# ISSA Proceedings 2014 – Meeting The Demands Of A Changing Electorate: The political Rhetoric Of Julian Castro And Marco Rubio

*Abstract*: Rapid demographic changes in the United States have made American Hispanics an increasingly powerful force in American politics. This paper examines the argumentative strategies of two rising Hispanic stars of American politics: Democrat Julian Castro of Texas and Republican Marco Rubio of Florida. This paper analyzes the argumentative strategies that Castro and Rubio use in their 2012 party convention speeches to build political coalitions with Hispanic and non-Hispanic voters.

*Keywords*: American Dream, American Hispanic politicians, identification, Julian Castro, Marco Rubio, narrative, political argumentation, political rhetoric.

1. *Introduction*

Rapid demographic changes within the United States mean that the country will soon have a majority-minority population. One group that has gained prominence during this demographic shift is American Hispanics, who are becoming a critical political population and are challenging the demographic hegemony held by white Americans. This demographic change has also created more opportunity than ever before for Hispanic politicians on the national stage. While many scholars of political rhetoric have studied the argumentative strategies used by non-Hispanic political rhetors to gain support from Hispanic voters, this paper examines how Hispanic politicians reach out to Hispanic and non-Hispanic audiences in their political arguments.

This paper examines the argumentative strategies of two rising Hispanic stars of American politics: Democrat Julian Castro of Texas and Republican Marco Rubio of Florida. Castro represents a state that is already majority-minority and Rubio represents a state that soon will be. Both politicians made strong national debuts as prominent speakers for their respective parties during the 2012 presidential campaign. Both Castro and Rubio have parlayed this success into national

political recognition. Julian Castro, as the youngest mayor of a major American city, is frequently mentioned as a possible Democratic vice presidential or presidential candidate. Meanwhile Marco Rubio has become an important conservative Republican voice in the U.S. Senate and is viewed as a potential Republican vice presidential or presidential candidate. This paper analyzes the argumentative strategy of identification that Castro and Rubio use in their public arguments in order to build political coalitions.

In this paper we first provide a snapshot of the rise of the Hispanic voter in the United States. Second we discuss how narrative provides opportunities for identification in political rhetoric. Then we analyze the 2012 convention speeches of Marco Rubio and Julian Castro, in each case examining their narratives recounting their personal stories, their relationship to the Spanish language and Hispanic culture, and their respective tellings of the American Dream narrative. Finally, we consider some implications of Rubio and Castro's identification strategies.

## 2. *The rise of the hispanic voter*

Hispanic politicians, like all politicians, must adapt to heterogeneous audiences in order to garner enough support to win elections and serve broad constituencies in large and diverse settings. Stuckey (2000) described "political leadership in a campaign context" as the process of "crafting a political coalition large enough [and] diverse enough" (p. 453) to win office and govern. Major demographic changes mean that political rhetors must adapt to a rapidly changing political landscape. The dramatic increase of Hispanic voters gives Hispanic politicians a ready constituency; it also means that non-Hispanic politicians must now seriously consider strategies for garnering Hispanic support. Bowler and Segura (2012) pointed out that "Latinos are undermobilized by the parties," which suggests that "the sky is the limit" in terms of the political power they could potentially wield (p. 136).

As of now, the Democratic Party has made more inroads in attracting Latino voters than has the Republican Party. The Democratic Party has long relied on a coalition of minority voters, which includes Latinos. In fact, minority voters have been fundamental to Democratic electoral success. As Bowler and Segura (2012) observed, "Republicans usually win a majority of the white vote . . . suggesting that minority votes are essential to Democratic competitiveness" (p. 3). While Democrats thus need to continue to attract minority voters in order to remain

electorally competitive, Republicans face the challenge of trying to expand their base beyond white voters. Bowler and Segura (2012) also noted that the Republican Party's "whites-only strategy will become electorally unviable over time as demography takes its toll" (p. 67). In this context the continuing growth of the Hispanic population is potentially good news for the Democratic Party. Both political parties, however, are highly motivated to obtain support from Hispanic voters.

3. *Narrative and identification*

Scholars of political science and political communication have been studying the increasing Hispanic demographic within the U.S. and the ways in which political rhetoric has changed in order to reach Hispanic voters. Much of this literature analyzes the arguments non-Hispanic (primarily Anglo) political rhetors have made in order to gain support from Hispanic voters (Connaughton, 2004; Connaughton and Jarvis, 2004; Cisneros, 2009). Many of these analyses describe the strategy of identification. Rhetors using identification try to build explicit or implicit connections between themselves and their audience members (Connaughton, 2004; Connaughton and Jarvis, 2004). Political speakers may try to foster an audience's sense of identification with experiences, values, or self-image. Rhetors may try to articulate these connections overtly in their arguments or may try to invoke this sense of connection through forms of address, use of pronouns, or choices of examples. Political communication theorists "have long viewed identification as central to understanding the dynamics of American politics" (Connaughton, 2004, p. 132).

One of the ways of achieving identification is through narrative. MacIntyre (1981) famously argued that humans are "essentially story-telling" animals (p. 201) and claimed, "we all live our narratives in our lives and we understand our own lives in terms of narratives" (p. 197). Fisher (1984) challenged communication scholars to consider the power of narrative not only as a discursive strategy but as a mode of reasoning that shifted focus away from the formal argumentation, emphasis on rationality, and claims of technical expertise that Fisher said characterized the "rational world paradigm." In the "narrative paradigm" that he outlined, people could make and judge arguments according to "good reasons" and according to inherently understood standards of narrative probability and narrative fidelity (Fisher, 1984). Fisher (1987) argued that narrative relied on Burke's idea of identification. Fisher (1987) wrote, "the principle of narrative rationality is

identification rather than deliberation" (p. 18). Burke (1969) described identification as the basis of persuasion. He wrote, "You persuade a person only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his" (Burke, 1969, p. 55). Thus, people judge narratives based on the degree to which they can identify with the narratives, or feel that the narratives have expressed some aspect of their essential truth. McClure (2009) contended that identification is even more important in the function and assessment of narratives than Fisher had explicated. McClure (2009) argued that the process of identification can account for "the rhetorical viability of the narratives of identity, subjectivity, and ideology" (p. 202).

At key points of the American electoral process, such as the political parties' conventions, the strategy of identification is especially salient. Stuckey (2005) described how political rhetors seek to create personal points of connection with voters and why that is significant. She noted, "When we choose a particular sort of person to represent us collectively, we are declaring more than that we trust this person to walk our dogs or attend our backyard barbecues. We are also saying that we see ourselves reflected in him or her" (Stuckey, 2005, p. 654). Through the use of narrative and identification, Rubio and Castro positioned themselves as reflecting American society rather than the Cuban-American or Mexican-American communities. One narrative that American political rhetors commonly use is the American Dream. Presumably, Americans of all ethnicities and political affiliations can identify with aspects of the American Dream, which stresses political freedoms, an egalitarian economic and political system based on meritocracy, and the expectation that immigrants can improve their lot for themselves and their descendants. Rowland and Jones (2011) discussed the unique properties of American Dream narratives, arguing that the focus of the American Dream is "not on perfection found in the past, but on gradually achieving a more perfect future" (p. 131-132). Moreover, they noted, "the heroes present in such stories are not larger than life but thoroughly ordinary men and women who do extraordinary things in the society" (Rowland & Jones, 2011, p. 132). In their convention addresses, Rubio and Castro sought to create identification through their respective American Dream narratives. Furthermore, in order to foster identification, both elevated their humble forebears to the status of hero.

4. *Marcio Rubio*

Marco Rubio was born on May 28, 1971, in Miami, Florida, to Cuban immigrant parents who later naturalized as American citizens. He graduated from South Miami Senior High School in 1989 and attended Tarkio College for one year on a football scholarship. He attended Santa Fe Community College before finishing his B.S. in political science from the University of Florida in 1993. He earned a law degree from the University of Miami School of Law in 1996. At the age of 28 Rubio, a Republican, was elected in a special election to the Florida House of Representatives. He served in the Florida House from 2000 to 2009 and as Speaker of the Florida House from 2007 to 2009. Rubio ran successfully for the U.S. Senate in 2010 and began serving his term in January 2011.

Late in 2011, *The Washington Post* and the *St. Petersburg Times* reported that Rubio had been telling audiences an inaccurate version of his parents' emigration to the United States. While Rubio had maintained that his parents were forced to leave Cuba in 1959, after Fidel Castro had come to power, in actuality they had left Cuba in 1956. Rubio (2011) responded, "the Post story misses the point completely. The real essence of my family's story is not about the date my parents first entered the United States. . . . Or even the date they left Fidel Castro's Cuba forever and permanently settled here." Instead, he claimed, "The essence of my family story is why they came to America in the first place; and why they had to stay" (Rubio, 2011). Rubio's response signalled that the American Dream narrative has vital functions apart from relating accurate information.

Rubio addressed the Republican National Convention on Thursday, August 30, 2012. While his speech was not billed as a keynote speech – there was not an official keynote speech for the convention – Rubio spoke immediately before Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney, which was a coveted slot. The media coverage of Rubio's speech treated it as a keynote speech and many compared it explicitly to Castro's Democratic keynote speech.

In his speech, Rubio used personal narratives featuring his grandfather and his parents. He introduced his speech by saying, "In 1980, I watched my first Republican convention with my grandfather" (Rubio, 2012). Rubio (2012) said his grandfather "was born to a farming family in rural Cuba. Childhood polio left him permanently disabled. Because he couldn't work the farm, his family sent him to school, and he became the only one in the family who could read." Rubio (2012) continued the narrative of his family's rise from poverty by describing his parents'

immigration to the United States: “They emigrated to America with little more than the hope of a better life.” Rubio (2012) added, “They never made it big. . . . And yet they were successful. Because just a few decades removed from hopelessness, they made possible for us all the things that had been impossible for them.” These descriptions of his grandfather and parents reinforced the American Dream’s emphasis on ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

One of Rubio’s personal narratives concerned the family of Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney. Rubio (2012) said the American Dream was represented by “the story of a man who was born into an uncertain future in a foreign country. His family came to America to escape revolution. They struggled through poverty and the great depression.” Rubio (2012) explained that this man, George Romney, nevertheless “rose to be an admired businessman and public servant. And in November, his son, Mitt Romney, will be elected President of the United States.” This narrative showed Mitt Romney in a more personal light by describing the struggles of his father. The story also made it possible for Americans of all backgrounds to identify with the affluent Romney because of the Romney family’s humble beginnings.

We hypothesized that Rubio and Castro would take time in their speeches to articulate their understandings of their Hispanic identities and how they fit into the larger American society. It is notable that in these speeches they did not. Instead they invoked a distinctly Hispanic identity by occasionally speaking in Spanish or quoting Spanish remarks made by family members. This is an efficient way to self-identify as Hispanic and invite identification with other Hispanic citizens while not excluding non-Hispanic voters. Rubio (2012) recalled, “My Dad used to tell us: ‘En este pais, ustedes van a poder lograr todas las cosas que nosotros no pudimos.’ ‘In this country, you will be able to accomplish all the things we never could.’” This Spanish phrase and its English translation invited both Spanish-speaking and English-speaking audience members to identify with Rubio. In this anecdote Rubio also connected his use of Spanish to his personal narrative and to the narrative of the American Dream.

Finally, Rubio in his speech shared several variations of the American Dream narrative. Often these narratives reinforced the importance of his personal narratives about his family. As he remembered his grandfather, Rubio (2012) said, “I don’t remember everything we talked about, but the one thing I remember, is the one thing he wanted me never to forget . . . there was no limit to how far I

could go, because I was an American." He also used the story of his father to express the American Dream. Rubio (2012) recalled, "A few years ago during a speech, I noticed a bartender behind a portable bar at the back of the ballroom. I remembered my father who had worked for many years as a banquet bartender." Rubio (2012) reflected that his father "stood behind a bar in the back of the room all those years, so one day I could stand behind a podium in the front of the room." He continued, "That journey, from behind the bar to behind this podium, goes to the essence of the American miracle—that we're exceptional . . . because dreams that are impossible anywhere else, come true here" (Rubio, 2012). It is also critical that the American Dream be accessible to everyone. Rubio (2012) stressed this accessibility, arguing, "That's not just my story. That's your story. That's our story." Toward the end of his speech he said, "America is the story of everyday people who did extraordinary things. . . . Their stories may never be famous, but in the lives they lived, you find the living essence of America's greatness" (Rubio, 2012). Rubio emphasized the ordinary nature of the characters of the American Dream narrative and thus explicitly sought to establish identification with every member of the audience.

5. *Julian Castro*

Julian Castro was born on September 16, 1974, along with his twin brother Joaquin, in San Antonio, Texas. His family was Mexican-American. His mother, Maria Castro, was a political activist in San Antonio who helped found the political party La Raza Unida. Her politics instilled in Julian a sense of social responsibility to his community. Castro's father, Jesse Guzman, was also a political activist and a retired math teacher. After completing high school at Thomas Jefferson High School in San Antonio, Castro and his brother attended Stanford University where he majored in communications and political science and graduated with honors and distinction. After graduating the brothers attended Harvard Law School. Castro ran for City Council after returning to San Antonio from law school and served on the council from 2001 to 2005. He ran for mayor in 2005 but was defeated, and then ran again and won in 2009. He was re-elected in 2011 with 82 per cent of the vote.

On September 4, 2012, San Antonio Mayor Julian Castro delivered the keynote address at the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina. At 37 years old, Castro was the youngest and the first Hispanic speaker to deliver a keynote address to the Democratic National Convention. Political observers and

journalists noted the significance of his speech. The *Guardian* reported that Castro was "breaking one more glass ceiling for this rapidly rising demographic force in American politics" (Pilkington, 2012).

Like Rubio, Castro shared personal narratives that invited the audience to identify with the speaker. Castro's first narrative detailed his "unlikely journey" to the convention floor and the influence of his grandmother (Castro, 2012). He told the story of how his grandmother moved from Mexico to the United States as an orphan to live with relatives in San Antonio. Her formative years were difficult and she only went to school through the fourth grade because, as Castro (2012) explained, "She had to drop out and start working to help her family" and that she "spent her whole life working as a maid, a cook and a babysitter, barely scraping by." Castro told how she managed to teach herself to read and write in English and Spanish. He reminisced, "And I can still remember her, every morning as Joaquin and I walked out the door to school, making the sign of the cross behind us, saying, *'Que dios los bendiga.*' "May God bless you'" (Castro, 2012). Later Castro explained that he used that phrase to send his daughter off to school. Castro's second personal narrative detailed what he had accomplished as mayor. He described programs that were implemented to help four-year-olds have access to pre-K school programs and he explained his concept of Café College, "where students get help with everything from test prep to financial aid paperwork" (Castro, 2012). He continued, "We're investing in our young minds today to be competitive in the global economy tomorrow" (Castro, 2012). In this way Castro indicated that he shared and supported Americans' quest for betterment through education.

Castro used a personal narrative about Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney to underscore how the American Dream works. Castro told the Democratic delegates that Romney advised a group of college students to start their own businesses by borrowing money from their parents. Castro chided Romney for assuming that all Americans could pursue the American Dream by relying financially on their parents. Castro remarked, "I don't think Governor Romney meant any harm. I think he's a good guy. He just has no idea how good he's had it" (Castro, 2012). This narrative highlighted the Democratic criticism that Republicans underestimate the work required to attain the dream.

Castro also addressed his relationship to the Spanish language and Hispanic culture. As mentioned previously, we expected both speakers to use more Spanish

in their speeches. Castro used only one Spanish phrase three times in the speech. The phrase *"Que dios te bendiga"* or "God bless you" is used once in the beginning of the speech and twice at the end of the speech. It is interesting to note that Castro, who is second generation American, did not speak Spanish growing up. His mother spoke English to them in the home and he took Japanese and Latin in high school. In fact, he had to have a tutor to teach him Spanish (Gates, 2012). There is an expectation that politicians who identify as Hispanic automatically speak Spanish. This assumption is incorrect.

Castro also used narratives to convey that the American Dream is obtainable. The dream narratives functioned argumentatively in the speech by illustrating how ordinary individuals achieve the dream. The narratives also created identification with Democratic supporters by associating the dream with the Democrats and Obama. In his first example, Castro's explanation of his grandmother's plight reaching the United States provided one illustration of the dream:

*My grandmother spent her whole life working as a maid, a cook and a babysitter, barely scraping by, but still working hard to give my mother, her only child, a chance in life, so that my mother could give my brother and me an even better one* (Castro, 2012).

Castro (2012) concluded:

*My grandmother didn't live to see us begin our public service. But she probably would have thought it extraordinary that just two generations after she arrived San Antonio, one grandson would be the mayor and the other would be on his way – the good people of San Antonio willing – to the United States Congress.*

This personal illustration evolved into a generalized version of the American Dream. Castro (2012) noted that his family's story was not unique or "special" but that America made the "story possible." America facilitated Castro's grandmother's achievement of the dream. Castro (2012) said that his grandmother "believed that opportunity created today would lead to prosperity tomorrow" and would provide "the chance for your children to do better than you did." Additionally, he believed that the attainment of the dream was not immediate but took time and perseverance. He argued, "In the end, the American dream is not a sprint, or even a marathon, but a relay" where "each generation passes on to the next the fruits of their labor" (Castro, 2012). Castro (2012) also

indicated that the American Dream was not just an American dream, but a "human dream." He argued, "The dream is universal, but America makes it possible" (Castro, 2012). Indeed, that opportunity provided a bridge for Castro to achieve his own dream. Finally, the dream required responsibility and dedication to the nation. It needed the American spirit to move from the reality of the narrative to an emotionally charged dream.

