

ISSA Proceedings 2006 - Argumentation And Education: Preparing Citizens In Cultures Of Democratic Communication



In classical democracy, John Quincy Adams once declared, “eloquence was POWER.” Adams believed that eloquence had been dormant since Cicero until the American Revolution, when the rebirth of freedom and democracy “fostered the reinvigoration of the lost art of political eloquence” (Gustafson, pp. xiii-xiv). In his “inaugural address as the first Boylston Chair of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard University” in 1805 (Gustafson, p. xiii), Adams stressed the centrality of rational discursive processes to republican government: “Under governments purely republican, where every citizen has a deep interest in the affairs of the nation, and, in some form of public assembly or other, has the means and opportunity of delivering his opinion, and of communicating his sentiments by speech; where government itself has no arms but those of persuasion; where prejudice has not yet acquired an uncontrolled (sic) ascendancy, and faction is yet confined within the barriers of peace; the voice of eloquence will not be heard in vain” (Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory*, pp. 30-31; qtd. in Gustafson, p. xiii).

Adams was speaking directly of rhetoric in ancient Athens and of rhetoric’s importance in the new American republic; however, his insight is applicable to democracies in general: governance of the people, for the people, by the people is attainable only through rhetorical arts and skills. Public deliberation about choices of future actions, judgments of past actions, and commemorations of moments of public unity or renewal occur under conditions of uncertainty, where determinations are at best probable. Throughout history, flourishing democracy and robust public argumentation and rhetoric have been cognates: they share the same essence and sustain each other in the give-and-take of public deliberation. Together they forge what we have termed “cultures of democratic communication.” Open societies have been hallmarks of public deliberative disputation; conversely, closed societies have stifled both public deliberation and

rhetorical training.

Although advocacy skills have been and remain essential for citizens in democracies, modern republican forms of democracy typically cast most citizens in the role of argument critics, evaluating the public deliberations and expressing judgment through candidate, party, or proposition choice. Skills in both advocacy and critical evaluation are therefore important requisites for citizens in a democratic culture, and consequently development of such skills should be important components of educational objectives in democracies. Writing of his experiences as President of the Sierra Club, J. Robert Cox noted:

Without the ability to challenge misleading claims, reasoning, or bias in the testimony of special interests, green advocates would lose meaningful opportunities to hold elected officials accountable or to expose potentially harmful practices to the wider public. The ability to demand “good reasons” or to question the credibility of political leaders or industry lobbyists’ claims often have been the only means which public interest advocates have for the redress of environmental degradation. (p. 82)

In this paper, we argue,

1. democratic governance and free, open deliberative rhetoric are co-dependent;
2. argumentation skills (advocacy, analysis, criticism) are not naturally occurring phenomena, and certainly not in large population aggregates;
3. systematic inclusion of argumentation and criticism in educational curricula can further the growth of a culture of democratic communication in all democracies.

Specifically, we will argue for an “argumentational approach” to education that incorporates concerns with justification, evidence, and reasoning across specific disciplinary boundaries.

1. Democracy and deliberative rhetoric are co-dependent

If rhetoric is considered, as Weaver puts it, “in the whole conspectus of its function” (pp. 1354-1355), then we view phrases such as “rhetorical democracy” (see Hauser) as redundant: rhetoric and democracy are innately cognates. It is only when rhetoric is shorn of aspects of its function, such as invention or its deliberative dimension, that it survives in truncated form in a non-democratic, closed political system. It regains its full vitality, or at least the potential for its full vitality, when the system is again open, when the citizens have the freedom to

participate in their own self-governance in meaningful ways. Hauser identifies two communication requisites for such 'openness': what he terms the "principle of publicity and the principle of free speech":

The publicity principle holds that a society has the right to assess all relevant information and viewpoints on public problems. As a corollary, it holds that a member of society has the right to call society's attention to matters that he or she regards as public concerns. The principle of free speech holds that a person has the right to express his or her opinion without being subjected to legal penalties. From these two principles we can elaborate a more complete statement of basic rights protected by law and the necessary structures of public policy that guarantee a well-functioning liberal democratic state. Publicity and free speech are the *sine qua non* for those necessary guarantees to have effect and on which they ultimately rest. (6)

Argumentation/persuasion/rhetoric are the *agencies* of democracy, yet without open societies argumentation cannot flourish. They are 'co-dependent' on each other, or, literally, cognates in the sense that they 'share the same blood.' Democracy occurs in the domain of the uncertain; it is an exercise in choice in the realm of the probable rather than the certain – and the regulation of uncertainty through the exercise of ideas is the realm of rhetoric and argumentation. The 'co-dependency' between rhetoric and democracy can be seen both historically and theoretically.

