and Houtlosser, 2007: p. 383). Responses such as Mr. Cameron's are instances of a particular way of confrontational strategic manoeuvring that has been characterised as strategic manoeuvring to rule out a standpoint by means of an accusation of inconsistency (Mohammed, 2009: Ch. 2). In this way of

manoeuvring, a discussant casts doubt on a standpoint by means of an accusation of inconsistency against the proponent of the standpoint challenged, aiming to direct the accused towards the retraction of the standpoint. By means of the accusation, the accuser attributes to proponent of the standpoint two mutually inconsistent commitments: one on the basis of the standpoint challenged (a commitment to A) and the other on the basis of another position that the proponent of the standpoint assumes (a commitment to –A), and urges him to eliminate the inconsistency by retracting one of the mutually inconsistent commitments.**[i]** Even though, in principle, the accused can eliminate the inconsistency by retracting any of the allegedly inconsistent commitments, the accuser manoeuvres strategically in order to lead the proponent of the standpoint to eliminate the alleged inconsistency by retracting the commitment to A, rather than the commitment to –A. The former is favourable to the accuser as it requires the accused to retract the standpoint in which criticism of the accuser is expressed.**[ii]**

In the exchange between Mr. Cameron and Ms. Harman above, Mr. Cameron challenges Ms. Harman's critical standpoint about the Government's planned cuts by accusing her of being inconsistent in her attitude towards cuts. Ms. Harman's criticism of the Government can be understood as a standpoint like *The Government's planned cuts, which will hit the poorest and throw people out of work, are a sign that the performance of the Government is not up to standard*.**[iii]** In his response, Mr. Cameron attributes to Ms. Harman a commitment to the proposition *the Government should not be allowed to plan cuts that hit the poorest and throw people out of work* (*commitment to A*) on the basis of her criticism, and a commitment to the opposite proposition, namely that *the Government should be allowed to plan cuts that hit the poorest and throw people out of work* (*commitment to –A*) on the basis of the plans of Labour to cut £50 billion. The accusation challenges Ms. Harman's commitment to her critical standpoint, on the basis of the unacceptability for an arguer to hold mutually inconsistent commitments simultaneously, and urges her to eliminate the alleged inconsistency. Mr. Cameron manoeuvres strategically to direct Ms. Harman towards the retraction of her commitment to *A*, rather than her commitment to *–A*, which she could retract, for example, by admitting that her Government's plans should not have been made. The retraction of the commitment to A is favourable to Mr. Cameron as it requires Ms. Harman to retract her critical standpoint and thus spare him the need to refute it.

3. The reasonableness of accusations of inconsistency as a response to criticism: Soundness conditions

In line with the view of fallacies as derailments of strategic manoeuvring (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2002a, 2007), the Prime Minister's manoeuvring at issue can be considered reasonable as long as the pursuit of winning the discussion, typical of strategic manoeuvring, does not hinder the critical testing procedure. That is to say that the manoeuvring at issue is in principle reasonable. Only when, in a particular instance, the attempt (to lead the proponent of the standpoint challenged to retract it) constitutes a hindrance to the critical testing procedure, is the strategic manoeuvring in this move considered to have derailed and the instance of strategic manoeuvring is therefore considered fallacious.

Generally, for a move in an argumentative confrontation not to hinder the critical testing procedure, two requirements need to be fulfilled. First, the move needs to constitute a contribution to the externalisation of the difference of opinion at stake. This is mainly because, as van Eemeren suggest, for an argumentative move to be sound, the move needs to contribute to the critical testing procedure. In an argumentative confrontation, this means that the move needs to contribute to the aim of the confrontation stage, namely the externalisation of the difference of opinion at stake. The importance of the latter is evident, as van Eemeren and Grootendorst show (2004: pp.135-137). The requirement is also in line with the view suggested by van Eemeren and Houtlosser that a dialectically sound case of strategic manoeuvring needs to respond to the move preceding it and allow a relevant continuation after it.**[iv]** The second requirement is that the move does not hinder the development of the argumentative confrontation towards any of the outcomes of externalisation, namely those definitions of the difference of opinion which are allowed in the confrontation stage of a critical discussion. This condition is necessary for protecting arguers' freedom against attempts of bringing about particular outcomes, which is inherent in strategic manoeuvring.

In order for the accusation of inconsistency to constitute a contribution to the externalisation of difference of opinion (i.e., in order for the first requirement for reasonableness to be fulfilled), the accusation needs to play its dialectical role in a clear manner. Given that the accusation is employed to challenge the critical standpoint, the accusation needs to clearly, even if only indirectly, express the accuser's non-acceptance of the standpoint challenged.

When casting critical doubt upon a certain standpoint by means of an accusation

of inconsistency, the non-acceptance of the standpoint challenged is derived from the unacceptability for an arguer to hold mutually inconsistent commitments simultaneously. The accuser challenges the commitment of the accused to his standpoint by attributing to him a simultaneous commitment that is inconsistent with this standpoint. This attribution needs to be justified in order for the accusation of inconsistency to express the accuser's non-acceptance of the standpoint challenged. The three following soundness conditions are meant to guarantee that:
(i) The accuser should be justified in attributing to the accused a commitment to A on the basis of the standpoint challenged,
(ii) The accuser should be justified in attributing to the accused a commitment to –A on the basis of the other position assumed, and
(iii) The accuser should be justified in attributing to the accused the commitments to A and to –A simultaneously.