6. *Conclusion*

Both Rubio and Castro are rising young Hispanics who must attract non-Hispanic as well as Hispanic voters to further their political careers. Although they represent different political parties and would likely argue that their political philosophies are incompatible with each other's, there are many similarities in the strategies of narrative and identification that both speakers used in their political convention speeches. Both relied on personal narratives that invited Hispanic and non-Hispanic audience members to identify with them. Rubio and Castro also used Spanish in their speeches to signal their Hispanic identity, but made the Spanish understandable to non-Spanish-speaking audience members by using only short Spanish phrases and by translating them into English. And both speakers also shared narratives that personified the American dream. This dream resonates with the Hispanic and non-Hispanic population.

We note some additional similarities between Rubio and Castro's strategies in their speeches. First, while the reasons for their families' immigration and their families' countries of origins were different, Rubio and Castro describe their respective grandparents as having the same reasons for coming to America. According to their speeches, Rubio's Cuban grandfather and Castro's Mexican grandmother wanted future generations of their families to experience the availability of opportunity. Both forebears believed that their descendants would be able to improve their lot through hard work and thereby participate in the American Dream.

Another similarity between the speeches was that Rubio and Castro argued that the American experience was unique. Rubio (2012) noted, "For those of us who were born and raised in this country, it's easy to forget how special America is. But my grandfather understood how different America is from the rest of the world." Castro (2012) claimed, "My family's story isn't special. What's special is the America that makes our story possible." In both cases, the speakers expressed the belief that their personal success was possible only in America. To audience

members whose families have recently emigrated to the United States, including many Hispanic Americans, this message could be especially persuasive.

A third common theme was that the success promised by the American Dream would take more than one generation. According to Rubio, his family's experience started with his disabled and uneducated grandfather's vision of opportunity, which led to his parents working in low status retail and food service jobs. But it was the dreams and hard work of those generations that made it possible for Rubio to achieve his success. Castro's multi-generational narrative was comparable. His grandmother also had no formal education and worked as a domestic labourer. While she "didn't live to see us begin our lives in public service," said Castro (2012), his grandmother "probably would have thought it extraordinary that just two generations after she arrived in San Antonio, one grandson would be the mayor and the other would be on his way . . . to the United States Congress." Castro (2012) characterized this multi-generational phenomenon by saying, "In the end, the American Dream is not a sprint, or even a marathon, but a relay."

Both Rubio and Castro also described the American Dream in terms that were consistent with Rowland and Jones's (2011) observation that American Dream narratives feature ordinary people who work toward a more perfect future. Rubio recounted how the Rubio family moved symbolically from the back of the ballroom (his father serving as bartender) to the podium in the front of the room (Rubio himself speaking to an audience). And Castro (2012) recounted that his mother "fought hard for civil rights so that instead of a mop, I could hold this microphone." In these invocations of the American Dream, all people who work hard and believe in the dream are participating in the dream, no matter how humble their circumstances are. Audience members can see themselves as participating in the American Dream regardless of their own status. This creates more opportunities for people to identify with the speakers' narratives.

Finally, in their narratives, both Rubio and Castro presented themselves as the embodiment of the American story. Stuckey (2005) argued that political rhetors want to connect with voters on a personal level and that voters want to see themselves "reflected" in their politicians (654). Rubio and Castro shared their personal narratives and linked those narratives to the universal American experience. In the way they shared these personal narratives, Rubio and Castro conveyed that they are representative of all Americans, regardless of ethnicity,

country of origin, or generation. Potentially all Americans can identify with them. These political rhetors thus positioned themselves not as “Hispanic” politicians, but as “American” politicians. From this rhetorical standpoint, they can make the broadest appeal to American voters.

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# ISSA Proceedings 2014 – Justification And Effectiveness: Critical Thinking And Strategic Maneuvering

*Abstract*: Advocates of dialectical perspectives and critical thinking theorists require all the objections to a standpoint to be considered in order to justify it. Rhetorical attitudes on persuasion seem to contradict this position. Pragma-dialecticians relieve the tension between justification and effectiveness by

strategic maneuvering. We find it necessary to link the nature of the issue and the degree of uncertainty to the rhetorical context to adapt the argumentative dialectical procedures.

*Keywords*: context, effectiveness, justification, persuasion, rhetoric, uncertainty

## 1. *Introduction*

There are different senses of using, and subsequent ways of defining what is meant by "argument". An argument can be defined as a set of statements, one of which, called the conclusion (thesis, claim, standpoint etc.) is affirmed on the basis of the others. An argument can also be defined as an act of persuasion intended to cause an interlocutor to believe that something is the case. Arguing can be seen also as a mutual pursuit of truth or shared understanding.

By arguing one may try to sustain a well-grounded theory or a settled factual claim related to some state of affairs unknown to the addressee, but arguing can be also just a way of thinking about a claim that at the moment is uncertain for both parties in the discussion. Sometimes it is possible to analytically confirm the adequacy of the claim by means of sound arguments but in many cases, the justification of a claim may not fulfill strong epistemic requirements. Nevertheless, in many such cases, a change in the cognitive environment of the interlocutors can be induced because the acceptance of the claim can be strengthened as a consequence of the dialectical interchange.

As a consequence of the different approaches to the concept of argument, there are also different proposals for a theory of argument(ation), with evident tension between strong epistemic proposals and more holistic approaches that include elements related to the social component of argumentative practices.

For us, the relationship between justification of the claim, dialectic obligations and rhetorical strategies, in other words, the relationship between justification and persuasion, is context dependent. The role of rhetorical inputs may be minimal in simple argumentative examples but it grows with the complexity of the argumentation and varies depending on the audiences and the different issues and contexts.

Certainly, the goal of the argumentation, at least in its explicit agenda, should be related to epistemic notions such as truth and soundness. However, real argumentations constitute, in most cases, complex processes in which the issues

and the rules to follow are not so clear. The dichotomy between truth and falsity does not always apply. Moreover and above all, it does not apply in the cases in which arguing fulfills its most important function, as in courts of law, in early stages of scientific inquiries, in public decision-making, in negotiations, conflict resolution and resolution of differences of opinion, in many everyday discussions or in fields or situations in which the theoretical standards of science cannot be fulfilled.

2. *Justification and effectiveness*

For epistemic approaches, justification is a feature that is constitutive of arguments (Bermejo-Luque, 2010) and the only truly important requirement to evaluate them. From this point of view, the use of persuasion as a criterion cannot avoid the threat of relativism and renders epistemic criteria irrelevant.

In our opinion, the relationship between epistemic and persuasive constituents is complex and the combination of the ideas of "epistemic vigilance" and of the "argumentative theory of reasoning" proposed by Sperber et al. (2010), may help us to understand it. Sperber et al. maintain that reasoning should be considered as a tool to persuade others and is a result of the evolution of humans as social beings. Their theory predicts the preponderance of confirmation bias in the production of arguments but also the epistemic vigilance of the argumentations of the interlocutors (the search for incoherencies, false affirmations, errors in the inferences or fallacies).

Even before the ideas of Sperber et al. were made public, empirical researches on argumentative practice could be used to confirm some of those hypotheses. Deana Kuhn (1991), for instance, in her survey about argumentative justification of the cause of an event, finds that only 19-22% of the participants do not regard the evidence they offer as sufficient to prove the correctness of their theory. The remaining subjects, roughly 80% of the sample, regard their evidence as proof of the correctness of their causal theories, irrespective of the actual quality of this evidence.

Sperber et al. think that the use or rhetoric strategies to persuade others in a mixed argumentative practice may work well to obtain sound epistemic results in many cases, mainly when the aim of the parties is to reach a proper conclusion:

*When people with different viewpoints share a genuine interest in reaching the*

*right conclusion, the confirmation bias makes it possible to arrive at an efficient division of cognitive labour. Each individual looks only for reasons to support their own position, while exercising vigilance towards the arguments proposed by others and evaluating them carefully. This requires much less work than having to search exhaustively for the pros and cons of every position present in the group* (p. 378).

However, many theorists think that if persuasion is the main goal of argumentation, reasonableness and cogency may be at risk. The critical thinking movement tries to protect against this risk and many textbooks stress the need to adopt a critical attitude avoiding biases. Thus, they recommend moving further away from a simple epistemologically "make sense" attitude guided by a strong confirmation bias that may not change without a deliberate educational intervention (Perkins, Faraday & Bushey, 1991). This critical attitude is characterized by Bailin & Battersby (2010) as *open-mindedness:* acceptance of the possibility of being wrong and thereby "the willingness to consider evidence and views that are contrary to our own" (p. 15) and *fair-mindedness* that "requires us to be as unbiased and impartial as we can when making a judgment"(p. 15). While open-mindedness can be seen as "the genuine interest in reaching the right conclusion" referred to by Sperber et al. in the above-cited passage, fair-mindedness presupposes a very strong epistemic requirement that can be contrary to the use of many persuasive strategies.

Critical thinking education may have an important role in the development of a more conscious and refined epistemic vigilance and in strengthening the argumentative skills necessary to make better established justifications. Critical thinking courses help the students understanding meta-cognitive aspects of the argumentation and train them in the task of "arriving at reasoned arguments on complex issues" (Battersby & Bailin, 2011, p. 244). Nevertheless, we think that argumentative instruction should be extended also to develop capacities to deploy persuasive strategies.

The theoretical notion of "strategic maneuvering" integrated in the pragma-dialectical framework (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2009) manifests itself in the choice of presentational devices, the framing of the issue and the adaptation to the intended audience in an argumentative situation. This choice facilitates understanding of the arguments and their reception in a favorable view. Strategic-maneuvering is considered by pragma-dialecticians as compatible with

the rules governing a critical discussion and it includes part of what we consider rhetorical practice. However, as we will try to show in the next sections, in the practice or arguing the use of persuasive strategies is not always fully compatible with the ideal dialectical rules, but it may be the best or the only way to achieve a rational outcome in a particular situation.

When people engage in arguing to resolve a difference of opinion they implicitly accept some general principles or rules under which the verbal interaction occurs. In many cases, participants in a debate or discussion intercalate ground-level arguments related to the issue under discussion with meta-arguments about the epistemic status of the premises, the soundness of the inferences, their relevance, the attribution of the burden of the proof, etc. Moreover, when, for example in the CEDA (Cross Examination Debate Association) debates in the nineties, meta-argumentative critiques were discouraged "in favor of specific and temporally-bound "scenario"-based interpretations", some researchers thought that these limitations constituted an obstacle to creativity and argumentative self-regulation (Broda-Bahm, 1993, p. 2)

As in the case of the particular rules of the CEDA debates in the nineties, in sections 4, 5 and 6 we will present more examples to show that consensual standards of what is argumentatively appropriate may change through time and different argumentative scenarios, and that apart from very general standards, this adaptation to the particular context is necessary if we want to be fair in assessing argumentative exchanges.

## 3. *Argumentation in context*

Through the short history of modern argumentation theory, many proposals have stated that there are different types of argumentative discourse that follow specific norms to adapt to the particular context in which the discursive activities arise. That is, many authors think that different contexts of argumentation ask the arguer to use different cognitive skills and strategies to modulate the requirements of the task.

The antecedents of this debate on context dependency go back to the works of Stephen Toulmin (1953; 1958). Toulmin maintained that the kinds of data and warrants to justify a point and the criteria of evaluation of arguments are not universal but field-dependent and that they should be adapted to the particular field in which the argument is situated. His definition of "argument field",

however, was not sufficiently clear. Toulmin, himself, used this term differently throughout his work. In his first proposal in 1958 he considered that "two arguments belong to the same field when the data and the conclusion in each of the two arguments are, respectively, of the same logical type" (p. 14). Further on in the same book, he added to this definition that fields differ because they address different kinds of problems and, in (Toulmin, 1972) he considered fields as "rational enterprises" that could be identified with intellectual disciplines (Zarefsky, 1982; 2014). These diffuse and different definitions resulted in lively discussions in the 70s and 80s that opened the way toward finding a possible definition or different uses of the notion of field which, as a consequence, contributed to conceptual confusion about this term. Conflicting definitions and overall confusion led, in the end, to its virtual disappearance from debates, conferences and literature.

Following Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958) rhetorical perspective which stated that arguments are determined by the audience, McKerrow's proposal of "argument communities" (McKerrow, 1980) and Goodnight's view of "spheres of discourse" (Goodnight, 1982) tried to look for a way out of the plurality of perspectives in field theory.

Goodnight proposed to leave aside the term "field" due to the difficulties encountered in fixing its meaning, and to use the more general idea of "spheres" of discourse. Without aiming to be exhaustive, he distinguished three main "spheres" of argument, the private, the public and the technical. The first one would encompass roughly all the informal argumentative interpersonal exchanges; the second one, the discourses related to public or political deliberation; and the third one, all the argumentation related to the academic disciplines. It is now clear that this new idea and classification of spheres is not free of problems. Although it is a more general concept than that of "field" it is precisely its generality that makes its use difficult if the purpose is to advance toward a better understanding of particular argumentative practices.

In 1980, McKerrow defined a community as "a collective of people interacting in a space-time continuum" that share the same type of discourse and "a set of rules for verbal or non-verbal behavior which are authorized and guided by the uniting rationale for their common aspirations, and which are observed in the display of their communal interactions" (p. 28). In McKerrow's view, communities determined the appropriate argumentative norms and the evaluative standards

that prevail in the community (Zarefsky, 2014, p. 78). Although the idea of community is interesting, it is also very vague and difficult to fix with more precision. It underlies, in our opinion, the idea of "culture", but of different cultures coexisting at the same time, because different communities intersect each other and members of a community can, at the same time, be part of another; van Eemeren & Houtlosser (2005) handle the question of adaptation to the audience to achieve argumentative success by means of strategic maneuvering. Strategic maneuvering asks for the observation of the various "argumentative activity types" defined as "conventionalized entities that can be distinguished by 'external' empirical observations of the communicative practices in the various domains". They equate those activity types to Goodnight spheres of discourse (p. 76). The observance of particular rules in different argumentative activities is important to improve our argumentative models but by looking at the examples they provide, we think that in some cases, it may be difficult to integrate particular rules with the observance of the rules of the ideal pragma-dialectical model. For example, the use of persuasive strategies in a negotiation might not be fully compatible with many of the ideal dialectical rules (closure, burden of proof, validity, etc.). However, a particular rhetorical move such as avoiding the more conflictive points, even if it does not help justify your position, may be good to achieve a rational outcome.

Recently, Rowland (2008) has maintained that the conflicting approaches to argument fields were not inconsistent but that they reflected different aspects of what he prefers to call "field practices". As he states:

*It now seems obvious that one cannot adequately define the field in which a given argumentative controversy occurs without a focus on subject matter, audience characteristics, argument forms found in the area, propositional content, argument models serving as terministic devices to aid comprehension, disciplinary organizations, the evolution of argument practices, and a consideration of shared purpose.* (Rowland, 2008, p. 242)

Underlying all the previous proposals is the notion that the participants in the argumentative discussion have to share the same "type" of discourse, that is, the way to handle the special terms and references they may use, has to be recognized as *endoxa* or shared knowledge to which the interlocutors in the exchange are committed. The same idea applies to special structural ways of presenting those thoughts in an argumentative dialog. Moreover, if

argumentation is a kind of communicative discourse, argumentative exchanges are also subjected to communicative general principles. The idea of the "cognitive environment" of Sperber & Wilson (1986/1995) is, for us (and for some others, see for example, Tindale, 1999 and Kraus, 2011) an important notion that represents a minimum common basis for all the above-stated proposals.

Sperber and Wilson define the cognitive environment of an individual as the set of facts or true beliefs that are manifest to that individual at a given moment. To be "manifest" is either to be perceptible or inferable. In a dialog both interlocutors may share parts of their respective cognitive environments. This "shared cognitive environment" includes both participants in the exchange and the shared mutual knowledge that is manifest to both of them at the time of the utterance, which may include knowledge relative to the social or cultural group of which they are part.

According to Sperber and Wilson, in all communicative exchanges participants look for information that may alter or reorganize their respective cognitive environment. Argumentation is a specific form of communication whose goal is to alter the cognitive environment of the addressee by means of reason. If both interlocutors share a large part of their respective cognitive environment and are willing to discuss a point, the possibilities for argumentation to work are better because each interlocutor can connect more easily with the system of beliefs of the other. Kraus (2011) considers this shared environment a particular kind of community which he calls "argument community". For him, cognitive communities are not fixed entities and "their boundaries are neither universal nor fixed" (p. 6) and may realign according to individual cases. This being true for ordinary cases of argumentation, it is also true that for argumentative exchanges that arise in institutionalized contexts, a large part of the shared institutionalized environment may remain fixed. In this way, by being part of the shared context, participants in a discussion have to adapt their discourses to the institutionalized form of arguing or, in the words of van Eemeren & Houtlosser (2005), to the institutionalized activity type.

In this respect, Rigotti (2006) emphasizes two relevant dimensions in an argumentative context, which he characterizes as the institutional and the interpersonal dimensions. The institutional context refers to the institutional field in which the interaction takes place and to the activity type in which the participants engage (for example, adjudication, negotiation, mediation, and public

debate, as presented in van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2005). The institutional context dictates the roles of the interlocutors, who have to adapt to the special requirements of it, make their own interpretations of the rules to follow, and play their roles in the way demanded by the institutional situation. The interpersonal context includes a rich network of relationships between the arguer and the audience. Those relationships are bounded and modulated by the participation of the interlocutors in a community and a culture. Across both dimensions there are other contextual sides to be stressed, related to the individual circumstances of the interaction. We can cite for example, the communication channels (face to face dialogue, written argumentation, public dissertations, Internet chat), time constraints, the motivation of the arguer and the presupposed motivation of the audience to accept the claim (that may change depending on the importance of the claim in their belief systems or on the impact of its acceptance on their lives), the arguer's knowledge about the topic and about the views of the audience, etc.