Historically, democracy and training in argumentation and rhetoric have flourished together, as in classical Athens and the Roman Republic, and they have withered together, as in Imperial Rome and any number of authoritarian regimes throughout history (it is reputed that one of Lenin's first acts after the Bolshevik's ascent to power was to ban Aristotle's *Rhetoric*). The historical relationship between robust rhetoric, in the full conspectus of its function, and the relative democratic openness of the societies in which that occurs (as well as the opposite, in which rhetoric withers as authoritarianism waxes) is well rehearsed and does not require repetition here (See, for instance, Bizzell and Herzberg).

The historical pattern follows from the intractable inter-connections between rhetoric and democracy. Following the work of Kenneth Burke, we view democracy as a culturally engrained communication system premised upon the competence of rhetors and audiences, as well as on guarantees of fundamental political freedoms. Burke writes, we "take democracy to be a device for

institutionalizing the dialectical process, by setting up a political structure that gives full opportunity for the use of competition to a cooperative end” (PLF, 444). Frans van Eemeren offers a somewhat similar perspective: “Democratization is an act of institutionalizing uncertainty: of subjecting all interests to competition. It is inside the institutional framework for processing conflicts offered by democracy that multiple forces compete. Although the outcome depends on what the participants do, no single force controls what occurs. Here lies the decisive step towards democracy: in the devolution of power from a group of people to a set of rules” (71-72). The rules themselves are negotiable and mutable through the same process of argumentation.

Our view of democracy as a communication system is not offered as an alternative to more traditional, institutional and procedural models of ‘democracy.’ Rather, our emphasis on the communicative dynamics within other models is meant as a necessary supplement to those models. For instance, a mainstream approach to “civil society” stresses the “institutionalization” of non-governmental interests and sources of power, which can then serve as counter-forces to the abusive or oppressive wielding of state powers. In *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals* (1994) Louis Gellner posits “civil society” as “that set of diverse non-governmental institutions which is strong enough to counterbalance the state and, while not preventing the state from fulfilling its role of keeper of the peace and arbitrator between major interests, can nevertheless prevent it from dominating and atomizing the rest of society” (p. 5; as cited in Taylor, Kazakov and Thompson, p. 2). Similarly, in *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (1995), Francis Fukuyama posits “civil society” as “a complex welter of intermediate institutions, including businesses, voluntary associations, educational institutions, clubs, unions, media, charities, and churches” which “in turn” are based on “the family” as “the primary instrument by which people are socialized into their culture and given the skills that allow them to live in [the] broader society and through which the values and knowledge of that society are transmitted across generations” (pp.4-5; as cited in Taylor, Kazakov and Thompson, p. 2). These concepts of civil society, which focus upon social structures and institutions, gloss over the very dynamic that empowers these non-governmental institutions as well as families and individual citizens, i.e., the communicative competence of the people involved. As communicative competence develops and grows into a culturally secured norm, the vitality of civil society and indeed of democracy itself will grow as well.

Perhaps here we approach Dewey's vision of democracy as "a *personal* way of individual life" (1940, p. 148), a notion that we see as entirely consistent with the "enacting of a dialectic," when understood in the Burkean sense of a competitively-cooperative non-resolutional dialectic. Dewey's elaboration suggests as much:

Democracy is the belief that even when needs and ends or consequences are different for each individual, the habit of amicable co-operation – which may include, as in sport, rivalry and competition – is itself a priceless addition to life. To take as far as possible every conflict which arises – and they are bound to arise – out of the atmosphere and medium of force, or violence as a means of settlement, into that of discussion and of intelligence, is to treat those who disagree – even profoundly – with us as those from whom we may learn, and in so far, as friends. A genuinely democratic faith in peace is faith in the possibility of conducting disputes, controversies, and conflicts as co-operative undertakings in which both parties learn by giving the other a chance to express itself, instead of one party conquer by forceful suppression of the other – suppression which is none the less one of violence when it takes place by psychological means of ridicule, abuse, intimidation, instead of by overt imprisonment or in concentration camps. To co-operate by giving differences a chance to show themselves because of the belief that the expression of difference is not only a right of the other persons but is a means of enriching one's own life-experience, is inherent in the democratic personal way of life. (p. 151)