Only if the three conditions above are fulfilled can the accusation of inconsistency justifiably function as an expression of doubt concerning the standpoint challenged. Failure to meet any of them leads the strategic manoeuvring to derail, resulting in hindrances to the critical testing procedure.

Unless the accuser is justified in attributing to the accused a commitment to A on the basis of the standpoint of the accused, i.e. unless condition (i) is fulfilled, the accusation of inconsistency is irrelevant to the standpoint it reacts to. The irrelevance of the accusation that results from failing to fulfil condition (i) is of the kind associated with the *straw man* fallacy. If the accuser cannot, on the basis of the standpoint of the accused, justifiably attribute to the accused a commitment to A, the accuser distorts the standpoint by making it seem as if a commitment to A follows from it. Failure to fulfil condition (i) hinders the critical testing procedure by violating the pragma-dialectical *standpoint rule,* which stipulates that "attacks on standpoints may not bear on a standpoint that has not actually been put forward by the other party" (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004: p. 191).

Unless the accuser is justified in assuming that the other position of the accused commits him to –A and that commitments to A and to –A are held simultaneously, i.e. unless conditions (ii) and (iii) are fulfilled, the accuser is falsely presenting these assumptions as commonly accepted starting points. The correctness of these assumptions, which are made in the accusation, is necessary for the

accusation to function as an expression of doubt. If any of them is incorrect, the inconsistency does not come about and, hence, the commitment of the accused to the standpoint challenged is not problematic. Unless the accuser argues explicitly in support of these assumptions, the assumptions need to be considered as commonly accepted starting points.

Failure to fulfil conditions (ii) and (iii) can thus be considered to hinder the critical testing procedure by violating the pragma-dialectical *starting-point rule,* which stipulates that "discussants may not falsely present something as an accepted starting point or falsely deny that something is an accepted starting point" (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004: p. 193).**[v]** The exchange between Mr. Cameron and Ms. Harman is an example. Mr. Cameron is not justified in attributing to Ms. Harman a commitment to *the Government should be allowed to plan cuts that hit the poorest and throw people out of work* on the basis of the plans of the Labour Government to set out £50 billion of cuts. The attribution assumes as a commonly accepted starting point that Harman's Government's plans to cut £50 billion were going to hit the poorest and throw people out of work, just like the cuts criticised by Ms. Harman are alleged to be. Unless this is assumed, there would be no inconsistency on the basis of which Ms. Harman's critical standpoint is challenged. Because no further argumentation is advanced to support this assumption, the assumption needs to be considered as a starting point. But Ms. Harman cannot be assumed to share this starting point. Hence, assuming so, as the accusation does, hinders the critical testing procedure by falsely presenting an assumption as an accepted starting point.

It is important to note that Mr. Cameron's accusation can also be interpreted more generally to be about the general attitude towards cuts, in which case condition (ii) is fulfilled. If the alleged inconsistency is interpreted to be concerning A': *the Government should not be allowed to plan cuts in its budget* rather than A: *the Government should not be allowed to plan cuts that hit the poorest and throw people out of work* , there would be no problem in attributing to Ms. Harman a commitment to *the Government should be allowed to plan cuts in its budget* on the basis of her Government's plan to cut £50 billion. However, in this interpretation of Mr. Cameron's accusation, condition (i) is violated. Mr. Cameron is not justified in attributing to Ms. Harman a commitment to *the Government should not be allowed to plan cuts in its budget* on the basis of her standpoint that *The Government's planned cuts, which will hit the poorest and*

throw people out of work, are a sign that the performance of the Government is not up to standard. In his accusation, Cameron would be distorting Ms. Harman's standpoint, which is about the specific cuts that the Conservative Government is planning by making it seem to be about any cuts that a Government plans. This overgeneralisation of the standpoint, intended to make it easier to refute, is a case of the *straw man* fallacy.

Conditions (i), (ii) and (iii) guarantee that an accusation of inconsistency that comes in response to a standpoint functions as an expression of doubt concerning this standpoint. But in order for an accusation that functions as an expression of doubt to contribute to the externalisation of the difference of opinion at stake, the accusation needs to be expressed clearly. The soundness condition below is meant to guarantee that:
(iv) The accusation of inconsistency needs to be performed clearly enough for the accused to understand that the accuser attributes to him commitments to A and to –A simultaneously and demands him to retract one of them to eliminate the alleged inconsistency.

Failure to fulfil condition (iv) can be associated with violations of the pragma-dialectical *language usage rule*, according to which "discussants may not use any formulations that are insufficiently clear or confusingly ambiguous, and they may not deliberately misinterpret the other party's formulations" (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004: p. 195). Clarity, as required in the rule, does by no means rule out indirectness and implicitness as unreasonable (van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 1987: pp. 293-296). In fact, advancing an accusation of inconsistency to express critical doubt is in itself an instance of indirectness that is not unreasonable as such. And as long as the speech act is identifiable, implicitness is no obstacle to critical testing. However, lack of clarity can have direct consequences for the critical testing procedure, for example, by masking failures to fulfil other requirements for reasonableness.