These contextual aspects may vary from one argumentative practice to another, giving rise to different degrees of uncertainty. Contextual considerations and specific requirements of an argumentative situation, cognitive aspects of the issue and the adaptation of the participants to the activity type may help us to make the analysis and assessment of an actual practice more flexible and to give an account of the dynamic communicational process involved in every argumentative discussion.

To make our point clearer, in the next sections, we will consider briefly examples of two different scientific disciplines, some features of pro and contra conductive arguments, and some aspects of argumentative practice oriented to decision-making.

4. *Argumentation in scientific practices*

Many researchers in the field of argumentation and also in mathematics maintain that almost all of what is done in mathematics is informal in the sense that it is not done in a purely formal system (see Aberdein, 2009 for references, also Carrascal, 2013). The discovery part of a proof is possibly the most difficult phase of any mathematical work. Proofs arise in dialogical contexts (even when thinking up a proof to convince oneself) and uncertainty is usually present in the period of discovery of a proof or while looking for the solution to a problem. On the way to establishing a proof there are conjectures (that afterwards can be proven wrong), inferential gaps and appeals to intuition (by the use of diagrams, for example),

and the steps are not formalized. In the process of proving, ordinary forms of argumentation, as in other communicational contexts, are always present. Pólya (1954) stated, that "we secure our mathematical knowledge by demonstrative reasoning, but we support our conjectures by plausible reasoning" (p. vi). As so, controversies occur and are in practice dealt with without fully formalizing them. For example, Pease & Martin (2012) analyze the Mini-Polymath projects as an example of collaborative work over the internet to solve demanding problems in mathematics. They show that 23% of the comments on the problem were made to propose definitions developed in a variety of ways: analogies, correction of misunderstandings, use of conjectures, etc.

For the final proof, standards of rigor are specific, and additional requirements of mathematical practice and proofs are always achieved and checked by the mathematical community. This does not mean that mathematical products are not communicative products but that the requirements needed to be considered as proof by the mathematical community are specific and stricter than those required for ordinary arguments. For example, notational requirements are a must in mathematical proofs and the deductive steps of the proof should be verified and presented in a way that can be checked by the mathematical community. Nevertheless, mathematical proofs are thought out and presented in different communicative situations that may also demand specific forms of expression to convince a particular audience. Rhetorical elements to adapt to the situation are necessary but the special requirements of mathematics for considering a mathematical product a proof remains.

In the initial stages of any emerging scientific enquiry, not only in mathematics, uncertainty is also always present. Louise Cummings (2002; 2009) presents a study about new diseases, such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy, as a good example of the need to adapt argumentative procedures to contextual constraints. She argues that possible informal fallacies such as the argument from ignorance play an important heuristic role in the application of rational scientific methodology. Argument from ignorance, she defends, is non-fallacious in these kinds of contexts and helps settle the priorities of the research, directing projects to a more testable hypothesis. These kinds of presumptive, non-conclusive arguments are relevant in persuading researchers to take a definite line of inquiry. Marcello Pera, a well-known non-relativist philosopher, places rhetoric at the core of any scientific inquiry:

*We have seen that methodological rules have an open texture that can be tightened only through decisions that have to be well-argued. But making decisions and arguing for them involves discussing rival views and convincing an audience. This is the fundamental reason why rhetoric enters into science.* (Pera, 1994, p. 51).

Pera assigns to rhetoric the role of adapting methodological rules by means of arguing. That is, in a scientific enquiry the way to reach a decision should be by giving and asking for reasons, because methodological rules are open and subjected to interpretation.

5. *Conductive argumentation and rhetoric*

The pros and cons type of conductive argumentation that can be found in different contexts may illustrate the importance of considering the characteristics of the issue in the evaluation of an argumentative discourse.

A conceptual introduction to conductive argumentation was first proposed by Wellman (1971; 1975) and it referred mostly to ethical contexts. This conceptualization was further elaborated by Govier (1999) who advocates its importance in other contexts such as historical and scientific argumentation. Although almost all components of the different definitions of conductive arguments are objects of controversy, the existence of counter-considerations as a part of the argumentative product is the more relevant and polemical characteristic of this type of argument.

Counter-considerations are different to objections (Govier, 2010). Objections or presumed objections of the interlocutors need to be accounted for in order to sustain a claim properly. Counter-considerations are considered part of the argumentation but they are not to be refuted as the objections and cannot be considered as premises. This fact makes it difficult to integrate counter-considerations in the structure of the argumentation.

This difficulty disappears, we think, if we consider the addition of counter-considerations as rhetorical moves that play a role in the integration of the audience in the argumentative discussion. Such rhetorical moves can be combined with other linguistic elements, such as the use of the first person plural or the use of rhetorical questions to make explicit the character polyphonic of argumentation.

Psychologists studying the development of argumentative skills (Golder & Coirier, 1996; Golder & Pouit, 2000; Andriessen, 2009), and researchers of the didactic of argumentation in the classroom (for example, Doltz & Pasquier, 1996; Doltz, 1996; Douek & Scali, 2000; Douek, 2005) consider arguing as a twofold task in which justification and adaptation to the addressee are analyzed in the different stages of the growing process, and are used as criteria to elaborate teaching strategies for the different ages and subjects. The use of counter-considerations in a dialogical situation may indicate that the arguers, children or students in classroom settings, are looking at the issue from different points of view in order to integrate others' insights. Rhetorical requirements, viewed from this perspective, can be considered to correlate with dialectical requirements. Introducing counter-considerations, the arguer shows that she considers her claim defeasible and that she is giving the audience space for extended discussion. From this perspective it can be seen that she respects the opinions of the audience but, at the same time, the arguer states her conviction that considering all the arguments in favor of the claim and the related counter-considerations, she may be entitled to maintain her opinion.

6. *Justification and persuasion in argumentation centered on choice of action*
Arguing to make a choice in civic decision settings or in more private settings, such as the individual choice between therapeutic alternatives or investments, has characteristics that are significantly different to argumentation in other settings, as may be the case in academic controversies. Practical argumentation in informal settings is also different from argumentation made in institutional contexts.

When we argue to make a decision, the issue is important because, first of all, the degree of uncertainty is not the same in all the cases in which a decision has to be taken. Decision-making implies predictions about the future and that depends on some factors that are partially unknown and out of the control of the people making the decision. For instance, in the choice of therapeutic alternatives, sometimes the choice can be made by pursuing protocols that strongly indicate one of two alternatives, but in other cases the alternative to choose may be uncertain. The evaluation of the results has to be made also under conditions of uncertainty, the success of a treatment does not mean that the other alternative would not have been better, and its failure does not mean that the alternative would not have been worse.

Second, very often the issue has many sides: the desirable outcomes that constitute the reasons in favor of one decision are often counterbalanced by possible undesirable consequences that may also be used to reject it or to justify an alternative decision.

Third, the subjective-objective dichotomy pointed out by Wohlrapp (2008) presents specific characteristics related to the domain of the discussion through which the decision has to be made. Personal interests and values often undermine the decision processes. Values, a relevant aspect of decision-making, are subjective. Certainly, many reasons for favoring a decision can be related to facts and theories about the world that can be tested and refined through argumentation. Nevertheless, very often, due to time and cognitive constraints, decision-making has to be grounded in limited knowledge and intuitions. Subjective assumptions and suppositions may play an important role due to material constraints. van Eemeren & Houtlosser (2009) state that as a consequence of subjective factors, in the resolution stage of a public debate, it is possible that some members of the audience may change their minds, while others will maintain their initial positions, because different conclusions may, to some degree, be reasonably justified.

In decision-making, the high degree of uncertainty, the convergence of multiples factors and the relevance of subjective values and preferences make the role of rhetoric much more decisive than in other kinds of context. Not only should presentational devices and audience adaptation be considered; the way of framing the issue may be also an object of debate, and the construction of the credibility and the status of the participants always play an important role. If there is room for the justification of different options, argumentation takes a more intense rhetorical orientation than in other settings.

## 7. *Conclusions*

Argumentation is a communicative interchange between an arguer and her audience. In order for the interchange to work, it is crucial that the participants in the interaction accept the possibility of a change in their system of beliefs.

The persuasion of the interlocutors should be reached by justifying the claim by means of a discursive game of giving and asking for reasons. Without justification there is no argumentation, but rhetorical strategies or rhetorical maneuvering are always present in real argumentative practices.

The evaluation of an argumentation should include factors such as the complexity and nature of the issue and the context, because these factors, among others, determine the different degrees of uncertainty of an argumentative discussion. If uncertainty cannot be avoided rhetorical adaptation to the case is unavoidable and more than the product it is the dynamic process which should be assessed.

The audience plays an important role since argumentative practice is an open-ended task that can be performed well in many ways but that can go wrong in just as many. Good or bad instances of an argument are audience-dependent because often the same argument will be optimal for one audience but inadequate for another.

Rhetorical argumentation has to be considered a rational enterprise (Tindale, 2004; 2009). On many occasions we argue because we hope that by giving and asking for reasons we can get a clearer and richer understanding of the issue, discard some bad options, refine errors, build a more accurate and not contradictory set of beliefs, and make more balanced decisions. As Wohlrapp (2008) states, it is important to dismiss the dichotomy between procedural and structural dimensions of argumentation to understand the virtues of arguing in these cases in which an undisputable justification may be inaccessible. At least in the kind of argumentative contexts in which uncertainty cannot be avoided, we think, as Tindale (2009) does, that "reasonableness arises from the practices of actual reasoners, it is not an abstract code independent of them that they consult for corroboration" (p. 55).

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# ISSA Proceedings 2014 – The Sliding Scales Of Repentance: Understanding Variation In Political Apologies For Infidelity

*Abstract*: This paper investigates the apologies of four US politicians whose marital infidelities were made public. The paper notes the variations in the use of religious language, representations of the transgressions, and metadiscourse. These variations can be calibrated to political ethos, the nature of the transgression, and the amount of repair work required. Thus, generic qualities of the personal political apology are best interpreted as existing on a sliding scale relative to the situation.

*Keywords*: Anthony Weiner, Eliot Spitzer, ethos, image restoration, Mark Sanford, Mark Souder, metadiscourse, political apology, representations of social events, stance.

1. *Introduction*

Apologies abound in everyday life as important speech acts that support saving face, maintaining relationships, improving *ethos*, and righting wrongs. Over the years discourse scholars have studied public apologies, identifying various shared characteristics. They have been particularly interested in how political apology works rhetorically to repair relations among different parties and repair the image of the one apologizing.

While the majority of studies have helped define the genre, a few have pointed out variations in public apologies due to cultural resources and speaker roles. In this paper, I also investigate variations, but do so by looking at apologies from similar rhetorical situations. I limit the variables of difference by investigating personal political apologies – those made for personal indiscretions – in these cases, marital infidelity by US elected politicians: Mark Sanford, Eliot Spitzer, Mark

Souder, and Anthony Weiner. These speech events share the same cultural context, speaker roles, transgression, and mass media dissemination. By limiting the variables of these selected speeches, I sought a more detailed understanding of the linguistic and rhetorical choices made by the speakers and thus, a more nuanced understanding of apologetic practices. The analysis revealed variations in the use of religious language, representations of the transgressions, and the use of metadiscourse. These differences can be calibrated to the speaker's established political ethos, the nature of the transgression, and the amount of repair work required of the speaker. I will first provide an overview of apology, then discuss characteristics shared by the apologies investigated for this study, and finally, I will examine their variations.

2. *Apology*

For the ancient Greeks, *apologia* referred to an orator's speech of self-defense in a trial (Cooper, 1997). Today, apology is commonly understood as a speech act in which speakers try to repair the damage done to a relationship by acknowledging and expressing regret for some perceived offense or failure. An offense can cause doubt in the offender's ethos along various lines, such as moral integrity, faithfulness to a commitment, or competency in a given task. According to Lazare, a genuine apology must "acknowledge [the] offense adequately … express genuine remorse, [and]…offer appropriate reparations including a commitment to make changes in the future (2004, p. 9). Such an apology necessarily places a speaker in a reflexive position in which she is enacting one version of herself (the one who is sorry) who is commenting on and repudiating another version of herself (the one who committed the offense), with the hope that the newer apologetic version is accepted as authentic.

Benoit identified five strategies public figures use for image restoration in apologies:

1. denial,
2. evasion of responsibility,
3. reducing offensiveness,
4. corrective action and
5. mortification, which entails admitting the wrongdoing and asking forgiveness (1997, p. 253).

His last two strategies, corrective action and mortification, are particularly

relevant to public apologies in America with its roots in Protestant Christianity. When studying the public apologies of several US politicians, Jennifer Jackson argued that "the political apology performance … presupposes… a doxic acquaintance to the Christian doctrine of Original sin and the performed Protestant Christian personal testimonial" (2012, p. 48). Such testimonials frame "within the single narrative event multiple instantiations of the Self across time to distinguish between the past sinning Lost Self as Other and the redeemed present Found Self as that durable Self" (Jackson 2012 p. 52). A sinner tells a story of conversion by admitting wrong, asking for forgiveness, and committing to avoid future falls.

Similarly, Ellwanger discusses public apologies as "stag[ed] conversion narratives," a *metanoia,* the Greek term meaning a change of heart, that reconciles the offender with social ethical standards (2012, p. 309). This performance, he argues, is in itself a punishment and form of humiliation – a penance. Through enacting a *metanoia*, the offender reconstitutes her identity to repair her image and relationship with the audience. Further, the public spectacle of the apology can act as a deterrence to other potential offenders.

It is important to note that these qualities of apology discussed thus far are culturally bound. The majority of research on apology has focused on American and Western European practices. However, several studies have argued that apologetic practices differ across cultures. For example, Suzuki and van Eemeren (2004) illustrate that the Japanese have different expectations for apology than do Western Europeans. Japanese accept a simple statement of sorrow and stepping down from leaders while Westerners have a more defensive tradition that does not necessarily require resignation from a position. Also, in Japan a speaker's ascribed ethos, that which derives from seniority, sex, family background, can be more important in an apology than an achieved ethos, which is established in speech. Liebersohn et al. compared American and Jewish apologetic practices through studying apologies by President Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Barak. They noted that the public nature of the Protestant confession, and hence US apologetic practices, does not exist in Judaism. Therefore, Barak instead relied on the Zionist historical narrative as a rhetorical resource (2004, p. 937).

Through this analysis, Liebersohn et al. explicitly argued against the "pretentions of universality underlying the study of apology" (2004, p. 941). In addition to the dominance of studying Western apologetic traditions, most studies are also

focused on identifying the shared generic qualities of apology. Like Libersohn et al., I would like to highlight differences among apologies, rather than commonalities. The speech events I investigate here share many features that reflect what we already know about political apologies in the US, relying heavily on the Protestant confessional model. However, despite the similar rhetorical situations, variety still exists among these apologies that influence rhetorical choices made by the speakers.

3. *US political apologies for marital infidelity*

In 2008, Eliot Spitzer, then Democratic governor of New York and formerly Attorney General, was found to have frequently visited high-end prostitutes. The next year, Mark Sanford, then Republican governor of South Carolina, admitted to having an affair with a journalist from Argentina. Prior to his admission, he had been missing for several days and lied to his staff about his whereabouts. In 2010 Mark Souder, a Republican representative from Indiana, resigned after admitting to an affair with a staffer. Finally, in 2011, Anthony Weiner, a Democratic representative from New York, admitted to having sent sexually explicit texts and images of himself to women, what is popularly called "sexting." He initially denied sending the images, saying his Twitter account had been hacked.

The analysis studied six texts: Spitzer's initial speech admitting to his "failings" (Chan, 2008) and his speech several days later stepping down from office ("Full Text of Spitzer Resignation"), Sanford's speech confessing to his affair and resigning as the Chairman of the Republican Governor's Association ("Transcript: Gov. Mark Sanford's Wed. afternoon press conference"), Souder's speech in which he confessed and resigned from his Senate seat ("Verbatim"), and two speeches from Weiner, the first in which he admitted to sending the explicit message ("Full Transcript Of Rep. Anthony Weiner's Resignation Speech") and then, like Spitzer, one a few days later in which he resigns his Senate seat ("Full Transcript Of Rep. Anthony Weiner's Resignation Speech").

These speeches all echo the Protestant testimonial with their central act of public mortification – each speaker admits wrongdoing and explicitly apologizes or asks for forgiveness. They also signal some corrective action by referencing their efforts to repair their relationships with their wives, families, and constituents or acknowledging the need to "heal" themselves. None of them deny wrongdoing or try to evade responsibility which would be contrary to a true confession. They also make some reference to religion or God.

In addition to mortification and corrective action, they employ some other image restoration strategies – most prominently bolstering, a sub-strategy to reduce the offensiveness of an act. Benoit quotes Linkugel in defining bolstering as "any rhetorical strategy which reinforces the existence of a fact, sentiment, object, or relationship …" (1997, p. 258). The speakers bolster their images by reaffirming their commitment to public service, indicating that despite their "private" or "personal" failings that their desire to serve was sincere and the work they accomplished significant. In his initial speech, Spitzer opens with

*Over the past nine years, eight years as attorney general and one as governor, I've tried to uphold a vision of progressive politics that would rebuild New York and create opportunity for all. We sought to bring real change to New York and that will continue.*

Only after this bolstering move does he admit his violation of "obligations to my family" and "any sense of right and wrong." In similar ways, all the speakers expressed their sincere commitment to serve their constituents, presenting themselves as true public servants. Souder, for example states, "It has been a great honor to fight for the needs, the jobs, and the future of this region where my family has lived for over 160 years."

They even characterize their resignations as a way of caring for the office and their constituents. Sanford didn't resign from office, but as chairman of the Republican Governor's Association. He does this, he says, in order to have the time to repair his relationship with his family, friends, and constituents. Sanford, then, in not stepping down as governor, shows he is still committed to public service and that he feels his affair, though wrong, does not indicate that he is unfit as a governor. Spitzer, though he says resigning is part of taking responsibility for his actions, he also says he is doing so as to not "disrupt the people' work." Souder resigns to save his family from media scrutiny. And Weiner states that he is stepping down because he has become a "distraction."