As a way of living, democracy enters the realm of the habitual: it is a way of interacting with others that stresses, among other things, the give-and-take of argumentative exchange, the enactment of dialectic, of difference. It is as a habit of living, a way of interacting, a particularized competence in communication that democracy is ultimately realized. Dewey comments that "democracy is a reality only as it is indeed a commonplace of living" (150).

As we wrote in the inaugural issue of *Controversia: An International Journal of Debate and Democratic Renewal*, "Democracy may or may not require certain economic prerequisites, such as a viable middle class; it may or may not have necessary implication in specific economic formulations, such as free market capitalism; it may or may not be characterized by specific constitutional, governmental or non-governmental institutions; it may or may not require certain voting procedures, representational practices, or party formulations. But it always

requires controversy.” And regulating, perhaps even resolving, controversy requires the competent practice of argumentation. Van Eemeren, for instance, notes that “argument plays a crucial part in the management of uncertainty that is inherent in the exercise of democracy” (82). It is thus clearly the case that in the western traditions of rhetoric, “the ability to argue in public and private domains” has been “linked with democratic process” (Andrews, Mitchell, Prior, and Torgerson).

Finally, although we tend traditionally to think of the association between rhetoric and democracy at a societal level – in the speeches of politicians or the editorials or broadsides aimed at mass audiences – the interactional habits of democracy (and remember that John Dewey saw democracy simply as a ‘habit of mind’) permeate the spectrum of the communication culture. The inculcation of democracy therefore is not reducible to economic preparedness, to the conduct of elections, or any other particular structural element; although some of those structural elements may be necessary, they certainly are not sufficient, as is being so painfully demonstrated daily by ill-conceived efforts to impose ‘democracy’ top-down (often at the point of a bayonet) on cultures not disposed to the habits of mind Dewey finds so necessary. Columnist Joe Klein has also observed the problem: “It is common wisdom among serious democracy advocates that there are preconditions for successful representative government. There must be a solid middle class; there must be rule of law and freedom of speech. But a more elusive human quality is necessary as well: a drastic change of public sensibility from passivity toward active engagement.” Democracy “demands that people take charge of their lives and make informed decisions” (Klein).**[i]**

2. Argumentation skills do not develop without training

Argumentation skills (advocacy, analysis, criticism) are not naturally occurring phenomena across large population aggregates, and it does not necessarily follow that the opening of political space for free speech will result in robust deliberative discourse or a culture of democratic communication; rather, skills in argumentation can and should be taught, and through that process a culture of democratic communication can be nurtured. Even in so-called advanced democracies such as the United States and Great Britain, there is a “skills gap” in the renewal of civic engagement and democracy. Our students and too often our faculty do not have training in argumentation – either for advocacy or for critical analysis of arguments directed toward them. As a result, all positions and claims tend to be viewed as equally valid ‘opinions’ without regard for reasoning or

evidentiary support – and challenges to positions are too often interpreted as personal attacks. Controversial topics tend to be avoided. In the larger culture, models of arguments are sorely lacking: debate (in the sense of testing ideas and positions in a dialectical exchange) and political persuasion have devolved into acerbic monologues of vituperative viciousness. Critical analysis of arguments, in the sense of testing evidence and reasoning, is also lacking.

At the level of argument criticism – the rhetorical skill perhaps most frequently called into play for most citizens in modern representative democracies – the current deficiencies are manifest. A recent study conducted by the American Institute for Research (AIR) found that “(m)ore than 50% of students at four-year schools and more than 75% at two-year colleges lacked the skills to perform complex literacy skills. That means they could not interpret a table about exercise and blood pressure, *understand the arguments of newspaper editorials*, compare credit card offers with different interest rates and annual fees or summarize results of a survey about parental involvement in school” (Feller. Emphasis added). The cultural models for argument analysis are also significantly lacking, as any even cursory viewing of televised political “analysis” shows reveals. Matt Miller observes, “Ninety per cent of political conversation amounts to dueling ‘talking points.’ Best-selling books reinforce what folks thought when they bought them. Talk radio and opinion journals preach to the converted. Let’s face it: the purpose of most political speech is not to persuade but to win, be it power, ratings, celebrity or even cash.” Tellingly, Miller concludes, “*Alienation is the only intelligent response to a political culture that insults our intelligence*” (emphasis added).