In the exchange between Mr. Cameron and Ms. Harman, for example, insufficiently clear formulations of the accusation were indeed used to mask failures to fulfil other soundness conditions. Mr. Cameron advances his accusation vaguely leaving it unclear whether the inconsistency is about those cuts that hit the poorest and throw people out of work or about the cuts in general. The lack of clarity masks the failure to fulfil conditions (i) and (ii) discussed above and makes it difficult to realise that the accusation is either

distorting the standpoint challenged or falsely presenting an assumption as a common starting point.

Conditions (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv), taken together, guarantee that an accusation of inconsistency clearly expresses the accuser's non-acceptance of the standpoint challenged. This is necessary for the accusation to fulfil the first requirement for reasonableness, formulated above as to contribute to the externalisation of the difference of opinion at stake. But, in order for the accusation not to hinder the development of the argumentative confrontation towards any of the outcomes that are allowed in the confrontation stage of a critical discussion (i.e., in order to fulfil the second requirement for reasonableness), the accusation must not restrict the response of the proponent of the standpoint, in his next turn, to the one favoured by the accuser. That is to say that the accusation must not preclude the possibility for the accused to maintain rather than retract the standpoint in the following turn.

In an argumentative interaction in which an accusation of inconsistency functions as an expression of doubt, the maintaining or the retraction of the standpoint challenged by the accusation are realised through the perlocutionary effects of the accusation (Mohammed, 2009: Ch.2) . While the proponent of the standpoint can retract the standpoint by retraction of the commitment to A, the standpoint can be maintained by not accepting the accusation of inconsistency or by retracting the commitment to –A in case the accusation is accepted. If the accused does not accept the accusation, he has no obligation to retract anything, and can therefore maintain his standpoint. An accused can express his non-acceptance of the accusation by denying that his standpoint commits him to A, that his other position commits him to –A or that his commitments to A and –A are held simultaneously. By doing so, the proponent of a standpoint attempts to justify that his position is consistent in order to be able to maintain his current standpoint.

Dissociation is one of the ways of expressing non-acceptance of the accusation. By means of dissociation, the alleged inconsistency is denied by dissociating between different interpretations of the commitments attributed, one of which involves no inconsistency. But even if the accused accepts the accusation, he can still maintain the standpoint by retracting the commitment to –A, which the accused can do by conveying that he has changed his mind about his other position, for example. The final soundness condition below is meant to guarantee that the accusation does not preclude the possibility for the accused to maintain rather

than retract the standpoint in the turn that follows:
(v) The choice of topic, audience frame, and stylistic devices of the accusation of inconsistency must not preclude the possibility for the accused to either express non-acceptance of the accusation or to retract the expressed commitment to –A in case the accusation is accepted.

Exactly because the accuser makes his choice of topics, audience frames and stylistic devices so that the accused is directed towards retracting the commitment to A, it should be observed that such a choice does not violate the freedom of the accused to opt for a different response.

Failure to fulfil condition (v) hinders the critical testing procedure by violating the pragma-dialectical *freedom rule,* which stipulates that "discussants may not prevent each other from advancing standpoints or from calling standpoints into question" (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004: p. 190). The violation results in cases of the *ad hominem* fallacy. The exchange between Mr. Cameron and Ms. Harman is an example. Mr. Cameron, who would rather have Ms. Harman retract her commitment to *the Government should not be allowed to plan cuts in its budget* (*commitment to A*), precludes Ms. Harman's option to eliminate the inconsistency by retracting the opposite commitment (*commitment to –A*). As he refers to the plans of the Labour Government to cut £50 billion and asks her to apologise for the mess that her party has left, Mr. Cameron portrays Ms. Harman's maintaining of her commitment to A as an acknowledgement that the plans of the Labour Government were problematic and that the policies behind them have left the country in a mess. So if Ms. Harman chooses to maintain her critical standpoint, which Mr. Cameron does not favour, she would be enforcing Mr. Cameron's claim that her Government left the country in a mess. The latter can also be seen as an attempt to discredit Ms. Harman. Ms. Harman's acknowledgement that her party has "messed up" the finances is an indication that she is unworthy of being taken seriously. So, whatever response to the accusation she chooses, whether to reject the accusation, or to retract commitment to –A, Ms. Harman's choice cannot be trusted.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have investigated the reasonableness of a politician's response to a critical standpoint by accusing his critic of being inconsistent concerning the subject of the criticism. The investigation is based on the analysis of the kind of response at issue as a particular way of confrontational strategic manoeuvring

and guided by van Eemeren and Houtlosser's view that cases of strategic manoeuvring are reasonable as long as the attempt to achieve advantageous outcomes does not hinder the critical testing procedure. Analysing the kind of response at issue as a particular way of confrontational strategic manoeuvring reveals the strategic function of the response as an attempt by the politician to get his adversary to retract his critical standpoint, by appealing to the reasonable principle that one cannot hold two mutually inconsistent commitments simultaneously. But this principle does not necessarily guarantee that the critical testing procedure is not hindered by the accusation. As the investigation shows, unless the five soundness conditions suggested are fulfilled, an accusation of inconsistency cannot be considered a reasonable response to the standpoint it challenges.

Similar to the pragma-dialectical rules for a critical discussion, the soundness conditions formulated in this paper assess the reasonableness of argumentative moves based on their contribution to the critical testing procedure. However, the conditions are formulated to apply to the actual moves that arguers perform, namely the accusations of inconsistency, rather than to their reconstructed analytically relevant counterpart, namely the expression of doubt. Consequently, the conditions bring the evaluation closer to argumentative moves as they actually occur in argumentative practice and enable the analyst to trace the dialectical (un-)reasonableness of the responses at issue to aspects related to the accusation of inconsistency advanced.