By bolstering in these ways, the speakers re-present themselves almost as they were as candidates running for election: idealistic, passionate, hard working, and self-sacrificing. This public persona is juxtaposed with the fallen individual. The personal vs. public dichotomy is implied or explicitly referenced by each speaker. Their "sin" does not, or should not, diminish the good that they have done and still are capable of. And, they will each be able to "heal" from this fall. In looking

at similar types of speeches, Jackson argues that through these redemption narratives speakers "each generalizes his individual acts as typical journey of anyone" that they are "representative of Everyman's fall from grace" (2012, p. 55), reminding the audience that politicians are only human and that all of us, at some time, fall and have to get up. Thus, the bolstering not only helps restore their image, but also supports the conversion narrative, the metanoia by juxtaposing the ideal self with the fallen self.

4. *Variation: religious presence*

Despite the similarities among these apologies for infidelity, significant differences also exist. The most obvious variation seems to be the amount of religious language used, which can be related to each speaker's political ethos. Although there are exceptions, in US politics, Republicans are considered the more conservatively Christian and the Democratic party more secular. Sanford's political ethos, as well as Souder's, was grounded in a Republican, conservative Christian tradition. Sanford, an Episcopalian, was a Southern Republican and member of the religiously conservative group The Family. Likewise, Souder, a Republican from the Midwest, and evangelical, self-identified and ran as a religious conservative. To break one's marriage vows, then, is a blow to this religious grounding of their public images. Their efforts to restore their images, then, must address this fact. Their metanoia, must be an explicitly religious one.

In his rambling speech, Sanford reflects on "God's laws," which he says are "designed to protect people from themselves." Here he acknowledges he has broken God's laws and affirms their wisdom. He further apologizes to "people of faith across South Carolina" and claims "believe it or not, I've been a person of faith all my life." Souder is even more direct in his religious sentiment when he states, "I have sinned against God" and later, "My comfort is that God is a gracious and forgiving God to those who sincerely seek his forgiveness as I do." This use of religious references and language gives "presence" (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p.115ff) to their faith and makes their repentance a religious one.

For Spitzer and Weiner, both Jewish Democrats, religious faith was less a part of their public ethos. Therefore, their apologies, though in a form with religious roots, gave little presence to religion. In his first speech, Spitzer makes no religious allusions. In his resignation speech, he states "From those to whom much is given, much is expected," a phrase from the New Testament, and in

closing asks for prayers for his successor, David Patterson. Weiner likewise makes no religious references in his first speech. In his second, his only religious reference is in his closing thought when he states, “With God’s help and with hard work we will all be successful.” In comparison to Sanford and Souder, then, Spitzer and Weiner’s apologies are not grounded in religious terms. They didn’t need to be since religion was not part of their public ethos. In fact, if they had suddenly expressed strong religious sentiment in these apologies, their authenticity may have been questioned. Not surprisingly, then, the presence given to religious sentiment remains consistent with the political ethos of the speaker. This highlights the fact that image restoration strategies depend upon, in part, the prior image being restored.

5. *Variation: representations of transgressions*

A more significant difference exists in how the speakers represent their transgressions. In some cases the transgression was already known publically (Spitzer), in others there was suspicion and speculation (Weiner), and others little was known yet by the public (Souder and Sanford). But in all cases, the speakers, as part of the apology, had to admit to wrongdoing and therefore, had to represent the transgression in some way. Fairclough states that when “representing a social event, one is incorporating it within the context of another social event, recontextualizing it” (2003, p. 139). This recontextualizing filters the elements of the social event: it decides what details to include or exclude or foreground or background, giving presence to some aspects of the situation rather than others. It also represents the event as more or less abstract, arranges them in a certain order, and may or may not make additions to the event, such as explanations or evaluations (Fairclough 2003, p.139).

In the apologies, the representations of transgressions vary in their levels of abstraction. These differences can be related to the legality of the transgression and with the forthrightness with which the speaker initially dealt with the media and the public in relation to the transgression. Despite these differences, the representations still all contribute to image restoration.

First, legality: although prosecution for patronizing a prostitute is rare, Spitzer still faced possible criminal charges in relation to his use of prostitutes. The Justice Department was investigating him for possibly breaking several laws: one law involved transporting someone across state lines for the purpose of prostitution, another involved how he paid for the prostitutes (he may have

engaged in “structuring,” which means the money was paid in such a way as to “conceal their purpose and source”), and finally, he was also being investigated for possibly using campaign funds for his prostitution activities. (“The Times Answers Spitzer Scandal Questions”).

Not surprisingly, then, although he had to admit guilt, he had to do so in a very generalized way so as to not implicate himself with regards to any of these charges. In his speeches Spitzer represents his transgressions in two ways: “I have acted in a way that violates my obligations to my family and that violates my – or any – sense of right and wrong.” And “… I have disappointed and failed to live up to the standard I expected of myself.” Note that these representations are highly generalized – he never mentions prostitutes or even marital infidelity. He could be referring to many types of transgression – tax evasion, fraud, sexting, an affair. Thus, he admits to an unspecific wrongdoing, carefully avoiding possibly implicating himself.

Despite being very general, Spitzer’s representations still assist him in restoring him image. In the first representation when he says “I have acted in a way that violates my obligations…” he, while being in the agent position, is still able to slightly distance himself from the wrongdoing. Using “acted in a way” instead of simply saying “I have violated my obligations…” is reminiscent of an old adage “hate the sin, not the sinner” which implies that peoples’ actions are not necessarily reflective of their persons. Also, in referencing his sense of right and wrong and the “standard” he expected of himself, he bolsters his image, reaffirming the values that he stood for as attorney general and governor. These phrases also allow him to acknowledge his own hypocrisy since in his previous role as attorney general he prosecuted prostitution rings (Eimicke & Shacknai, 2008).

The other three apologists did not have to worry about possible legal prosecution.**[i]** They were freer to be concrete in representing their transgressions. But, they differed in how forthright they were in the initial handling of their scandals. The less initially forthright, the more concrete the representations. Sanford and Weiner clearly complicated their situations with their lies. Souder’s case, on the other hand, was fairly simple and direct: he resigned before the case became widely known by the general public. His representation is concrete, though not detailed:

*I sinned against God, my wife and my family by having a mutual relationship with a part-time member of my staff.*

He also calls it a "personal failing" and an "error." He makes additions to the representation by stating:

*It has been all consuming for me to do this job well, especially in a district with costly, competitive elections every two years I do not have any sort of 'normal' life – for family, for friends, for church, for community.*

Although he does not make an explicit connection, through this addition he implies that reason for his transgression, suggesting that the pressure and isolation led him to have an affair, thus minimizing the offensiveness of the event. He later says "For sixteen years, my family and I have given our all for this area. The toll has been high." He does not specify what he means by "toll," but this sentence puts him in a victim position, as suffering a toll with his family. It also implies that the affair itself could be the toll. This again helps minimize the offensiveness of the event.

The lead-up to the apologies by Sanford and Weiner were less forthright. Sanford told his staff he was hiking the Appalachian Trail, but his cell phone was turned off and they were not able to reach him for several days. His wife also could not account for his whereabouts. This situation lead to speculation and concern by members of the state Senate and of course, put his staff in a difficult position ("Sanford back Wednesday"). He was, in fact, in Argentina visiting his mistress. Thus, he had secondary transgressions to address in his speech – his lying to his staff and being unreachable. He represents his affair in concrete terms:

*I've been unfaithful to my wife. I have developed a relationship with a dear, dear friend from Argentina. It began innocently as I suspect many of these things do in just a casual email back and forth in advice on one's life there and advice here. But here recently over this last year it developed into something much more than that.*

Note that although in the beginning of this representation he takes the agent position, accepting responsibility for the transgression, the narrative that follows provides a causal explanation that helps him minimize the affair. The "relationship," a nominalization, takes the subject position in the sentences, being the agent that "began innocently" but "developed into something much more."

This narrative, by detailing the process, helps minimize the offense by making it understandable and relatable, even common. Here we see how he "generalizes his individual acts as a typical journey of anyone" (Jackson 2012, p. 55). This characterization of the event is supported by calling his mistress a "dear dear friend." Thus, the affair was not some thoughtless fling with a random woman, but rather a "relationship" that developed from friendship. But Sanford also had to address lying to his staff and causing confusion:

*I would also apologize to my staff, because as much as I did talk about going to the Appalachian Trail, … that isn't where I ended up. And so I let them down by creating a fiction with regards to where I was going, which means that I then in turn, given as much as they relied on that information, let down people that I represent across the state.*

Although this representation of lying is more abstract than that of his affair, it is still constructed in ways to diminish damage. By saying the Trail "isn't where I ended up" he seems simply someone along for the ride, without agency. And he softens the offense by referring to it as "creating a fiction," rather than "lying" which has a strong negative connotation.

Finally, Weiner had the most sensational transgression and circumstances leading to his speeches. Not only was sexting relatively new and uncommon, he emphatically denied in media interviews that he was the source of the pictures. He and his office claimed that his social media accounts had been hacked. They kept up this ruse for 10 days until he finally admitted he sent the pictures. Thus, in addition to sexting, he had the added transgression of lying about it to the media and the public. Because of this, his apologies not only had to acknowledge his previous self that behaved inappropriately, but also his self who boldly lied about it. Of all the apologists investigated in this paper, he had the most repair work to do.

While Weiner is concrete in his representations of both his transgressions, he does little minimizing. In his first speech he gave a concrete explanation of his sexting by narrativizing his scandalous tweet and the how he came to cover it up:

*Last Friday night, I tweeted a photograph of myself that I intended to send as a direct message as part of a joke to a woman in Seattle. Once I realized I had posted it to Twitter, I panicked, I took it down, and said that I had been hacked. I*

*then continued with the story to stick to that story, which was a hugely regrettable mistake.*

In this statement he slightly minimizes the sexting by referring to it as "joke," but, unlike Sanford and Souder, there are no other additions or explanations that help his audience understand why he was engaging in such behavior or how it came about. The explanation he does provide only addresses the cover-up and again slightly minimizes by referring to his panic. After this statement he continues, admitting that he engaged "in several inappropriate conversations conducted over Twitter, Facebook, email and occasionally on the phone with women I had met online." Notably, he also specifies what he did NOT do: "To be clear, I have never met any of these women or had physical relationships at any time." He also then refers to his other transgression – that of lying to the media and the public: "I haven't told the truth and I've done things I deeply regret." In his second speech he represents his transgression more generally as "personal mistakes…and the embarrassment I have caused…the distraction I have created" and "the damage I have caused." Weiner, then, having the most repair work to do, is concrete, but does little minimization. This lack of minimization is perhaps due to the nature of the transgression. Unlike having an affair, extra-maritial sexting by politicians is still fairly uncommon and more difficult to make understandable or relatable.

Overall, investigating the representation of transgressions reveals ways in which their levels of concreteness or abstraction are related to the forthrightness with which they initially dealt with the situation. Also, the representations, whether abstract or concrete, are constructed in ways to support image restoration.

6. *Variation: metadiscourse*

The final variation among the speeches I will address is the use of metadiscourse. All the speakers use some metadiscourse, but its use increases with the amount of repair work needed, so that Sanford and Weiner employed the most metadiscourse. Metadiscourse is understood as discourse about discourse, or "the unique reflexive capacity of language, as used by human beings, to have itself as its subject matter" (Martinez Guillem 2009, p. 731).

Metadiscourse takes many forms, from explicit guidance to the reader such as "let me first point out" to more subtle modality markers. Vande Kopple identifies seven functions that metadiscourse serves, noting that any instance of

metadiscourse could serve more than one function at a time:

1. text connectives (first, next, etc,),
2. code glosses, which help readers understand specific points,
3. illocutionary markers, which make explicit what speech act is being performed,
4. validity markers, which can be understood as modality markers,
5. narrators,
6. attitude markers, which express the speaker's feeling toward the text (e.g. "surprisingly"), and
7. commentary which directly dialogues with the reader (1985, p 83-85).

Others have pointed out how these metadiscourse functions contribute to ethos through positioning (Martinez Guillem 2009, p. 737), alignment, and evaluation (Crismore & Farnsworth, 1989). Sociolinguists refer to this phenomenon as stance-taking. DuBois defines stance as:

*a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field*. (2007, p. 163)

Thus, when speakers express a judgment through evaluation, they position themselves as holding certain sociocultural values that either align, or don't, with their audiences.

While all the speeches had some metadiscourse that act as illocutionary markers, such as Souder's "It is with great regret I announce that I am resigning," Sanford and Weiner had more than twice the amount of metadiscourse than Spitzer or Souder. The additional metadiscourse in their apologies function as attitude and validity markers. The attitude markers are found in the expressions of desire such as "I want" and "I would" that Sanford and Weiner often use to preface their statements. Sanford is quite repetitive with the phrases "I would" and "I want": "I would secondly say to Jenny…"; "I would apologize to my staff…"'; "And so I want to apologize to my staff…I want to apologize to anybody…"; "I would ask their forgiveness."

In a similar way, Weiner states: "I want to thank my colleagues.…"; "I also want to express my gratitude to members of my staff…" These speakers could have said

“I apologize” or “I thank,” but they add a layer of attitude markers that imply an emotional stance – a desire. Not only is the speaker apologizing or thanking, but he *wants* to do so.

In addition to these attitude markers, they also employ validity markers. Sanford says he will “lay out the whole story” to provide “the bottom line”; he uses the phrase “bottom line” several times throughout his speech. Most notably, he precedes his admission of an affair with “The bottom line is this,” implying that other lines or stories were out there, but his representation is the most accurate and relevant. Weiner uses the phrase “to be clear” several times, as in “To be clear, the picture was of me, and I sent it.” These instances of metadiscourse are used to affirm the validity of what they are saying.

I attribute the higher frequency of metadiscourse, specifically attitude and validity markers, in Sanford and Weiner’s apologies to the increased repair work required of them. They not only had to repair their images because of their infidelity, but since they mislead people or directly denied the wrongdoing, they also had to repair their relationship with the public and reaffirm themselves as *now* telling the truth. Thus, they strengthen their emotional stance as repentant through attitude markers and use validity markers to portray their current representations as truthful.

7. *Conclusion*

The apologies of these four politicians are typical of public apologies in the US. They follow the features of the Protestant confessional testimonial through mortification and corrective action. These moves contribute to the speakers’ image repair as does their bolstering. Despite these similarities, however, variations exist in their use of religious language, how they represent and minimize their transgressions, and their metadiscourse. These variations can be related to their political ethos, the nature of the transgression, and the amount of repair work required. It seems that the nature and severity of the transgression have the most impact on the variations in these speeches. Also, it appears that metadiscourse is an especially important resource for speakers whose images are severely damage. Thus, it is worthwhile not only to look at whether or not a speaker uses a specific strategy, but also the extent to which they do so, relative to features of the rhetorical situation they face.

**NOTE**

**i.** Souder might have been investigated by the US House of Representatives for ethics violations, but he avoided this by resigning.

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# ISSA Proceedings 2014 – Missed Opportunities In Argument Evaluation

*Abstract:* Why do we hold arguers culpable for missing obvious objections against their arguments but not for missing obvious lines of reasoning for their positions? In both cases, their arguments are not as strong as they could be. Two factors

cause this: adversarial models of argumentation and the permeable boundaries separating argumentation, meta-argumentation, and argument evaluation. Strategic considerations and dialectical obligations partially justify the asymmetry; virtue argumentation theory explains when and why it is not justified.

*Keywords:* argumentation evaluation, virtue argumentation.

## 1. *Introduction: an odd asymmetry*

There is a curious asymmetry in how we evaluate arguments. On the one hand, it is taken as fair game to point out obvious objections to a line of reasoning that have not been anticipated. Arguments that fail to do this are not as strong as they could be and should be. Elementary critical thinking textbooks and advanced argumentation theorists all agree that the failure to criticize an argument for failing to take relevant and available negative information into account would be critically culpable. Of course, arguments that fail to take relevant and available *positive* information into account are also not as strong as they could be and should be, but those same voices are curiously silent on this omission. The failure to criticize arguments this way is so routine that it largely goes unnoticed, and when it is noticed, it is apparently regarded as acceptably strategic. Following Finocchiaro 2013 (p. 136), the question can be put very simply: Why are unanticipated objections culpable omissions but missed opportunities are not?

In the first part of this paper I propose an explanation for the presence of this odd asymmetry, including how it arises, why it can seem natural and comfortable from one perspective, why it can seem artificial and discordant from another perspective, and why the difference has not even registered on other perspectives. In the next sections, I offer a partial justification for this asymmetry by reference to arguers' dialectical roles and obligations which put significant roadblocks in the way of offering positive and constructive criticism. Strategies are then proposed for overcoming them, leading, first, to the conclusion that the virtues approach to argumentation evaluation is especially well suited to accommodating and explaining the phenomena in question. However, those same considerations also lead to the conclusion that the fundamental insight of virtue argumentation – that a good argument is one in which the arguers argue well – has to be qualified in two substantial ways. The crucial analytic element for understanding this largely invisible problem about evaluating arguments is recognizing that the critical evaluation of *arguments* cannot be independent of the critical evaluation of *arguers* – all the arguers, not just the proponents and

opponents. And, in addition, the value of an argument is not simply the sum of the values contributed by its arguers, so virtuous arguers can be only a necessary but not sufficient condition for good arguments. Finally, the entire exercise forces us to rethink what we mean be a good argument.

2. *The curious incident of the missed gambit.*
Let me begin with a parable about a noble chess player.