Frank L. Cioffi, writing in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, makes a similar point: “Our media do not provide a forum for actual debate. Instead they’re a venue for self-promotion and squabbling, for hawking goods, for infomercials masquerading as news or serious commentary. In terms of discussing issues, they offer two sides, pick one: Either you are for gay marriage or against it, either for abortion or for life, either for pulling the feeding tube or for ‘life’” (p. B6). “This failure to provide a forum for argumentative discourse has steadily eroded students’ understanding of ‘argument’ as a concept” (p. B6). Like Miller, Cioffi sees alienation and disengagement from active citizenship as the ultimate outcome: “Students typically don’t want to attempt ‘argument’ or take a controversial position to defend, probably because they’ve seen or heard enough of the media’s models – Bill O’Reilly, Ann Coulter, or Al Franken, to name a few –

and are sick of them” (p. B6). Too often, then, students become cynical and disengaged. George Mahaffey, one of the originators of the American Democracy Project, reports “Fewer than half of persons 15-26 years old think that communicating with elected officials, volunteering, or donating money to help others are qualities of a good citizen.” **[ii]**

In addition, there is not sustained or systematic critical analysis of political argumentation, particularly not by individual citizens: instead, we wait for our pundits to attack their pundits, and then we join them in a symbolic victory dance. But for democracy to function fully and to flourish toward its potential, each citizen should be equipped to analyze critically the argumentative and persuasive messages that besiege us routinely. No less an authority on propaganda than Joseph Goebbels offered the following insight: “Propaganda becomes ineffective the moment we are aware of it” as propaganda (as qtd. in Taylor 1979, p. 230). An analogy to a magic show might best illustrate the point: when we first experience magic, we are in awe; we are moved. But as we learn about magic, we learn the methods and techniques of magic: we learn the trick. And then when we see a magic show, we may come to appreciate the deftness of the magician, their skill in the performance of the trick, but we nonetheless recognize it as a trick, and we are no longer in awe. We need our students – and our citizens – to recognize the tricks of political persuasion and to be appreciative of skilled argumentation but to be awed by neither.

Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, and Stephens have observed the ability of educational reform to affect the overall culture:

Higher education has the potential to be a powerful influence in reinvigorating the democratic spirit in America. Virtually all civic, political, and professional leaders are graduates of higher education institutions, and the general public is attending college in higher numbers. Over fifteen million students are now enrolled in higher education. About 40 percent are in community colleges, and unlike students in earlier eras, most are commuting students, many with jobs and families. This extensive reach places colleges and universities in a strong position to reshape broader culture. (p. 8)

3. Training in argumentation and criticism will enhance a culture of democratic communication

We start with the simple premises that some arguments are simply better arguments than others and that better arguments are more often productive of

better outcomes than are weaker arguments. Moreover, in a 'democratic' system of governance, the role of argument is as important as the rule of law. [Of course, for the rule of law to be effective, the application of law in any specific case depends on argument to clarify the issues.] Unless argument assumes its rightful place in the conduct of public business, there is no means to properly test policy directives and initiatives.

Recent trends in argument and debate pedagogy, as well as recent popular commentary about argument,^[iii] re-orient argumentation toward outcomes laudable in terms of the growth of individuals *qua* individuals and their empathic functioning in interpersonal and group contexts; however, it may well have the effect of accentuating the disconnect between individuals and the public, civic sphere of argument. The emphasis on "invitational rhetoric" (Foss and Griffin) and notions like "constructive argument" (Mallin and Anderson) reposition argumentation away from the public sphere by featuring concerns with empathy, understanding the emotions of the other, the "solution" of salient inter-relational problems, and the non-conquest of the other, all of which concerns are perhaps more centrally focused in the personal sphere. As Cox observes:

An "invitational rhetoric," with its stress upon mutual respect and an effort to understand the viewpoint of the other, is a presumptive choice for many of us in beginning a conversation, but in the political arena, its terms and conditions are more often than not betrayed by the interests of power. "Argument," therefore, has been positioned as a means for clarifying and representing difference in a manner that allows its claims to be made transparent, rationalized, challenged, and defended/revised. As such argumentation and debate function ultimately as modes of "critical publicity" (Habermas), the achievement of moral force capable of mediating State or other entrenched power. (p.84)

Further, as Crenshaw and Lee note, "invitational rhetoric is not always possible or desirable if access to power and influence is not democratically distributed. Cooperative communication can easily become a form of velvet coercion" (p.109).