NOTES

[i] This analysis of the particular way of manoeuvring at issue is based on the speech act account of an accusation of inconsistency suggested by Andone (2009). Andone formulates the essential condition of the speech act of accusation of inconsistency as "raising a charge against an addressee for having committed himself to both p and –p (or informal equivalents thereof) in an attempt to challenge the addressee to provide a response that answers the charge" (2009: p. 155). In line with Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1995), who understand an accusation of inconsistency as an attempt to get the accused to eliminate the inconsistency by retracting one of the inconsistent commitments (p. 195), I take Andone's 'response that answers the charge' to be the retraction of either of the two mutually inconsistent commitments alleged.

[ii] See Mohammed (2009: Ch. 2, Ch.4) for elaborate analyses of cases of this

particular way of confrontational strategic manoeuvring.

[iii] Ms. Harman's question in this exchange is interpreted as a contribution to an overarching discussion about the performance of the Government. This interpretation is guided by the view that Prime Minister's Question Time is a mini-debate over the performance of the Government (Beard, 2000; House of Commons Information Office, 2005; Rogers & Walters 2006; Wilson, 1990). In this debate, the Prime Minister and MPs from his party defend the standpoint that *the performance of the Government is up to standard* by means of arguments that praise plans, policies or actions of the Government, and MPs from the Opposition defend the opposite standpoint by means of arguments that criticise plans, policies or actions of the Government (Mohammed, 2009: Ch. 3).

[iv] In a presentation at the research colloquium of the department of Speech Communication, Argumentation Theory and Rhetoric at the University of Amsterdam in late 2006, van Eemeren and Houtlosser suggested that a dialectically sound case of strategic manoeuvring needs to be (a) "chosen in such a way that it enables an analytically relevant continuation at the juncture concerned in the dialectical route […]", (b) "in such a way adapted to the other party that it responds to the preceding move in the dialectical route […]" and (c) "formulated in such a way that it can be interpreted as enabling a relevant continuation and being responsive to the preceding move". Even though I do not at this stage associate -as van Eemeren and Houtlosser do- the requirements I suggest with the three aspects of strategic manoeuvring, I consider that the three conditions, taken together, are meant to guarantee that a move constitutes a contribution to at least one of the allowable outcomes of the stage at issue.

[v] Even though the starting point rule pertains usually to the argumentation stage (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992: pp. 149-157), the rule can also be applied to exchanges that exemplify argumentative confrontations. Especially in argumentative exchanges that occur in institutionalised contexts, arguers do not enter confrontations with an empty commitment store. Reference to commonly accepted starting points is therefore possible in argumentative confrontations. The starting point rule is accordingly applicable.

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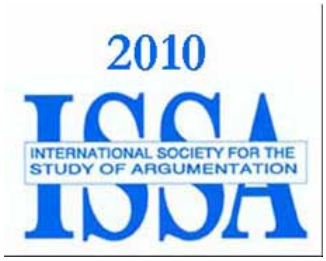
ISSA Proceedings 2010 – Argumentative Insights For The Analysis Of Direct-To-Consumer Advertising



1. Introduction

Among the scholars interested in direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA), there is more and more interest in examining argumentation in this particular type of ads. On the one hand, the argumentative nature of direct-to-consumer advertising can hardly be overlooked,**[i]** but on the other hand, this argumentative nature is also often the main source of criticism that the opponents of DTCA advance. Critics often point out that direct-to-consumer advertising, as the name suggests, is a promotional activity that aims at increasing the sales of the medicine advertised (Chandra & Holt, 1999; Gilbody, Wilson & Watt, 2005; Mintzes, 1998; Wolfe, 2002), rather than a source of information that raises the health literacy of the public and allows patients to be more involved in their healthcare, as DTCA supporters claim (Auton, 2004, 2007; Calfee, 2002; Jones & Garlick, 2003). In a previous paper (Mohammed & Schulz, 2010), we have argued that the argumentative nature of DTCA is not necessarily what diminishes its educational potential. Ideally, it is possible for direct-to-consumer advertising to fulfil both educational and promotional purposes.

Reasonable argumentation can reconcile the promotional and educational aims of direct-to-consumer advertising. A reasonable defence of this claim will react to the doubt of patients as well as to the competing claims and arguments of other pharmaceutical companies. Such a defence will provide assistance for the patients in making well-informed decisions and if successful will also convince them to ask their doctors to prescribe medicine x for them. The latter is the heart of pharmaceuticals' promotional interest. However, our previous analysis of

strategic manoeuvring in DTC ads suggests that pharmaceutical companies are more interested in getting the claim that promotes their medicine accepted by an audience of consumers rather than by an audience of patients who would like to be more involved in their health care. That is mainly reflected by the choice of relying significantly on arguments that promote the medicine on the basis of qualities that relate to its non-medical attributes (in our earlier study, we have referred to such arguments, which address the non-medical attributes of a medicine, such as the ease of use of a medicine, its cost benefits, and social-psychological enhancements attributes … etc, as convenience appeals). Such a choice reflects an interest in convincing a potential consumer who would certainly care about what is convenient, rather than convincing an active patient who is more concerned with the effectiveness and safety of his treatment option. Even though the findings of our analysis are in line with a significant part of the criticism of the practice of direct-to-consumer advertising, a test of the generalisability of such findings seems to be necessary.