*It is the final match of a chess tournament between two intensely competitive grandmasters. One is an older, distinguished player who has devoted his whole life to the game of chess and the pursuit of the championship. He has risen to the highest ranks in the world, but he has fallen just shy of the top on several previous occasions. This may be his last chance. His opponent is much younger, but the defending champion. She is brilliant, even audacious, but sometimes erratic – a daredevil of a player who managed to control her bold style of play long enough in the previous tournament to take the crown. The series of games leading up to this one has included some epic games that will be studied and analyzed for years to come. It has also included some stinkers, games marred by rash attacks, sloppy defenses, and failed gambits. Now, at a crucial juncture in play, the young champion is about to make a daring but in fact very flawed move. The older player sees, leans forward, and whispers, "Don't do it." He pauses, then whispers again, this time through tears in his eyes because he realizes what he is doing "Don't do it. You have a much stronger move over there. It will be a better game, a more interesting game, a worthy game."*

I am afraid for how the story must end, but what are we to say of this chess master? That he was very, very good at chess, of course, but also that he knew chess intimately, and had an immense respect for the game, and perhaps, in the end, he may have loved chess too nobly. His love of chess got in the way of his skill at chess. A noble chess master, certainly, but a great chess *player*?

And now imagine the same scenario between two arguers, rather than two chess players: two eminent philosophers in debate, perhaps, or two heavyweight politicians arguing in a public forum. What are we to say of noble arguers who respect argumentation so much that they strengthen their opponents' hands? Would we really want to say that they are not good arguers *on that account?*

I will assume that we do *not* want to say that, so we are left with this question:

why isn't the argumentative counterpart to "missing the good move" on any of the standard lists of fallacies? Part of the reason may be that it does not fit neatly into the standard conception of a fallacy: it is not an "error in reasoning" (both Kelley 2013 and Copi, Cohen, and McMahon 2011, the two best-selling introductory logic textbooks are among the many texts that use this exact phrase to define a fallacy). Neither is it a "procedural violation", a "mistake" in reasoning, nor a "form of argument that gains assent without justification" (van Eemeren and Grootendoorst 1984, Govier 2010). However, it arguably does qualify as a "discussion move which damages the quality of an argument" (van Eemeren, Grootendoorst, and Snoek-Henkemans 1996) and it certainly counts as "a common mistake… that people tend not to notice" (Govier 2010). I think we have something like the case of "Silver Blaze," the one that Sherlock Homes solved because of the curious incident of the dog in the night, namely that the dog didn't bark: it was an inside job. And just to be clear: we argumentation theorists are the dog that didn't bark here.

3. *Explaining the asymmetry: the "D.A.M. model".*

The most important and most easily identifiable factor at work in establishing and sustaining this asymmetry is the "Dominant Adversarial Model" – the DAM account – for arguments. When we conceptualize arguments as *essentially* agonistic, we cast our fellow interlocutors as opponents and enemies rather than as colleagues or partners in argumentation. Often they are in fact just that, of course, because some arguments really are zero-sum scenarios, so your gain is my loss, but since not all arguments are like that, the agonistic element is not in fact an essential element.

If an argument is conceptualized as essentially adversarial and elevated to something like verbal warfare, then two principles of action take hold. First, no holds are barred in all-out war. All is fair, so withholding suggestions for improving your opponent's argument is completely justified from a strategic point of view. Second, pointing out favorable but missed lines of thought would be giving aid and comfort to the enemy. It is not simply that withholding that information is advisable and permitted, but that providing that information is all but forbidden because it would be tantamount to treason! We may not have to think of arguments as wars but it can be very hard to escape the ways of thinking imposed by that DAM account.

I think that goes a long way to explaining why we do not expect arguers to offer

that kind of helpful criticism of their fellow arguers' arguments, but it does not explain why the topic has been so consistently ignored by the textbooks and literature of critical thinking and argumentation theory. We also need to explain this curious incident of the theorists who have not barked at the failure to offer constructive criticism.

Part of an answer comes from the tension between trying to respect critical neutrality and offering constructive, i.e., *helpful*, criticism. Outside critics who suggest better lines of attack transgress in two ways: they become part of the argument rather than remaining safely on the level of meta-argumentation and in so doing, they violate the principle of critical impartiality. That lands us in a dilemma:

Q: *If neither the proponents nor the opponents in arguments, nor impartial critics observing it from outside, are in an appropriate position to give that kind of positive criticism, who is?*

The best way to analyze and understand this phenomenon is through the different roles in arguments and the different expectations that accompany those roles.

4. *The roles roles play*

Arguing is not a single, homogenous activity. There are many different ways to participate in an argument. Arguing for a standpoint is not the same as arguing against it, which is not the same as raising objections to its supporting line of reasoning. The different roles have different goals, they require different skill-sets, and they follow different rules which generate different expectations. The roles we assume in an argument are fluid, which makes separating them difficult. They often overlap in messy ways practically, functionally, and temporally. We may start out in the proponent's primary logical task of arguing for a position but then find ourselves in the subsidiary, dialectical task of *defending* it against objections or *revising* it in light of those objections, and then we might end up as an opponent arguing *against* a contrary position. Similarly, objecting to a pro-argument, another opposition role, presupposes argument evaluation, a critic's activity. As van Radziewsky 2013 notes, the transitions are continual, effortless, and seamless. Still, no matter how intertwined the roles may be in practice, they are conceptually distinguishable in theory, and making those distinctions has payoffs for analyzing arguments.

Judges, third parties arbiters, audiences, and kibitzers should also be counted as participants in an argument if only because biased judges, incompetent referees, meddlesome kibitzers, and bad audiences are all quite capable of ruining an argument. Since they do contribute to fully satisfying, optimally successful arguments (in the sense of Cohen 2008, 2013), they have some stake in the outcome of the argument. Consonant with the DAM account, these roles can be referred to collectively as the "non-combatants" in an argument, and there is some merit in that terminology: it highlights their subsidiary roles and secondary involvement, and insightfully imports from the cluster of concepts surrounding wars the idea that there could be "collateral damage" from arguments. For the present purposes, however, it will be better to think of them as more like a supporting cast: extras who have their own parts to play and their own contributions to make (following Cohen 2013).

One of the roles that arguers routinely fill is that of being a critic, an argument evaluator. As a first pass, we might say that arguers engage *in* the argument while argument evaluators make judgments *about* the argument, and thus are actually operating at the level of meta-argumentation. This is not a distinction that will stand up to close critical scrutiny, but it serves as a start for the purposes at hand.

The transitions between argument roles include transitions into and out of each and every one these non-combatant or supporting roles. Arguers can and do assume the roles of interested audiences, disinterested judges and juries, and even uninterested spectators. Above all else, arguers inevitably and routinely become argument critics. What makes this so important is that argument evaluation is supposed to be a neutral activity, so stepping into that role involves assuming an air critical detachment attachment and impartiality, even for the most partisan participants. More often than not, of course, it is a hollow pretense, but the presumption is still there. The problem is that even the assumption of impartiality seems incompatible with aiding either side in a dispute while pointing out missed opportunities is constructive *criticism*. It helps its target. It appears to be at odds with the role of argument evaluator. "*I'm the judge. It's not my job to provide the arguers with their arguments*."

5. *Rules for roles*

That brings us to the duties and principles governing argument roles and the expectations that they generate.

Missed opportunities are failures on the part of proponents, the arguers constructing positive arguments for some conclusion. They are sins of omission, as it were, rather than sins of commission, and so they may be less noticeable, but since they are ways that arguments fall short, it is incumbent on argument evaluators to identify them. The failure to point them out is a critical failure, not a partisan arguer's failure. What emerges, then, is a more or less natural division of labor and division of expectations for the participants in arguments:

• *Proponents* are expected to find good reasons for their positions, so they can be criticized when they do not.
• *Opponents* are not expected to point those reasons out for them when they don't, so they cannot be criticized for remaining silent.

If neither the proponents nor the opponents in arguments can be expected to point out this argumentative failure, who can? This is a problem

• *Critics* are expected to note missed opportunities, so they should be open to criticism for their silence on that score.
• *Judges*, *juries*, and *audiences* do have critical roles, so they can be expected to take note of missed opportunities, but they are not expected to point them out and, in many cases, expected to remain neutral, i.e., not to interfere and to refrain from pointing them out.

For most observers and non-principals in arguments, there are either no expectations for positive contributions or else positive expectations for no-contributions. They are like referees in a sporting event: the only time they get much attention is for unwanted contributions to the action.

Unfortunately, a workable schema of expectations for proponents, opponents, observers, and critics cannot be that simple. On the one hand, the expectations of those engaged in the critical assessment of arguments conflict with imperatives of impartiality and non-interference. Critics are supposed to be above the fray rather than active participants in the argument. On the other hand, the argument roles are fluid and everyone involved in arguments is constantly moving in and out of the critic's role.

We have reached an impasse. Were it not for the expectations of impartiality and non-interference, critics could be held responsible for failing to note missed opportunities, but there *are* those expectations of impartiality. Since critics are

the *only* ones from whom we can positively expect that criticism, there is no place from which that kind of assessment can be made. And yet there are occasions when that kind of critical assessment really does need to be made. What we need to address, then, is the question of when the imperative for impartial but thorough critical assessment can outweigh the prohibitions against partisan non-interference.

One final complication further muddies the waters of the proposed schema of expectations: arguers are critics. The line between argumentation and meta-argumentation is so permeable as to virtually disappear: an argument for a position is simultaneously a meta-theoretic endorsement of that argument; the same is true for simply accepting that argument; on the other hand, not accepting an argument, whether by raising an objection or offering a counterargument, also implicates a meta-theoretic judgment, namely that the argument fails or that there is a stronger argument against it; conversely, most meta-argumentation evaluations can, and often ought, be included in the object-level argumentation (The inter-changeability of dialectical, rhetorical, and meta-argumentative approaches to argumentation is the over-arching thesis developed in Finocchiaro 2013). No matter their primary roles, all parties involved in any way in an argument also have the standing to be argument evaluators. Whether or not all critics are participants in arguments – and for the record, I do think there are good reasons to count them as such – all arguers are critics. That is a role participants cannot avoid.

Thus, arguers are subject to the impossible imperatives imposed by the contradictory expectations that arise from the complication of having to fill different roles in arguments.

It will prove helpful to look at this problem through the lens provided by virtue argumentation theory.

6. *Overcoming obstacles*

The problem comes down to finding space from which to provide positive and constructive critical engagement. Positive and constructive critical engagement is a complex concept whose constituents do not fit together easily. On the one hand, constructive critical engagement is easy enough: pointing out fallacies, missteps, and other errors qualifies, but those common critical moves are not positive, in the relevant sense. They can be constructive insofar as they strengthen the

critiqued argument by pointing out its weaknesses, but not by pointing out greater alternative strengths. On the other hand, positive and constructive critical evaluation is also conceptual unproblematic: it is the kind of criticism that can be safely offered from a distance without worrying about violating neutrality, rather than as a real-time, on-site engagement. The challenge is to combine them.

The main culprit is the DAM account of argumentation. It creates the asymmetry in allowable and expected criticism by making adversariality the essential, defining feature of argumentation and defining all of the roles within arguments accordingly, viz., by their role in the *conflict*. Even within that framework, however, arguers are constantly moving in and out of the different argumentative roles and occupying several roles at the same time. An arguer is a very "divided self." Because of that, proponents, opponents, and neutral third-parties all have possibilities for *positive and constructive critical engagement,* but they all have significant obstacles to overcome.

The obstacle for proponents is practical: critical self-evaluation is just plain hard. It is always more difficult to spot weaknesses in arguments with which one agrees, and apart from some special circumstances (e.g., lawyers representing clients, insincerity, and *reductio* argumentation), proponents tend to agree with their own arguments. The epistemic and cognitive blind-spots that prevented an arguer from seeing the missed opportunity in the first place may well still be in place, so, to use Wittgenstein's example, self-critique is often no better than checking a news-story about which one is skeptical by buying another copy of the same newspaper (Wittgenstein 1953, §265). Moreover, we can be undone by our own skills in argumentation here because the better we are at giving reasons for our beliefs – a skill that encompasses both prior deliberation and its often indistinguishable counterpart, *post facto* rationalization – the harder it will be to detect some flaws in our reasoning, especially the difference between reasoning and rationalization (Kornblith 1999, pp. 277, 278).

There are a couple of strategies for proponents to get around the obstacle to noting when they themselves miss an opportunity. Critical self-reflection may work to some extent. We exercise different skills-sets in constructing arguments than we do in evaluating arguments, so if we engage in the salutary but difficult task of turning a critical eye to our own arguments, the new perspective might help us notice things about our argument that were not as visible in constructing the argument. That is, we can take advantage of our ability to transition between

argumentative roles. Of course, merely exchanging a proponent's hat for a critic's hat will do nothing to ameliorate any of the problems with personal bias, skewed data selection, cognitive blind spots, or rationalization that may have caused the omission in the first place. Critical self-reflection does not come with any guarantees of success.

Despite the limitations of this particular attempt at argumentative multi-tasking, the strategy to try a new perspective on one's reasoning is well grounded. So, if there are limits to what we as proponents can do with our own arguments, call for re-enforcements: fellow proponents – teammates in argument, as it were – to provide a more detached critical perspective on our reasoning. Professionally, we all know this: it is the reason why we might ask friends to read drafts of our manuscripts. There may be more to be gained from more hostile criticism, but missed opportunities are more likely to be noted by allies. Again, there are limits to how well this can work, as well as to its real-time availability in specific arguments, but even the possibility does mean that the obstacle is not insuperable.

The apparent obstacle for critics to overcome is the principle of neutrality and non-interference, but there are actually two principles here: neutrality and non-interference are different critical values. They ground different imperatives and those imperatives apply to distinguishable roles in arguments. The principles are easily separated in the context of team sports. Spectators may be as partisan as they like but cannot interfere, During intra-squad scrimmages, coaches will interfere for training and pedagogical purposes but they will properly remain neutral. It is referees during actual games who must abide by both neutrality and non-interference. All those possibilities have counterparts in arguments.

The first category encompasses interested but not-directly involved spectators. The second is a little trickier but the obstacles to neutral critical involvement are more real than imagined. Any constructive contribution that helps one side will be resented by the other side and taken as a violation of neutrality. The asymmetry comes into especially high relief here because pointing out stronger lines of reasoning that are not presented rather than fallacious or mistaken parts of the existing, presented argument is pro-active, giving the appearance of partisanship. The appearance is deceiving. The distinct imperatives of neutrality and non-interference are not contradictory. After all, pointing out missed opportunities is one of the great joys of kibitzing (see Cohen 2014). Kibitzers are the back-seat

drivers of arguments, those observers who offer unsolicited, unwanted, and, in the common conception, *unhelpful* advice. *Good kibitzers*, however, will offer good advice. Kibitzers who do not point out missed opportunities are not doing their jobs. Kibitzers are quite capable of being completely impartial, at least insofar as they can be equally annoying to everyone. The obstacle for opponents is the hardest to overcome: the adversarial element in DAM argumentation. In zero-sum contests, opponents cannot reasonably be expected to help out their adversaries. Therefore, to do so is above and beyond the call of any of the imperatives deriving from one's role as an opponent – or any of the ancillary roles one assumes along the way in pursuing the opponent's primary goals. And yet, thinking back to the noble chess player, there is certainly something praiseworthy in helping out one's opponents. Johnson (2007) distinguishes "dialectical excellence" from the simple "dialectical adequacy" that comes with fulfilling one's duties; Finocchiaro (2013, p. 175) glosses this as a distinction between "dialectical virtues" and "dialectical obligations." What they are getting at is the idea of an action that is very good to do but not something that we are expected or required to do. Actions that have value independent of any imperatives are, in word, *supererogatory*.

7. *Conclusion: virtues and values in argumentation*

The concept of supererogation poses severe theoretical challenges for argumentation theory, so despite its apparent attractiveness and applicability here, it should resisted. In ethics, the concept applies to actions that are valuable but not obligatory. It implies that there are actions that are "*good enough*" to satisfy the demands of morality even though there are better actions available. Thus, although the only actions we are under any obligation to perform are good actions, the converse fails: there are good actions we are not obligated to perform. We have to detach the ethical concepts of *good actions* from actions we *ought to do.* What we end up with is two axes for moral evaluation: one scale for those good things which *ought to be*, and another for those whose goodness does not have consequences for mandated action.

The same consequences appear in when it comes to evaluating arguments. In order to make sense of the value of such positive constructive criticism as volunteering better lines of reasoning, we would need to acknowledge two different measures. Some virtues of arguers make them better arguers, but other virtues contribute to the *quality* of the argument. And it would seem that there

could be a tension between the two sets of virtues. The virtues of the noble chess player leading to his supererogatory actions may well result in better games of chess, but they do so *at the expense* of his chess prowess. Wouldn't the same situation be entirely possible in arguments?

The answer is, yes, of course, but only if one is stuck within the DAM account of argumentation that identifies good arguers with winning arguers and good arguments with winning arguments. But those are linear, impoverished concepts. Their focus is too narrowly on the product, "arguments-1" in the terminology of O'Keefe (1977). They miss the larger picture. The DAM account cannot make any sense of arguers who walk away from an argument having had their positions changed, either by winning or losing or listening and learning, and declaring it a good argument on that account.

In the case of the noble chess player, it is not easy to reconcile the qualities of character – the *virtues* – behind his supererogatory acts and the skills that make him a good chess player because the measure of final appeal in evaluating skill at chess is success at chess, and the final measure of evaluating success at chess is winning chess games. The situation is not the same when it comes to argumentation. We can still say that the measure of final appeal in evaluating skill at argumentation is success in arguments, but we do not have to acquiesce to the DAM idea that the final measure of evaluating success at arguing is winning arguments. That is something worth an argument.