One of the most common methodologies of testing the generalisability of empirical claims about discourse is the method of content analysis. Quantitative content analysis is a standard methodology in the social sciences for studying, structuring and analysing the content of communication. It is an effective, systematic, and replicable data reduction technique that helps compressing many words of text or images into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding, and it has the appealing feature of being useful in dealing with big volumes of data. In spite of the increasing awareness of the central role that argumentation plays in DTC advertising, argumentative considerations have not yet been adequately incorporated into the content analysis of DTCA. Existing coding schemes are not refined enough to capture argumentative characteristics of direct-to-consumer ads. Most content analysis in the field of DTCA are used to depict the variety of information that had been delivered in the ads without paying attention to the argumentative structure that links the different statements in the ads.

In this paper, we aim at discussing the possibility of designing a coding scheme to be used in a content analysis study that tests the generalisability of our empirical claims about DTCA. We shall first, in section 2, discuss the state of the art in the study of DTCA from the perspective of content analysis. This is intended to highlight methodological characteristics of content analysis in the particular area

of DTCA. In view of the discussion, we shall, in section 3, develop a proposal for a coding scheme that tests the generalisability of our claim. In section 4, we will discuss, briefly, the challenges that face our proposal.

2. The state of the art

One of the most important content analysis of DTC ads, in which the researchers were immediately concerned with the argumentation used in DTCA, was conducted by Robert Bell, Richard Kravitz and Michael Wilkes from the Department of Communication, University of California, USA (Bell et al., 2000). Bell et al. analysed DTC ads of prescription drugs appearing in 18 consumer magazines from 1989 through 1998 (a total of 320 distinct ads representing 101 brands and 14 medical conditions). Their aim was to explore trends in prevalence, shifts in the medical conditions for which drugs are promoted, reliance on financial and nonmonetary inducements, and appeals used to attract public interest.

In order to document the advertising appeals used to enhance a patient's interest in the drugs, each ad was coded for the presence or absence of *42 keywords* (adjectives, adjectival phrases, or adverbs that reflect claims about the drug's nature or impact). Each advertisement was coded for the use of these descriptors to depict the medicine advertised. After coding for the presence or absence of these terms and phrases, related terms were grouped in *(19) categories of product attributes*. So for example, terms like "advancement," "breakthrough," "a first," the "only" drug of kind, "innovative," "novel," and "new" were grouped in the attribute category "Innovative". These categories were further grouped in four *main 'types' of appeals*: effectiveness, social-psychological benefits, ease of use, and safety. Effectiveness appeals included attributes such as *effective*, *cure*, *dependable*, *innovative*, *powerful*, *prevention*, *reduced mortality* or *symptom control*. Social-Psychological appeals included attributes that relate to *lifestyle*, *psychological benefits* or so*cial enhancements*. Ease of use appeals included attributes such as *convenience*, *easy on system*, *economical* or *quick acting*. Finally, safety appeals included attributes such as *safe*, *natural*, *non-addictive* or *non-medicated* (see *Figure (1)* below).**[ii]**

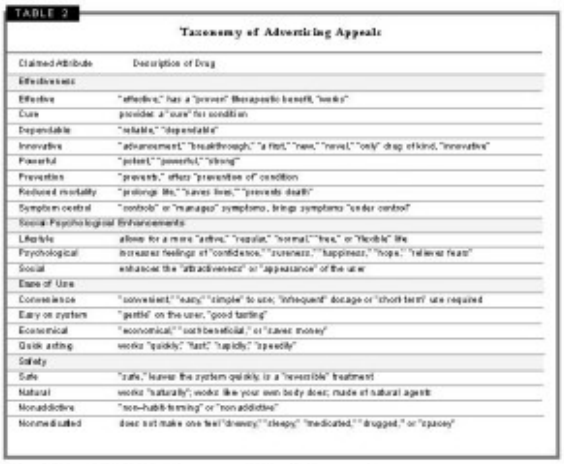


TABLE 2

Taxonomy of Advertising Appeals

Claimed Attribute	Description of Drug
Effectiveness	
Effective	"effective," has a "proven" therapeutic benefit, "works"
Cure	provides a "cure" for condition
Dependable	"reliable," "dependable"
Innovative	"advancement," "breakthrough," "a first," "new," "novel," "only" drug of kind, "innovative"
Powerful	"potent," "powerful," "strong"
Prevention	"prevents," offers "prevention of" condition
Reduced mortality	"prolongs life," "saves lives," "prevents death"
Symptom control	"controls" or "manages" symptoms, brings symptoms "under control"
Social-Psychological Enhancements	
Lifestyle	allows for a more "active," "regular," "normal," "free," or "flexible" life
Psychological	increases feelings of "confidence," "calmness," "happiness," "hope," "relieves fears"
Social	enhances the "attractiveness" or "appearance" of the user
Ease of Use	
Convenience	"convenient," "easy," "simple" to use; "infrequent" dosage or "short term" use required
Easy on system	"gentle" on the user, "good tasting"
Economical	"economical," "cost beneficial," or "saves money"
Quick acting	works "quickly," "fast," "rapidly," "speedily"
Safety	
Safe	"safe," leaves the system quickly, or a "reversible" treatment
Natural	works "naturally"; works like your own body does; made of natural agents
Nonaddictive	"non–habit-forming" or "non addictive"
Nonmedicated	does not make one feel "drowsy," "sleepy," "medicated," "drugged," or "spacey"

Figure (1) Bell et al's taxonomy of advertising appeals

Figure 1

Bell et al.'s taxonomy has been used by a number of more recent content analysis of DTC ads, such as the study of Wendy Macias and Liza Stavchansky Lewis, who examined the content and form of 90 DTC drug Web sites (Macias & Lewis, 2003)**[iii]** and by researchers at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, who examined 75 DTC ads for oncology drugs (15 distinct ads) that appeared in three cancer patient-focused magazines, CURE, Coping with Cancer and MAMM, in 2005 (Abel et al., 2007).**[iv]**

Another influential content analysis study of DTC ads is that of Kelly Main, Jennifer Argo and Bruce Huhmann, who were interested in identifying the kind of information and /or appeals that are being provided to consumers in DTC ads (Main et al., 2004). Main et al. devised their own taxonomy of advertising appeals when studying the ads that appeared in the December issues of 1998, 1999 and 2000 in 30 US magazines (a total of 365 ads). The taxonomy distinguished between rational appeals, positive emotional appeals and negative emotional appeals, and further distinguished between four main subtypes of positive emotional appeals: humour, nostalgic, fantasy and sex appeals (see *Figure (2)* below). A slightly modified version of this taxonomy has been also used by Dominick Frosch, Patrick Krueger, Robert Hornik, Peter Cronholm and Frances Barg from the University of California and the University of Pennsylvania, who examined how television DTC ads attempt to influence consumers (Frosch et al., 2007).

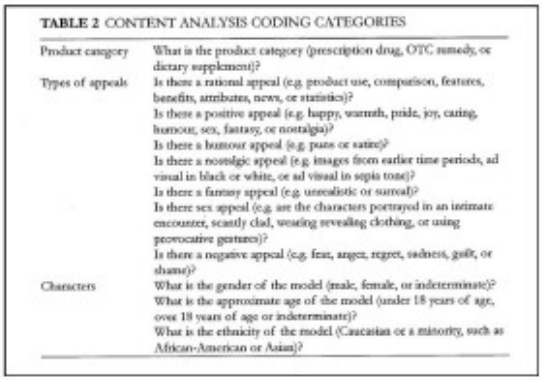


TABLE 2 CONTENT ANALYSIS CODING CATEGORIES

Product category	What is the product category (prescription drug, OTC remedy, or dietary supplement)?
Types of appeals	Is there a rational appeal (e.g. product use, comparison, features, benefits, attributes, news, or statistics)? Is there a positive appeal (e.g. happy, warmth, pride, joy, caring, humour, sex, fantasy, or nostalgia)? Is there a humour appeal (e.g. puns or satire)? Is there a nostalgic appeal (e.g. images from earlier time periods, ad visual in black or white, or ad visual in sepia tone)? Is there a fantasy appeal (e.g. unrealistic or surreal)? Is there sex appeal (e.g. are the characters portrayed in an intimate encounter, scantly clad, wearing revealing clothing, or using provocative gestures)? Is there a negative appeal (e.g. fear, anger, regret, sadness, guilt, or shame)?
Characters	What is the gender of the model (male, female, or indeterminate)? What is the approximate age of the model (under 18 years of age, over 18 years of age or indeterminate)? What is the ethnicity of the model (Caucasian or a minority, such as African-American or Asian)?

Figure (2) Main et al.'s categories of coding

Figure 2

Another significant contribution to the study of DTC ads using the method of content analysis is the research conducted at by researchers at the institute of Communication and Health at the Università della svizzera italiana in Switzerland. Peter Schulz and Uwe Hartung developed a codebook for analysing DTC ads, aiming to capture and assess relevant argumentative differences between patient-oriented and physician-oriented communication (unpublished manuscript). In particular, it was expected that variations will occur with respect to the use of medical evidence versus the emotional appeal. In order to capture and assess the expected argumentative differences, the researchers included in their corpus also adverts that are directed to physicians. 120 print adverts regarding health conditions published between 2003 and 2006 in two U.S. magazines, namely *Time* and *Good Housekeeping*, as well as in two leading medical journals, New England Journal of Medicine and JAMA (Journal of American Medical Association), had been collected. In their codebook, Schulz and Hartung suggest 8 categories of what they refer to as "substance of premise". The categories are: medicament helps, medicament has no/low side effects, medicament is cheap, medicament is widely used, disease or condition against which the medicament is indicated is bad, medicament is widely studied, use-related premises and fringe benefits (see *Figure (3)* below).

Figure (3) Schulz et al.'s coding categories of the substance of premises

Figure 3

3. Testing the generalisability of our claims on direct to consumer ads

What we would like to test, by using the method of content analysis, is whether the claim that DTC ads are addressed to an audience of consumers rather than an audience of patients applies in general to DTC ads and is not specific to the particular ads that we analysed in our earlier study. In our earlier analysis, this conclusion was reached on the basis of the central role that convenience appeals played in the ads analysed. For example, in one of the ads, in which Takeda Pharmaceuticals promote their sleeping pills Rozerem, two out of the four main arguments that are used to support the claim that *Rozerem is a good treatment against insomnia* were convenience appeals. In the ad, Takeda Pharmaceuticals express this claim quite strongly. Rozerem is *a sleep aid like no other*, they claim (see Rozerem ad below).