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# ISSA Proceedings 2014 – A Poem Without Words: Visual Argumentation And The Photography Collections Of The Black Panther Party

*Abstract:* The 40th anniversary of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense's founding in 2006 brought a renewed interest in an important organization within the Civil Rights Movement. Since the anniversary, two new collections of photography, by Howard Bingham and Stephen Shames, have been published that create discontinuities in the dominant historical narrative surrounding the organization. This essay draws on Cara Finnegan's work on visual rhetoric to advance our understanding of the transformative power of the image.

*Keywords:* argumentation, Bingham, Black Panther Party, image, photography, Shames, visual rhetoric.

1. *Introduction*

Non-dominant narratives often clash with conventional traditions and interpretations. Take, for example, the civil rights and counterculture movements of the 1960s and 1970s. These movements were comprised of smaller groups, charismatic leaders, and single events that helped to define their broader contributions. While a dominant historical narrative developed in these cases, new artifacts have been recently published that reveal new wrinkles in the movement's history. When new artifacts create non-dominant narratives that challenge previous assumptions, audiences are afforded the opportunity to reevaluate accepted historical narratives and frames. This essay argues that new, contradictory artifacts invite audiences to reconsider dominant historical narratives and reconfigure these narratives to reflect a deeper understanding of a unique and important moment in history.

2. *Artifacts and framework*

To illustrate the dynamic involved here, this essay carefully explores new artifacts that challenge traditional interpretations of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP). Considered highly controversial, the BPP changed the direction of the black power movement within the United States during its existence from 1966-1982 (Jones, 2006). Recently, two previously unpublished collections of photographs, Howard L. Bingham's *Black Panthers 1968* (Bingham, 2009) and *The Black Panthers* (Shames, 2006), have emerged after the 40th anniversary of the organization's founding by students Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. These artifacts provide new insight and problematize the existing BPP narrative.

It is important to note that historical narratives are multilayered with several overlapping and sometimes contradictory meanings. Additionally, access to primary historical sources is limited. Young audiences intrigued by the tumultuous rhetoric of civil rights and counterculture can only look to books, recordings, and other secondary sources to understand these unique and compelling rhetorical situations. In other words, their experience with this history is mediated. Inevitably, the introduction of new artifacts provides audiences with the opportunity to reevaluate the inherited historical narrative.

3. *Literature review*

Many scholars have investigated different aspects of the Black Panther Party using rhetorical analysis. Primary investigation into the BPP has been through three contexts: individuals, the group as a whole, and media representation. Scholars have focused on individual BPP leaders to study their rhetorical techniques and implications. Recent works have focused on the rhetoric of Huey Newton, the more radical of the co-founders (Avril, 2012; Johnson, 2004). Avril (2012) analyzes Huey Newton's 1973 autobiography *Revolutionary Suicide* for the theme of black masculinity utilizing three concepts, authenticity, performance, and experience, to gain better understanding of how Newton's rhetoric influenced the BPP's rhetoric. Avril pays particular attention to how Newton's use of black masculinity is reflected in his opinions of motherhood and struggle, and she compares Newton's rhetoric to that of female panthers Angela Davis and Elaine Brown (p. 13). Avril also focuses on Newton's word choice to separate the "working class" from the "middle class" (p. 17-19).

Johnson (2004) focuses on Newton's 1970 address to the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention. She applies the jeremaidic tradition to the speech and

concludes that the speech should be understood as an Afro-American jeremiad (Johnson, 2004, p. 17-18). Newton's address debuts a philosophy that will be later called "revolutionary intercommunalism," or the belief that communities should orient themselves in a communal stance as opposed to an individual stance, and that this stance must be in opposition to current power structures (p. 19). This philosophy is linked into a core discussion of American hypocrisy as well as how intercommunalism must be revolutionary as a result (p. 22-23). Both Avril and Johnson use analysis of an individual's rhetoric to speak about the entire organization.

Next, scholars use rhetorical analysis to look at the organization as a single entity (Bloom and Martin, 2013; Gatchet & Cloud, 2012; Ogbar, 2004; Rhodes, 2007; Spencer, 2005). Bloom and Martin's (2013) book *Black Against Empire* provides a comprehensive history of the founding of the BPP and its first few years as an organization. The book focuses on the human relationships formed between the different leaders of the party, as well as how individual leaders influenced chapter members. In contrast, Ogbar's (2004) book *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* takes a systems approach to the early rise of the BPP. Ogbar (2004) chooses to focus on the leadership as a single unit whose rhetoric influenced the general population. The book focuses on rhetorical positions taken by the larger organization, specifically, examining how those rhetorical positions affected three different levels: community members, the government, and larger society.

Rhodes' (2007) book *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of the Black Power Icon* provides context into how the Panthers became media subjects in the eyes of the national and international community. The book examines how the Panthers utilized their newfound fame to their benefit by primarily focusing on the "Free Huey" campaign (Rhodes, 2007, p. 116-144). This fame helped to influence Oakland's political landscape. Spencer (2005) makes special note of the importance of the Free Breakfast Program on the local community and how Oakland politics since have had to utilize social welfare platforms to become elected. She notes that, "Two of the Panthers most important and perhaps most overlooked contributions to the Black Freedom movement were their attempts to nurture oppressed people's political consciousness and revolutionize their daily personal and political praxis" (Spencer, 2005, p. 313-314). The effectiveness of these actions has been emulated to this day in California.

Gatchet and Cloud's (2012) essay acts as a bridge between understanding the group as a whole and understanding the media's depiction of the Black Panthers. They use an examination of multiple leaders in the BPP to outline two distinct rhetorical devices. First, they explained BBP identity creation around the concept of self-defense (Gatchet and Cloud, 2012, p. 2-6). The Black Panther Party utilizes the biblical story of David and Goliath to depict the oppressed members of the black community as David. David is both oppressed, and at the same time armed, ready, and willing to defend himself for the greater good of the community. In addition, their analysis includes the rhetorical paradox between oppression and militancy (p. 6-10). This article shifts its focus into media framing by analyzing how these two creations are represented in two major news publications (p.10-14). Gatchet and Cloud claim that the media skewed the role of the David identity to delegitimize the Panthers.

Finally, scholars use rhetorical analysis to examine media framing of the BPP and its actions (Fraley & Lester-Roushanzamir, 2004; Davenport, 2010; Lule, 1993; Lumsden, 2009). The most interdisciplinary of the three categories, the artifacts are analyzed with a critical-cultural lens to dissect how the media portrayed single aspects of the Party such as the death of a leader (Fraley & Lester-Roushanzamir, 2004; Lule, 1993) and the role of media repression to undermine the BPP (Davenport, 2010). Most noteworthy, Lumsden's (2009) rhetorical criticism analyzes articles from the *Black Panther,* the BPP's primary publication that reached thousands of readers. Lumsden focuses on portrayals of black womanhood within the publication. By focusing on womanhood, Lumsden provides a different perspective into an organization that is viewed as hyper-masculine. She writes that the *Black Panther* portrayed woman as both militarily strong and "elaborated on their expectations of sexual equality" (p. 906). Strong women helped to create a stronger community, a key emphasis of the BPP.

The current literature on the Black Panthers neglects new artifacts recently added to the historical narrative, and undervalues normative elements of visual rhetoric. Lumsden's article provides a limited examination of photographs and cartoons that appear in the *Black Panther* newspaper, but examine them more as vehicles of propaganda.

4. *Critical method*

This essay seeks to provide an analysis of photographic collections, utilizing visual rhetorical analysis, that reveal different viewpoints yielding the best investigation

for a contemporary audience. Visual rhetorical analysis is defined as "a mode of inquiry, defined as a critical and theoretical orientation that makes issues of visuality relevant to rhetorical theory" (Finnegan, 2004a, p. 198). Finnegan (2004a) contends that visual rhetorical analysis is best used when trying to understand photography as rhetoric. Visual rhetoric forces the rhetor "to explore understandings of visual culture in light of the questions of rhetorical theory, and at the same time encourage us to (re)consider aspects of rhetorical theory in light of the persistent problem of image" (Finnegan, 2004a, p. 198). The goal of this analysis is to more vigorously integrate images in the rhetorical history as central aspects of the narrative instead of supplementary additions.

Scholars have presented many approaches to visual rhetoric (Finnegan, 2004a; Foss, 2005; Hart and Daughton, 2004; Moriarty, 2005), which combine to create a full-bodied analysis. Moriarty (2005) discusses the threefold nature of the sign, the interpretant, and the object. This adds an additional dimension to photographs by including the image, the caption, and other written text surrounding the image as one object for rhetorical analysis. This enhances the data gathering process. Hart and Daughton's (2004) inquiry into "ideological force" (p. 189) and "significant tensions" (p.192) push the critic to create cohesive narratives throughout the criticism, linking images together to establish a holistic narrative. Foss (2005) contends that there are three ways for a rhetorical perspective to be applied to an image (p. 145-147). First, the critic needs to analyze the nature of the image. Second, the critic should analyze the function of the image. Third, the critic must evaluate the normative implications of image. This triangulation allows the critic to cover all fundamental aspects of visual rhetorical analysis.

Finnegan focuses on how to conduct visual rhetorical criticism of photography. She outlines three "moments in the life of the image" that must be accounted for when discussing the rhetoric of photography (Finnegan, 2004a, p. 199). First, production accounts for how the image came to exist (p. 200). Second, reproduction accounts for the current representation of the image to the audience (p. 204). Third, circulation accounts for how the narrative established by the photography fits into the overall historical discourse (p. 208). All three moments in time pose unique questions regarding the photographic artifact. Taken together, they provide the frame for examining the selected photography collections.

4.1 *Production*

The first moment in the life of the image is production, the time leading up to its current positioning in the status quo. Essentially, production asks the critic to assess what brought these photographs into existence. This inquiry into the past informs the critic of the history of an image and provides insight into possible discontinuities within historical narrative. Furthermore, since these specific collections were taken decades before publication, it is important to understand what brought these bound collections into production. In short, understanding the past of the artifacts will help the critic understand the present.

The American 1960s was a time of great political upheaval and civil unrest. The death of a great black power figure Malcolm X in 1965 proved to be a catalyst for change. Inspired by his passing, two college students, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, decided to create a new organization rooted in the ideals Malcolm X championed. In 1966 Newton and Seale founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense to create a change for the repressed African American minority in the United States (Bloom & Martin, 2013). The newly created BPP expressed the opinion, mainly driven by the rhetoric of Newton (Avril, 2012), that the loss of this great orator left a void in the struggle for African American equality. Malcolm X's extremist rhetoric acted to provide greater momentum for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s rhetorical position of nonviolent resistance (Johnson, 2004). Specifically, Malcolm X championed self-defense among black communities that the BPP felt was non-existent in Oakland at the time of his death. As such, the BPP was created to fill this void.

Violent crime in minority communities was on the rise, and an increase in police brutality further fueled violence in the community (Gatchet and Cloud, 2012). The original purpose of the BPP was to act as a citizen police force within African American communities. As opposed to vigilantes, the BPP would patrol neighborhoods and prevent crime through armed presence. Shortly after their inception, the BPP evolved their mission to follow the police to make sure that they were following proper protocol and not discriminating against blacks (Lumsden, 2009). Lumsden also adds that the BPP did not simply act as a paramilitary force, they set up classes to instruct the community in proper gun safety and teach about how the government violated personal constitutional protections.

The Black Panthers gained national media recognition on May 2nd, 1967, when

they staged a public demonstration at the California State Assembly to protest a pending act that would severely restrict a citizen's rights to bear arms in public (Gatchet & Cloud, 2012). In a speech delivered by Bobby Seale on that day, the BPP outlined its ten point program that called for the end to police brutality, as well as the release of all black prisoners who were convicted by all-white juries (Davenport, 2010). Many aspects of the BPP attracted the American people to become fascinated with the Panthers. Visually, the Panther's unique uniform of leather jacket, a black beret, dark jeans, and black army boots created a notable strong, unified presence (Shames, 2006). Rhetorically, the BPP used extremist rhetoric to denounce a government's established institution of justice enforcement as unjust and corrupt.

Three years after the beginning of national media attention the BPP began a shift in rhetorical focus. After serving a two-years for the fatal shooting of John Frey, Huey Newton was released from federal prison in 1970. Upon his release, Newton started to develop the BPP into a political organization (Heath, 1976). First, the Panthers started to seek political office. Second, the BPP undertook a vast initiative to start free breakfast programs across the nation for school age children. At its peak in the early 1970s, Panther breakfast programs fed upwards of 250,000 children across the country daily (Theoharis & Woodard, 2005).

The intense and mostly critical media attention devoted to the Black Panther Party attracted in two different photographers to document the organization in action. Gilbert Moore explains how he came to work on the assignment of the Black Panthers with the budding photographer Howard Bingham (Moore, 2009). Since Moore was only one of two black writers for LIFE Magazine, and the only one not on assignment at the time, he was given the task of teaming up with photographer Howard Bingham to follow the BPP during the year of 1968 (p. 66). Bingham was relentless in his pursuit of the craft, taking hundreds of pictures during the few months of the duo's stay with the BPP. With full funding, the duo followed top leaders of the Black Panthers. Since the magazine contacted the BPP to publish its story, the Panthers regulated the access granted to Moore and Bingham. After the assignment was complete, the two left California and returned to their New York headquarters. Ultimately, LIFE Magazine did not publish the story both journalists spent countless hours creating without providing concrete reasoning for its decision.

Stephen Shames took a different path in his photography. In the foreword,

Shames (2006) states that his quest to photograph the Black Panthers rose organically out of his interest in the organization when he started taking personal pictures in 1968. When a major publishing company offered Shames the prospect of a book contract, Shames decided that he would journey cross-country, from California to New York, taking pictures of the BPP in major chapters over the course of 1970. Unlike Bingham who primarily focused in California, Shames took photographs of chapters in Oakland, Los Angeles, Chicago, Toledo, Philadelphia, and Boston (Shames, 2006, p. 8). Shames' free-flowing agenda and unofficial Panther membership allowed the photographer to gain access to very intimate shots. Further, since Shames began his road trip in 1970, he had the opportunity to photograph Huey Newton after his release from prison. During his travels, he formed personal relationships with many members of the Panther leadership, including Newton, Bobby Seale, and David Hilliard. Eventually, upon reaching New York City, Shames would discover that the book deal had been a ruse, and the majority of his photos would go unpublished for decades.

The 40th anniversary of the Party's founding in 2006 generated renewed interest in a recorded history of the organization. Shames' close relationships with individual Panthers helped to privately fund the publication of a collection, with the majority of the donations coming from former members including even the book's foreword by Bobby Seale (Shames, 2006). In contrast, Bingham's career blossomed after his stint capturing the Panthers on film. Bingham is most famous for his photographs or, and for co-authoring Muhammad Ali's autobiography (Bingham, 1993). Finally, in 2009, private collectors helped to fund a book of Bingham's BPP photographs (Bingham, 2009).

Both Bingham and Shames were instructed from an outside publishing source to take photographs, but ultimately, the initial promises of publication did not come to fruition. Both collections sat relatively dormant, hidden from public eye for forty years. Bingham's publication is used to display the photographer's artistic merit to the public. Shames' publication is directed from the inner community to share photographs with the public. In both cases, the intended audience is the current generation who may not be familiar with all three parties (Bingham, Shames, and the BPP). Production offers understandings of how Bingham and Shames came to create their photography collections.

### 4.2 *Reproduction*

The contemporary critic uses the history of an artifact to understand the artifact's

present. Reproduction focuses on what the artifact is "made to do in the contexts in which we discover them" (Finnegan, 2004a, p. 204). Analysis of this time in the life of the artifact focuses on the ways that the arrangement of the image, text, and caption work to create shared meaning in each photography collection. In addition, it is important to note commonalities and differences among themes within each collection. All aspects of each work must be understood including, but not limited to, introductions, forewords, photograph and caption placement, and articles.

Both collections are relatively equal, in terms of physical size and quantity of the photographs. Each book begins with a foreword from the author explaining how they came about gaining their respective assignments to take photos and how they went about those assignments. Also, both books have additional forewords from close friends commenting on the collection. Bingham's forward, from close friend Bernard Kinsey, focuses on the quality of the photographs (Bingham, 2009, p. 16). It is worth noting that Shames' foreword is from BPP co-founder Bobby Seale, which adds legitimacy to the collection (Shames, 2006, p, 11-13). Parallel to the foreword, each book has an afterword that is themed around the photographer or the content respectively. Furthermore, the most direct point of comparison is the representation of the ten-point plan in each book. Each book has opted to include a version of the BPP's plan. Bingham chose to include the shortened version of the ten-point plan distributed as a pamphlet (Bingham, 2009, p. 35). Shames includes additional text delivered by Bobby Seale at the California General Assembly (Shames, 2006, p. 14-15). Here, Shames uses a more detailed text to create stronger connections between the audience and the Panthers. By doing so, Shames' presentation of the ten-point plan becomes is unique from the rest of the collection insofar as it is the one time where Shames book contains more text than Bingham's book.

The primary difference between the collections is the captions. This difference is twofold in placement and content. Shames' book (2006) utilizes full-page pictures and opts to place all the captions at the end, away from their respective photographs (Shames, 2006, p. 146-150). These captions range anywhere from one to four sentences and provide details explaining any important individuals. Sometimes these captions provide quick information; just enough to understand what is going on in the photograph such as "Huey P. Newton poses with three women at a rally in DeFremery Park. Oakland, 1971" (p. 148). Other captions

explain additional details not provided in the picture such as “Bobby Seale’s campaign car during his run for mayor of Oakland. The election was held on April 17, 1973. Seale lost. Oakland, 1973” (p. 150). By placing the captions at the end, Shames lets his audience evaluate the photographs on their own merit with little formal intervention in the image. In other words, he lets the picture do the talking. Once the audience accesses the image, the extra information from the removed caption focuses the message on a context of time, where the image represents more than just a single moment, but is part of a story.