Figure (4) Rozerem: when you can't sleep, you can't dream (*Times*)

Figure 4

In support of this claim, four main arguments are presented: Rozerem is *approved*

for adults having *trouble falling asleep (1.1a)*, Rozerem is *the first and only* prescription sleep aid that has *no potential for abuse or dependence (1.1b)*, you can *take Rozerem when you need it and stop when you don't (1.1c)* and Rozerem makes you dream *(1.1d)* which one can easily infer from the opening line of the ad, namely that *when you can't sleep, you can't dream*. Argument 1.1b is further supported by reference to clinical studies in which Rozerem shows no potential for abuse or dependence *(1.1b.1)*. The structure of argumentation is illustrated below.

1 Rozerem is a good treatment against insomnia

1.1a Rozerem is approved for adults having trouble falling asleep

1.1b Rozerem is the first and only prescription sleep aid that has no potential for abuse or dependence

1.1b.1 in clinical studies Rozerem shows no potential for abuse or dependence

1.1c you can take Rozerem when you need it and stop when you don't

1.1d Rozerem makes you dream

What coding variable can we use to reflect the central role that convenience appeals play in a DTC ad? One indicator of such a role is the number of such appeals in the ad. So, maybe even prior to the task of reflecting the central role of convenience appeals is the task of representing the presence of convenience appeals. Convenience appeals, as we used them in our earlier analysis, are arguments that promote the medicine on the basis of qualities that relate to its non-medical advantages. They are in this sense more general than the product attribute of convenience proposed by Bell et al. (2000). Unlike Bell et al.'s category, which refers solely to arguments in which claims about the medicine's convenience of use is made, our convenience appeals is a type of appeals that covers Bell's claims about convenience of use as well as other non-medical attributes, such as the medicine's cost, its enhancement of lifestyle and of the social and psychological being of those who take it … etc. In this sense, our convenience appeals comprise Bell et al.'s both ease of use and social-psychological attributes (i.e. premises about psychological enhancement, lifestyle enhancement, social enhancement, convenience, quick acting, economical and easy on system). This type of appeals has also been represented in the codebook

of Schulz and Hartung. A few of the coding categories for the variable “substance of premise” represent what can be considered as a convenience appeal (for example: -11- Medicament helps fast, its effect sets on quickly, -30- Medicament is cheap / its use is economic, -70- Use-related premises such as Medicament is easy to handle, easy to apply, convenient or does not create unpleasant sensations, -71- Medicament is easy to use, easy to apply or that no special abilities are needed to apply it, -72- Medicament has no unpleasant taste or odour, is agreeable for children, -74- Medicament has an easy schedule for taking, or that it has no temporal or situational requirements).

In order to represent the presence of such appeals, a variable needs be designed that describes the type of appeal involved in the argument (a content variable at the premise level). For every premise, coders would have to choose between three main types of appeals: an effectiveness appeal when the premise refers to qualities that relate to the medical effect of the medicine: it controls symptoms, it is powerful, it is long lasting … etc, a safety appeal when the premise refers to qualities that relate to the side effects of the medicine: it is natural, it does not have serious side effects … etc, and a convenience appeal when the premise refers to qualities that relate to the non-medical advantages of the medicine, including the ease of use, economical benefits, quick acting, life style, and social-psychological enhancements … etc. This proposal for a coding scheme is illustrated in *Figure (5)* below:

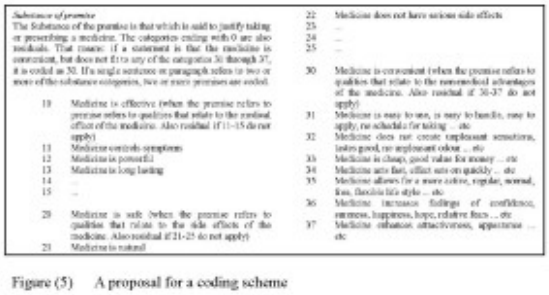


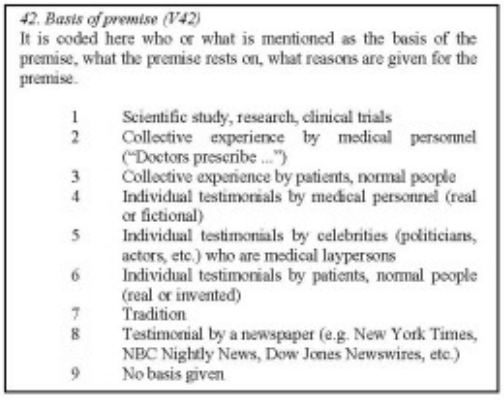
Figure (5) A proposal for a coding scheme

Figure 5

The percentage of the number of convenience appeals in relation to the total number of appeals might be an indication of the importance of such appeals. However, this is not always the case. The argumentative role that such appeals play is an important factor to consider, especially when ads employ a complex structure of argumentation**.[v]** For example, when ads employ argumentation in a

subordinative structure, i.e. when some premises support the main claim indirectly by supporting other premises, the percentage of convenience appeals no longer reflects their argumentative importance. The Rozerem ad is an example. The ad includes five premises, one of which (*1.1b.1 in clinical studies Rozerem shows no potential for abuse or dependence*) supports the main claim about Rozerem by supporting the safety appeal (*1.1b Rozerem is the first and only prescription sleep aid that has no potential for abuse or dependence*). If one counts the total number of premises, one would think that 40% of the premises (two out of five premises) are convenience appeals, but once the argumentative role is considered one realises that convenience appeals constitute 50% of the premises (two out of four lines of argumentation/ four main arguments employ convenience appeals).

There seems to be a need to represent the argumentative role that a certain premise plays. One way of doing this would be to code premises into main and sub-arguments. While main arguments support the main claim directly, sub-arguments are elaborations that support other arguments and only through such a support lend support to the main claim. This coding variable, which we can call *premise role* or *argument structure* would come prior to the coding variable *substance of premise* discussed earlier. Premises that are coded as main arguments would be further coded according to the variable premise substance discussed earlier, premises that are coded as sub-arguments need a different variable for coding. Something along the line of what Schulz and Hartung refer to as "basis for premise", in which it is coded who or what is mentioned as the basis of the premise, what the premise rests on, what reasons are given for the premise (See *Figure (6)* below).



42. Basis of premise (V42)
It is coded here who or what is mentioned as the basis of the premise, what the premise rests on, what reasons are given for the premise.

1	Scientific study, research, clinical trials
2	Collective experience by medical personnel ("Doctors prescribe ...")
3	Collective experience by patients, normal people
4	Individual testimonials by medical personnel (real or fictional)
5	Individual testimonials by celebrities (politicians, actors, etc.) who are medical laypersons
6	Individual testimonials by patients, normal people (real or invented)
7	Tradition
8	Testimonial by a newspaper (e.g. New York Times, NBC Nightly News, Dow Jones Newswires, etc.)
9	No basis given

Figure (6) Schulz *et al.*'s coding of the basis of premise

Figure 6

The coding categories used by Schulz and Hartung for the coding variable substance of premise would need to be divided into two coding variables: substance of main arguments and substance of sub-arguments. Variables such as -40- Medicament is widely used, patient preferred it would belong to the latter. This kind of argument is usually presented as a sub-argument in support of main arguments.

4. Discussion

The biggest challenge for our proposal to distinguish between main and sub-arguments is to maintain high inter-coder reliability. This kind of reliability, which refers to the amount of agreement or correspondence among two or more coders, is crucial for the generalisability of our findings. Coding instructions should be clearly formulated to assist the coders in distinguishing between main and sub-arguments, a distinction that is not necessarily easy to make if the coders are not familiar with concepts of argumentation theory. Good inter-coder reliability can be achieved by including indicators for subordinative argumentations as well as examples of this kind of argumentation structure in the coding instructions. Van Eemeren et al.'s *Argumentative Indicators in Discourse* (2007) can be a good source for such indicators.

NOTES

[i] Several studies, conducted by Rubinelli (2005) and Rubinelli et al. (2006, 2007) among others, have shown that direct-to-consumer ads exhibit clear argumentative features, and that these features are recognised by potential consumers. For example, Rubinelli, Nakamoto, Schulz and De Saussure report that in their pilot study, 71 out of the 72 respondents recognised the argumentative structure of the ads they were shown (2006: p. 339).

[ii] Bell et al. report that, in the ads they analysed, the categories of appeals used most frequently are *effective*, used in 57% of ads, *controls symptoms* and *innovative*, used in 41% of the ads each, and *convenience,* used in 38% of the ads. The rest of the categories appeared in the following frequencies: *prevents condition* (16%), *nonmedicated* (14%), *psychological enhancement* and *safe* (each in 11% of the ads), *powerful* (9%), *reduced mortality* and *natural* (each in 7% of the ads), *lifestyle enhancement* and *quick acting* (each in 6% of the ads), *economical* and *not addictive* (each in 5% of the

ads), *dependable* (4%), *cures*, *easy on system* and *social enhancement* (each in 3% of the ads).

[iii] Macia and Lewis (2003) report that while the advertising appeals used in DTC sites are similar to those found in print ads, DTC sites offer more monetary incentives but provide a much higher degree of medical and drug information. They argue that the latter makes DTC sites better suited to fulfilling Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guidelines.

[iv] Abel et al. report that DTC ads for oncology drugs make more appeal to effectiveness than to safety. The ads are reported to be difficult to read in general but the text outlining the benefits is reported to have the highest readability score. According to Abel et al., even though the amount of text devoted to benefits versus risks and side effects was roughly the same, information on benefits was more prominent: information about benefits appeared in the top third of the advertisement text while descriptions of side effects and risks typically ran in the bottom third, and the largest type size of the text explaining the benefits was about twice as large as the largest text outlining side effects and risks.

[v] We follow the distinction van Eemeren et al. (2002) make between a single structure of argumentation, in which a standpoint is supported by one single argument, and a complex structure of argumentation in which the standpoint is supported by more than one argument. A complex structure of argumentation can be either multiple argumentation, in which the standpoint is supported by more than one alternative defense, coordinative argumentation, in which the standpoint is defended by several arguments taken together, or subbordinaive argumentation, in which the standpoint is supported by arguments that are further supported by other arguments (2002, pp. 63-87).

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