Bingham’s book (2009) takes an opposite approach to captions. Instead of saving the captions to the end, guest writers explain a series of pictures using lengthy paragraphs. Each short entry covers a series of three to ten photographs. An example of this is the section titled *Black Power Rally* (Bingham, 2009, p. 22-34) which includes text on page 23, explaining the seven pictures on the surrounding pages. These entries are very detailed and include discussion regarding photographic technique, which Shames did not. Each picture is centered on the page and includes a caption at the bottom. These captions are very short, never more than a sentence, and typically include just names and locations and little else.

Picture order is dissimilar between the two collections. Shames provides neither text nor content order to his photos. The audience drifts from photo to photo with no order or caption to intervene with the experience of discovery and analysis. Contrary to this, the organizational pattern of Bingham is driven by thematic sections centered either on a person, such as Kathleen Cleaver (Bingham, 2009, p. 38-43), or a location, such as De Fremery Park (p. 106-125). Primarily, this organizational pattern acts as Bingham’s introduction to each person and location, almost as if each section is a different roll of film. This allows Bingham to drive conceptual stories through each miniseries of photographs. These stories outline the humanity of the individual leaders within the BPP.

Both photo collections share some similar tensions. Each book features very few pictures of police officers, and in instances where they do appear, they are never portrayed in a flattering manner. Bingham’s fourth picture (Bingham, 2009, p. 8-9) displays officers holding wooden batons as if they are standing guard, protecting an unseen group of people possibly from the Panthers. The photograph is given no caption. Police officers are portrayed as the enemy of both the Panthers and public in general.

As a response to police brutality, the BPP adopted the ideograph of the raised fist to display solidarity and power within the black community. The Panther fist is commonly held at rallies, but rarely outside of public spaces. This helps to establish that the leadership held celebrity lives; lives where they represent a persona and personal times where they only have to be themselves, such as in their homes. Shames captures Bobby Seale and his wife holding their son in a loving embrace (Shames, 2006, p. 130-131) showing his audience that important party members still found time to focus on their families.

Moreover, it is important to note that no photographs include a Panther holding a gun. There are two possible explanations for this decision by both artists. This could have been an intentional decision to exclude the hyper masculine from their photographs to show a more humanistic BPP. On the other hand, this could have been a decision passed down from the publisher. Significantly, this directly contradicts the dominant historical narrative of the Black Panthers as gun toting thugs.

The photographs significantly differ in their portrayal of romantic relationships. Bingham shares photographs of Eldridge and Kathleen Cleaver multiple times throughout his book. His photos of the duo are very business-oriented, as if they devoted their entire lives to the cause of the Panthers. In a photograph depicting Kathleen reading while Eldridge stands behind her. There appears to be little romantic attachment. The photograph focuses on the content of the reading materials instead of the two as a romantic partnership.

In contrast, Shames photographs portray strong work/life balance and deep romantic relationships within the BPP. Two photographs showcase David Hilliard (one of the Panther's prominent members and Chief of Staff at the time of the photograph) with his wife, Pat. The photograph on the left page shows David working on layout selection for *The Black Panther magazine* in the Oakland BPP office. David is in deeply concentrated, focused on his work, portraying the intense level of commitment to the organization often represented in the media. This photograph is juxtaposed by the photograph on the right capturing David and his wife engaging in a moment of intimacy. Pat sits on David's lap, as the couple closes their eyes, about to kiss. It is important that these photographs are placed next to each other, representing work/life balance.

Further, the two collections differ regarding their portrayal of masculinity within

the organization. One photograph from Bingham's work is captioned "Bobby Seale leading Black Panther drills Oakland, CA" (see Appendix A). The picture captures Seale dressed in full Panther uniform as he instructs male members, also in full uniform. The Panthers stand in line at military attention listening to Seale lead drills. The photograph uses linear directionality to place the focus on the importance of Seale's body language. Seale's facial expression illustrates power and his hand gesture, pointing at the ground, shows the importance of the Panther's paramilitaristic, masculine organization centered on strong, African American men. Bingham sparsely features women in his photographs and chooses not to include children as a focal point. An opposing understanding of the BPP and masculinity is presented in Shames' work. Outside St. Augustine's Church in Oakland, Shames captures two Panthers standing guard. While the male Panther on the left holds no organizational significance, the female Panther on the right represents an important aspect of the organization. Claudia Grayson, better known as Sister Sheeba within the BPP, was a strong member, known for her role of enforcement. Here, Sister Sheeba represents equality of women within the BPP, as she shares her role equally with her male counterpart. Sister Sheeba becomes just as important, if not more important, for the organization and is perhaps the main focal point of the photograph.

Also, Shames captures the importance that children in the movement. One photograph displays children standing at attention in a classroom. Similar to Bingham's photograph of Bobby Seale leading drills with male adults, the classroom scene shows young children dressed in uniform ready to receive instruction. There are differences in height, age, and sex of the children. The photograph illuminates the integral nature of childhood education within the greater movement, as the BPP stressed that children are the future of the nation. Many of Shames' photographs feature children including one selection depicting young girls holding protest signs in public (Shames, 2006, p. 36). This nurturing aspect of the Panthers directly contradicts the predominant narrative of the Party as an organization predominately comprised of adult males. These collections challenge typical media representations of the Panthers as disorganized and menacing radicals from impoverished Oakland.

### 4.3 *Circulation*

It is important to understand the similarities and differences in reproduction to better understand how these narratives fit into the overall historical discourse of

the Black Panther Party. Circulation asks the critic to analyze the significance that the production and reproduction of the images have to the broader historical narrative. Bingham uses his collection to focus on the roles carried out by the Panther leadership, highlighting individuals and the struggles they encounter in their lives. He does this by using textual narrative and picture sequencing to drive his book in a very intentional direction. An audience member would view this collection to mean that the BPP was an organization driven by sophisticated individuals who stood with strong convictions and pushed a very public agenda. Alternatively, Shames uses his collection to convey a sense of community and happiness within the BPP. Shames' lack of organizational pattern, multiple photographs of diverse groups, and decision to save captions to the end of the collection immerse his audience in the chaos of a social movement with its diverse struggles and relationships.

These narratives add new and sometimes contradictory perspectives to a preexisting narrative. By providing narratives that encompass both viewpoints of the outsider (Bingham) and the insider (Shames), the audience gains an understanding of the depth and complexity of the BPP. Today's younger audiences were not in Oakland during the time of the BPP, and so they must use these collections as new avenues to assess the dominant narrative regarding the BPP, one that typically demonizes the Black Panthers.

5. *Conclusion*

We live a world increasingly dominated by images. Rhetorical criticism and argumentation theory have been slow to adapt to this fact. Recently, however, "Visual rhetoric has become a minor theme in rhetorical studies" (Finnegan, 2004b, p. 234). This essay contributes to this growing body of scholarship, and pushes the parameters of more traditional, text based approaches to argumentation. In so doing, it is important to note that visual rhetoric "should not be conceived as a unique genre of rhetorical artifact ('rhetoric' than is 'visual'), but as a project of inquiry that considers the implications for rhetorical theory of sustained attention to visuality" (Finnegan, 2004b, p. 235).

In the case at hand, when audiences juxtapose the two recently released photography collections of the BPP, they realize that non-dominant narratives do not have to follow the same path. There is not one countervailing interpretation, or method of presentation that is "correct." The way these stories are told, through the primary medium of the image, invite multiple interpretations of this

important moment in history. While both collections challenge the dominant historical narrative on many fronts, they do so in remarkably unique ways, and with different vehicles, frames, and modalities in communicating their stories.

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# ISSA Proceedings 2014 – The Psychiatrization Of The Opponent

# In Polemical Context

*Abstract*: A variant of the ad hominem argument amounts to challenging the opponent's mental health. Semi-technical designations borrowed from psychiatric paradigms (such as autistic, paranoiac, hysterical) are thus appealed to in order to qualify the opponent. Based on three examples from polemical discussions on political issues, we investigate what kind of behaviour triggers such accusations, how they are justified, and how they are handled by the speaker to whom they are addressed.

*Keywords*: ad hominem argument, disqualifying strategies, mental pathologies.

1. *Introduction*

The present paper deals with the lexical dimension of some argumentative devices – more specifically, it focuses on the *ad hominem* use of terms like "paranoiac", "schizophrenic", "autistic", "hysterical", or "mythomaniac". All these terms are originally issued from esoteric bodies of knowledge pertaining to psychiatry. In France, they have been disseminated, beyond their technical use in expert fields, to ordinary discourses, in the political domain as well as in everyday conversations.

In their technical use, these terms designate specific mental pathologies. As such, they should not convey any negative judgment**[i]**. When used in ordinary interactions, they nevertheless often serve as pejorative devices aiming at disqualifying a person. Some linguistic arguments support this claim. French language offers specific discursive patterns which may change almost any item into an insult. Thus, in *"espèce de X"* and *"sale X"***[ii],** X has an offending dimension because of its insertion within such phrases, whatever its initial meaning. Even a neutral, descriptive word may work as an insult when obeying such a pattern. However, even if any word may be turned into an insult owing to such discursive patterns, the words that are intrinsically marked as pejorative are much more likely to be used that way.

If one uses a search engine like Google in order to investigate the frequency of phrases like "espèce de parano" or "sale autiste", it appears that they are quite common. Examples 1 and 2 illustrate such offending uses of these terms. In example 1, the administrator of a blog reacts to a participant accusing him of

committing censorship unduly by calling him “espèce de parano”:

(1)
*On se calme le Bauju, pas la peine de monter sur tes grands chevaux, il n’y a pas de censure […] Ton commentaire n’avait plus lieu d’être, espèce de parano, alors je l’ai scratché. Tu ne l’avais pas vu?***[iii]**

(Let’s calm down Bauju, there is no use getting on your high horse, there was no censorship […] Your commentary was pointless, you paranoid, so I erased it. Didn’t you see that? )

In example 2, a teenager expresses his hatred for one of his teacher, calling her autistic:

(2)
*Il etait une fois , dans ce qu’on ose appeler un lycee , une prof de sciences economiques et sociales […] qui etait bizare….cette chos.. heu , femme ( on va dire ca comme ca..) avait des petites manies : se mettre les doigts dans le nez , se les lecher , puis elle s’habille bizarement avec un petit bonnet bleu en laine […] ….pi lorsqu’elle parle , elle doit reformuler sa phrase au moins 10 fois avant d’en sortir le bon exemplaire : C EST UNE PUTAIN D AUTISTE DE MERDE !!! […] : SALE AUTISTE DE MES DEUX T’AS INTERET A ME METTRE 12 A MON DST SINON JE TE VOLE TON SAC A ROULETTE DE MERDE***[iv]**

(Once upon a time, in what they dare call a high school, an economics teacher […] who was bizarre… this thing- oups, woman (let’s call her that way) had little manias: put her finger into her nose, leak them, she gets dressed in a strange way with a small blue woolly hat […] and when she speaks she has to rephrase her claim at least ten times before getting a correct copy of it: she’s a fucking shitty autistic person! […] you autistic you, you’d better give me 12 for my exam otherwise I will steal your rolling bag.)

In both cases, the use of the qualifications “paranoid” or “autistic” is supported by the mention of behaviours (hastily interpreting an action as censorship, wearing a blue woolly hat) presented as characteristic of the corresponding pathologies. In these sequences “paranoid” and “autistic” obey an offending objective. However, in what follows, we will examine examples where these terms are not to be analysed as mere insults but as having an argumentative dimension, and more specifically, as part of an ad hominem argument. We will first indicate what we

mean by “ad hominem argument”, and justify our categorizing the examples we will account for as pertaining to this argument scheme. We then will identify the specific argumentative functions that may be achieved by the adjectives “hysterical”, “paranoid” and “autistic” in polemical contexts. We will conclude on what such argumentative uses of terms labelling mental pathologies tell us about the perception of mental disease in our society.

## 2. *Ad hominem argument*

First and foremost, an *ad hominem* argument is… an argument. In the examples that we will analyse, calling the opponent “hysterical”, “paranoid” or “autistic” does not necessarily support any explicit conclusion. But even when no reasoning of the type:

*X* claims that *p*.
*X* is schizophrenic / autistic / hysterical
Hence, *p* should not be accepted.

is made explicit, we consider that the disqualification of the opponent that these adjectives achieve has an argumentative function because of contextual reasons.

The three examples we will examine pertain to political discourse. They appear within what Christian Plantin (2010) would call an “argumentative situation”. According to Plantin, an argumentative situation is governed by an argumentative question (“should the government implement Measure M?”, for instance) which may receive opposing answers, each of them being supported by arguments (“I’m for M because arg.1, arg.2…”), or (“I’m against M because arg.3, arg.4…”). In an argumentative situation, any statement should be understood as part of an answer to the argumentative question which structures the discussion, whether it is presented as such or not. The question, writes Plantin, should be seen as an interpretative magnet which polarizes all the contributions that fall into its attraction field (2010: 33; translation is ours). In this perspective, the three adjectives which appear in the examples we will focus on are to be interpreted as personal attacks aiming at disqualifying, beyond the person of the opponent, the thesis that he supports. Hence they embody abusive ad hominem arguments.

We consider the use of terms issued from psychiatry, like “hysterical”, “schizophrenic”, “autistic”, as a subtype of a more general type of ad hominem arguments aiming at presenting the opponent as belonging to a debased fraction

of humanity. Of course we do not assume that this fraction really is debased, but rather that the use of such qualifications as personal attacks suggests that for the arguer, in some way, it is. Other variants of this general scheme consist in some cases in designating the adversary as an animal**[v]**, as a female (when addressing a man**[vi]**), as or a child or a teenager (when addressing an adult**[vii]**).

Example 3 displays simultaneously some of these disqualifying strategies. It is drawn from a French political newsgroup, and it combines the psychiatric and the animalistic variants of the ad hominem disqualifying strategy:

(3)
*Ce forum est essentiellement un exutoire pour une poignée d'autistes qui y déversent leurs délires d'illuminés, leurs élucubrations psychotiques ou leurs éructations de primates***[viii]**.

(This newsgroup is mainly an outlet for a handful of autistic individuals who pour therein their cranks' deliriums, their psychotic pipe dreams or their primates' eructations.)

3. *Hysterical*
The first term originally issued from psychiatry we will examined in this paper is the adjective "hysterical". "Hysterical" is frequently used in polemical contexts in order to qualify a whole debate, the communicative behaviour of one participant in the discussion, or the discussant himself. In context, "hysterical" refers to heated exchanges, characterized by a highly emotional tone.

In the context of a political discussion, pointing to the emotional dimension of one's contribution amounts to disqualifying it as irrational and potentially biased.

Even if the originally Freudian meaning of "hysterical" seems to be somewhat remote from its present uses in political discussions, accusing the opponent of being hysterical still suggests that he has lost control over his own communicative behaviour. Hence the conditions for a rational discussion are not fulfilled, and the opponent's argument does not deserve any serious examination.

Furthermore, the accusation of loss of control is not the only vector of disqualification of the opponent. The adjective "hysterical" is deeply marked by the specific historical situations in which it was used, as the analysis of example 4 will show.

Example 4 is drawn from the French debate that preceded the adoption of the so-called "mariage pour tous" law, opening the marital institution to same-sex persons. During a particularly heated parliamentary session, Christian Jacob, who opposes the law, accuses Sergio Coronado, who supports it, of being hysterical**[ix]**:

(4)
*M. Christian Jacob. J'pense qu'on pourrait: profiter/ euh je le: dis à mes (.) mes collègues de la majorité/ qui pourraient profiter (.) agréablement de la: coupure du dîner/(.) pour reprendre/ (.) un peu leurs le leurs esprits/ (..)* [protestations dans l'Assemblée*] 'ttendez\ (.) les les les attaques (..) qui ont été les vôtres/ vous savez/ (.) on peut avoir de vrais di- différences/ (.) et: et d'ailleurs j'ai apprécié le ton/ avec lequel Patrick Bloche (.) s'est exprimé tout à l'heure/ (.) nous sommes en désaccord/ (.) Total\ XX (.) MAIS/ (.) il l'a fait avec euh beaucoup de dignité/ avec des CONvictions qui sont les siennes/ (.) et qu'on accepte que l'on puisse s'exprimer d'la même façon/ (.) sans êt' soumis (.) à des invectives voire à de l'HYStérie/ (.) à de l'HYStérie/ (.) de par certains collègues/ je pense à vous [montrant SC de la main] (.) mon cher collè/gue (.) mais si/ (.) ces propos (.) vous n'apportez (.) RIEN au débat/ (.) vous n'avez pas/ d'argument/ (.) vous z'hurlez/ vous êtes dans l'hystérie totale/ (.) et je pen/se qu'il faut profiter du moment du déjeuner/ pour se calmer\ (.) je- du dîner\ (.)* [puis s'adresse à Mme la Ministre]

(I think we could take advantage – I'm addressing my colleagues in the majority who could pleasantly take advantage of the dinner break to come to their senses [protests in the Assembly]. Wait, you have been the ones who made these attacks, you know, people may have important differences of opinion, and by the way I appreciated the way Patrick Bloche expressed his position a few minutes ago, we deeply disagree but he expressed his convictions with much dignity, and people should accept that we express ourselves in the same way, without suffering abuses or even hysteria, hysteria from some colleagues, I'm thinking of you [pointing to Sergio Coronado] my dear colleague, yes yes, these words, you make no valuable contribution to the discussion, you have no argument, you're just yelling, you're totally hysterical, and I think one should take advantage of the dinner break to calm down. )

Nothing, in Sergio Coronado's offending turn, accounts for such an attack, either in what is said, or in the tone in which it is said: it is by no way more emotional or heated than the contributions of the other participants.

Regardless of its factual adequacy, Christian Jacob's attack may be understood, as suggested before, as a strategy aiming at shifting the discussion, from the criticism of the opponent's arguments, to its very person. Such a strategy may prove useful when no simple refutation is available. It may also be seen as obeying other logics, in connection with the history of the usage of the terms "hysteria" and "hysterical" in various contexts in France. It is what is suggested by Sergio Coronado, who reacts to Jacob's charge with hysteria as follows:

(5)

*Sergio Coronado : en fin d'séance tout à l'heure/ (-) euh le président euh Jacob/ m'a ::: (.) se dirigeant vers moi/ m'a qualifié/ d'hystérique\ […] mais j'me suis interrogé\ pourquoi m'a-t-il qualifié d'hystérique puisque : (.) j'fais un peu d'histoi/re (.) et j'me suis rapp'lé/ en effet/ que (.) le mot hystéri/que servait à qualifier/ euh (.) notamment en période de trou/ble pour les dénigrer/ (.) euh par exemple : les suffragettes/ (..) par celles et ceux qui étaient opposés euh (.) au droit d'vote des femmes/ (.) ça a servi à qualifier euh Simone de Beauvoir/ au moment d'la publication du deuxième sexe/ (..) ou enco/re les trois cent quarante troissalo/pes (.) lors euh de la publication du manifes/te pour le droit à l'avortement\ (..) j'me suis dit pourquoi être qualifié par ce terme/ (.) alors que je n'suis NI une suffragette/ ni Simone de Beauvoir/ (.) ni encore/ une fem/me demandant le droit/ à l'avortement\ (.) alors je (.) je suis rev'nu/ euh (.) euh au dix-neuvième siè/cle […] notamment aux travaux clini/ques (.) dans la foulée d'Charcot/ et je me suis rapp'lé en effet (.) et je pense que (.) c'est à ça que faisait référence sans doute le président Jacob/ (.) qu'à l'époque/ (.) à l'épo/que le mot d'hystérique servait (.) servait évidemment de (.) à qualifier TOUtes les femmes/ (.) toutes les femmes sont potentiellement hystéri/ques vous l'savez (.) cher collè/gue (.) hein/ (.) et une catégorie très particulière d'hommes\ (..) […] (.) les invertis\ (..) les invertis\ (..) alors (.) cher/ président Jacob\ (.) vous auriez pu êt' plus franc/ (.) et faire co :mme dans les cours d'éco/le me traiter d'pé/dé\ (..) voilà/ (.) cette inju/re (.) qui fait tant de mal notamment aux jeunes qui découvrent leur sexualité/ (.) je tiens à vous rassurer\ (.) cher président Jacob (.) j'assu/me (.) j'en suis fier/ (.) et je n'ai pas (.) du tout (.) envie d'raser les murs/ (.) malgré/ (.) vos/ (.) injures\ (..) j'aimerais simplement dire (.) au président Jacob/ (.) que ce type d'invectives (.) au sein d'cette assemblée/ (.) n'honore (.) ni vot' grou/pe (.) ni les travaux (.) aujourd'hui (.) de l'Assemblée Nationale/ (.) j'ai hon/te (.) pour ceux/ (.) qui profèrent ce ty/pe (.) de propos (.) c'est vrai que l'heure est un peu tardi/ve et j'ai l'impression/ (.) que vos nerfs commencent à lâcher\ (.) merci*

(Sergio Coronado : earlier at the end of the session, President Jacob, addressing me, called me hysterical. […] I wondered, "why did he call me hysterical?", and as I am fond of history, I remembered that the word "hysterical" was used to disqualify people in troubled circumstances, for instance it was used to denigrate suffragettes by those who opposed women's right to vote; it was used to denigrate Simone de Beauvoir as she published Le deuxième sexe; or it was used to denigrate the three hundred and forty three bitches when they published the manifesto for the right to abortion. And I wonder, why did Jacob call me hysterical, since I am neither a suffragette, nor Simone de Beauvoir or a woman claiming the right to abortion. So I went back to nineteenth century […] and I remembered the clinical works in the tradition of Charcot, and in fact I remembered – and I think that's what Jacob was referring to – that at that time, the word "hysterical" was addressed to all women – as you know, all women are potentially hysterical, you know that, dear colleague – and "hysterical" was also applied to a certain category of men, namely, homosexuals; yes, homosexuals. So, dear President Jacob, you could have been more frank, and, as children do in the schoolyard, you could have called me a fag. Here it comes, this insult that causes so much pain to young people who discover their sexual orientation. I want to reassure you, dear President Jacob, I assume my sexual orientation, I am proud of it, and I don't feel like hugging the walls despite your insults. I just want to tell President Jacob that such invectives, within this Assembly, do not honor either your group, or the work that the National Assembly has been doing today. I feel ashamed for those who utter such words. True, it is late, and I feel you're losing your nerves.)

Puzzled by the adjective "hysterical", the use of which he deems unfounded, Coronado connects it with former uses: it was used against the "suffragettes", that is, the feminine supporters of women's right to vote, to disqualify them; it was used against Simone de Beauvoir as she published her book *Le deuxième sexe*, which was considered a feminist manifesto; it was used against the feminine activists who claimed the right to abortion. Sergio Coronado finally mentions that the diagnosis of hysteria was made for a specific category of male individuals, namely, homosexuals. On that ground, he suggests that Jacob's accusation of hysteria amounts to calling him a fag: *"vous auriez pu êt' plus franc/ (.) et faire co:mme dans les cours d'éco/le me traiter d'pé/dé"*.

In the context of a discussion on a law that opens marriage to same-sex persons,

charging someone with homophobia is a way of bluntly disqualifying his contribution to the debate as irretrievably biased.

Example 5 is interesting in that it illustrates how the "hysterical" qualification, when applied to an opponent in a polemical discussion, may be a means of disqualifying his position as emotional and biased. It also shows how a specific context (here, the discussion of the law opening marriage to same-sex persons) may activate some semantic features associated to "hysterical" in what Sophie Moirand (2007) would call a collective discursive memory.

4. *Paranoid*

French "*paranoïaque*" (and its shorter version "*parano*"), or English "paranoid", is another term issued from psychiatry, and entering some ad hominem attacks.

Example 6 is part of an interview of Marine Le Pen, an extreme-right politician, by the left-wing journalist Pascale Clark on France-Inter radio station. At the end of the interview, by way of closing, Pascale Clark always broadcasts a musical piece chosen by her guest. Marine Le Pen chose a song by Laurent Voulzy, the lyrics of which were written by Alain Souchon, entitled "Jeanne". This song is about a contemporary man who claims his love for a medieval women named "Jeanne". The song does not explicitly refer to Jeanne d'Arc, but irresistibly evokes her. Whereas the interview should end with the song, Pascale Clark takes the floor and cites the lyrics of "Belle-Ile en mer", another song by Voulzy/Souchon, and specifically, a brief sequence which evokes Voulzy's feeling of rejection as a mixed-race child grown up in France**[x]**. Though Pascale Clark does not explicitly charge Marine Le Pen with racism, it clearly is the way the latter interprets the quotation by Pascale Clark of "Belle-Ile-en-mer"'s lyrics. She then strives to force the journalist into avowing what she intended by quoting this song. Pascale Clark resists, calling Marine Le Pen paranoid**[xi]**:

(6)

*MLP : ouais (.) non non mais attendez madame (.) moi/ (.) très objectiv'ment\ (.) euh euh que*
*votre: (.) la manière dont vous balancez vot' petite vanne à la fin/*
*PC : c'est pas une [va:/nne (.) je rappelle les paroles d'une belle chanson*
*MLP : [ça veut dire quoi\ ça veut dire que vous m'accusez (.) ben oui/ madame mais*
*qu'est-ce ça veut dire quoi quelque part vous m'accusez d'quoi*

*PC : mais de rien/*
*MLP: mais si/ si\ j'ai bien vu votre petit air pincé genre [j'suis contente de moi/ (.) j'ai balancé*
*PC : [mais arrêtez mais vous êtes parano/ mais*
*MLP : [une p'tite vanne*
*PC : [vous êtes parano/ le monde entier est contre vous:/ c'est juste les paroles que j'rappelle/*
*c'est tout/*

(MLP: yes, no but wait Madam, the way you hurl your little dig at me in the end
PC: that is no dig, I'm just evoking the lyrics of a beautiful song
MLP: what does it mean? It means that you are accusing me, yes Madam, but what does it
mean, you are accusing me of what?
PC: I'm not accusing you of anything.
MLP: oh yes you are, I saw your stiff face, meaning "I feel pleased with myself, I had a little dig at her"
PC: stop that, you paranoiac! You paranoid, the whole world is against you… (I'm just
evoking some lyrics, that's all)

Example 6 is typical of the use of the adjective "paranoid" as a disqualifying means. It enables Pascale Clark to suggest that Marine Le Pen is not grounded in suspecting that the quotation of "Belle-Ile-En-mer"'s lyrics was an indirect way of accusing her of being a racist. Beyond that, "parano" suggests that this faulty interpretation of Pascale Clark's intention by Marine Le Pen is due to a mental pathology ("you are parano"), which leads her into interpreting innocent words as personal attacks ("the whole world is against you").

The diagnosis of paranoia applied to the opponent gives clearance to the speaker of the personal attacks he may make: he does not have to answer for them while taking profit of their devastating potential.

However in this specific case, the strategy fails. If you want to rebut your opponent's accusation of your having committed a personal attack by suggesting that he is paranoiac, you should be able to propose an alternative credible interpretation for what you said. Here, no doubt that Pascale Clark's alternative interpretation of what she did (I'm just evoking the lyrics of a beautiful song) is a

poor one, and cannot support Marine Le Pen being charged with paranoia.

5. *Autistic*

The last case we will handle briefly here is the "autistic" adjective, and more specifically, its use to qualify the government. In such cases, "autistic" often works as a quasi-synonym for "deaf". Example 7 is from Thierry Lepaon, the General Secretary of a left-wing trade-union (the CGT). Lepaon criticizes Hollande's government for not defending the interests of the working classes**[xii]**.

(7)

*Les patrons ont pris l'offensive, ils ont l'oreille de ce gouvernement. Plus il cède aux patrons, moins les salariés sont audibles. Ce gouvernement est autiste de son oreille gauche, il entend bien à droite.*

(Bosses have taken the offensive, they caught the government's ear. The more the government lets them have what they ask, the less audible the workers get. This government is autistic from the left ear, it hears perfectly well from the right side. )

The same day when Lepaon made this statement, a commentator expressed a similar criticism of French government in similar terms on the blog of a French magazine**[xiii]**:

(8)

*Le gouvernement du Parti Schizofrène est devenu autiste de l'oreille gauche et n'écoute qu'avec celle de droite le Medef, le Cac 40, et les agences de notations Standard & Poor's et Cie…*

(The Schizophrenic Party Government became autistic in its left ear and listens only with its right ear to Medef [right-wing union], to the CAC 40 [Paris Stock Exchange], to rating agencies Standard & Poor's and Co…)

More generally, the adjective "autistic" is applied to any opponent that you fail to win over to your cause and who resists the arguments he's addressed. This strategy also appears in example 9 by Jean-Claude Gaudin, Marseille City's Mayor, who deems the government to be autistic because it does not satisfy his claimings on the reform of school timetables**[xiv]**:

(9)

*Le gouvernement est autiste. La Ville de Marseille a demandé un moratoire sur les rythmes scolaires. Il a été refusé. Elle a proposé un plan de développement du soutien scolaire. Il a été refusé.*

(The government is autistic. Marseille city asked for a moratorium on the reform of school timetables. Its demand was rejected. It proposed a plan for developing support classes. Its demand was rejected.)

Gaudin's declaration elicited reactions on Twitter pointing to the adjective "autistic", the pejorative use of which is considered inelegant in the following tweets:

(10)
*Tweet 1 : mère d'enfant autiste et entendre le mot autiste à tout va au gouvernement et ds les cours d'école: STOP!*
*Tweet 2 : autiste n'est peut être pas le mot le plus délicat ….*
*Tweet 3 : On pourrait dire… sourd, mais c'est aussi un handicap.*
*Tweet 4 : L'utilisation du handicap comme une injure. Classe.*

(Tweet 1: mother of an autistic child and hearing the word autistic all day long used by politicians and in schoolyards: STOP!
Tweet 2: perhaps autistic is not the most delicate word…
Tweet 3: You could say…deaf, but it's also a handicap.
Tweet 4: Using the handicap as an insult. Elegant.)

To sum up, in polemical contexts, integrating adjectives issued from psychiatry into ad hominem attacks may be shown to fulfil specific argumentative functions. Accusing the opponent of being hysterical is a way of disqualifying his position as emotionally biased, and enables one to dismiss a conflicting view without having to discuss it. Accusing the opponent of being paranoid enables one to make a personal attack without assuming the responsibility for such a disputable argumentative move, while taking profit of the devastating effect it may have. At last, calling the opponent autistic when he does not come to your point is a way of dismissing his resistance to your arguments as being a mere symptom of a mental pathology, which enables you not to acknowledge your argumentative failure.

Whereas such qualifications undoubtedly serve disqualifying strategies, they are somehow toned down by the fact that they do not claim that the opponent is motivated by malevolent intentions: if he is wrong, it's not his fault, it's because

he is mentally disabled, in one way or another.

6. *Conclusion*

Our present and preliminary study was concerned with only three words, and will be developed further. The use of mental disorder subtypes outside the psychiatric field will be examined from the medical point of view, to both interrogate the reasons and the meanings of using such specific vocabulary, not only to categorize but actually to undermine the opponent's discourse. We will address the reasons of using psychiatric words, in preference to words in relationship with physical impairments, such as "he or she must be deaf not to understand" or "is he or she blind not to see the evidence?" When a medical term is used outside its obvious diagnosis field, one can question why this word is used and not another one (given that hundred mental disorders are now recognized by academics) and what is conserved from the original definition and what comes from the common sense or from the lay person's understanding of a specific mental disorder.

Our post-modern society is considered to be biologically and genetically-oriented. In parallel, one's mental health is often questioned and analyzed. For some authors, policy-makers lean heavily and wrongly upon psychiatry to define norms and pseudo-relevant behaviour (Gori and Del Vogo 2008). For others, emotions are being used for economical purposes by pharmaceutical firms (Lane 2009). Whatever the reasons, the number of mental disorders medically recognized has been steadily increasing over the years**[xv]**. Mental illness terms – outside the medical field – are not only applied to individuals but are also used to characterize concepts or theories: for example, it was said that economy was autistic[xvi] or that the French society was schizophrenic**[xvii]**.

Such uses outside the medical field are paradoxical, because of the many public campaigns aiming at de-stigmatizing persons suffering from mental disorders. For the past twenty years, most western countries, including France, have launched media campaigns to emphasize that people suffering from mental disorders are "normal" persons. To name a few of these de-stigmatization campaigns, the World Psychiatric Association has launched "Open the doors" about schizophrenia**[xviii]** worldwide; "Time to change" claims to be "England's biggest programme to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination"**[xix]**; in France, the FondaMental association aims at explaining mental illnesses to the lay person**[xx].** However, all these initiatives have not prevented the use of psychiatric terms to depreciate one's opponents. Therefore our study will be a key

for understanding how French society is mentally-oriented, specifically in political interactions.

**NOTES**

**i.** At least, not more than terms referring to non-mental pathologies, such as cancer, pharyngitis or diabetes: such words clearly point to physiological dysfunctions, but they do not convey any disqualifying assessment of the person who suffers these pathologies.

**ii.** English "you X you" or "you fucking / dirty / lousy X" may be considered as rough equivalents for "espèce de X" or "sale X".

**iii.** http://parapentesaintevictoire.blogspot.fr/2014/05/panneau-retour.html

**iv.** http://www.tromal.net/conte/view.php?urlHistoCount=3623

**v.** As when Anne-Sophie Leclère, a National Front candidate for the 2014 local elections, compared French Attorney General Christiane Taubira to a baboon.

**vi.** Contesting the manliness of the opponent is a very common disqualifying strategy. It transpires from the revolting but nonetheless frequent injunction addressed to a boy in tears: "Don't cry, you look like a girl!"

**vii.** As when, during the "Gayet Gate", Manuel Valls suggested that "François Hollande behaved like a retarded teenager"; https://fr.news.yahoo.com/closer-fran%C3%A7ois-hollande-agi-quot-ado-attard%C3%A9-quot-103503108.html

**viii.** fr.soc.politique

**ix.** Christian Jacob, president of the UMP Group at the French National Assembly, February 1st, 2013.

**x.** «Moi des souvenirs d'enfance / En France / Violence / Manque d'indulgence / Par les différences que j'ai»

**xi.** Marine Le Pen interviewed by Pascale Clark, Le 7/9, France Inter, 19 April 2012.

**xii.** Thierry Lepaon, General Secretary of the CGT, on RMC radio station, 29th October 2013.

**xiii.** Dingo 117, 29th October 2013, www.marianne.net

**xiv.** La Provence, 12th June 2014.

**xv.** The American society of psychiatry has published several manuals for diagnosing mental disorders. The last one (DSM 5), published in May 2013, lists over 600 hundred different disorders (http://www.dsm5.org/Pages/Default.aspx

**xvi.** « L'économie autiste », Le Monde, 25 June 2012. The author, Marco Morosini, claims that "what could appear to be a courageous voluntarism is

actually nothing more than the confirmation of sixty years of autistic economy." (« Ce qui pourrait paraître un volontarisme courageux n'est que la confirmation de soixante ans d'économie autiste»)
http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2012/06/25/l-economie-autiste_1723092_3232.html

**xvii.** Ezra Suleiman, Schizophrénies françaises, 2008, Paris: Grasset.

**xviii**. http://www.openthedoors.com/english/index.html; "The WPA International Programme is designed to dispel the myths and misunderstandings surrounding schizophrenia."

**xix.** http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/

**xx.**
http://www.fondation-fondamental.org/page_dyn.php?mytabsmenu=1&lang=FR&page_id=MDAwMDAwMDAwOA

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