Such characterizations overlook what Zarefsky terms the essentially cooperative goal of argument in the public sphere, "deciding what to believe or do under conditions of uncertainty." Zarefsky continues:

The adversarial procedure is actually a means of quality control. Subjecting arguments to the critical scrutiny of an interlocutor helps to assure that the

strong arguments will survive and that the weak ones will be discarded The metaphors of debate . . . are better understood as calling for careful choices consciously considered out of respect for one's interlocutor and the desire to make the testing of ideas productive and robust. (p. 80)

Prior to concern about "adversarial" or "cooperative" models of argumentation is the simple need for individuals – and in the educational context, students – to be able to parse arguments, to be able to recognize claims and the edifice of justification advanced to bolster or legitimize the claims, including evidence and reasoning structures. But it is precisely here that current educational practices seem to fall dramatically short.

Adversarial models aiming at 'victory' and cooperative models aiming at empathy and understanding should not be conceived of as an either/or, but rather as alternative strategies that are situationally dependent. In fact, students and citizens need both skill sets as well as the *situational acumen* to know when each strategy is most appropriately adopted. (For instance, is "understanding" Holocaust denial sufficient as either a pedagogical or argumentational outcome?) Rather than become embroiled in an ultimately false dichotomy between "adversarial" or "invitational" models of argument, we should instead focus upon the *propriety of either within certain contexts*. Argumentation pedagogy should not be reduced to promotion of a favored model or static formula because argumentation is dynamic and heavily contextual and not reducible to idealized strictures that we may place upon it.

Sally Mitchell and Richard Andrews, writing about S. Toulmin, make the broader point:

The act of arguing is more dialogic and more contingent upon the contexts in which it is taking place than the Toulmin model of *argument* enables us to see. The power relationship between protagonist and antagonist (proponent and respondent are milder terms) will be a major factor Argument is particularly susceptible to context because it is essentially dialogic. It invites response in a way that narrative or lyric poetry often doesn't; its function is sometimes to heal rifts, sometimes to explore them, sometimes to engender them; but at all times one person's or one group's argued position depends on another's. Reification of interchange into 'argument structure,' as if the process were a monologue, hardly stands up to contemporary dialogue theory" (they cite Walton, 1999).

Some would argue that it is the adversarial nature of traditional argument theory

that has produced the invective characteristic of much public argument today. We do not agree. Our concern is that in abandoning the emphasis on analysis, evidence, and critical thinking that characterizes traditional approaches to argument, we are failing to prepare future generations for participation in civil society. Proper training in the essential features of argument emphasizes rationality, or the parsing of claims and justifications, and de-emphasizes ad hominem approaches.

Adversarial systems of argument are necessary for argument to assume its essential role in the context of public sphere. Only through adversarial argumentation can the testing of ideas occur. Only the adversary is motivated to explore the consequences of actions and/or policies in the full range of their possibilities. One need simply consider a few ill-fated policy directives with unintended consequences that were not fully explored in advance to realize the necessity of pursuing lines of argument to their logical conclusion before taking action, yet doing so within a commitment to the continued openness of the dialectical exchange, the process that Burke has termed “the use of competition to a cooperative end.”

Education should be understood as a process with at least a dual function: to better the social collective as well as to prepare the individual student both intellectually and vocationally for life. There are, in other words, both public and personal rationales for higher education, and skill in argumentation is germane to both. As Mitchell and Andrews note, “Graduates from university are expected to be able to ‘think’ creatively and imaginatively about their discipline but also more generally to be able to apply that creativity to different contexts. Learning to argue, then, could be a central purpose and activity of attendance at university.”

Writing in the inaugural issue of *Controversia*, William Rehg argues that training in argumentation is essential to ensuring public deliberation, but that it is not enough to expect students to be able to transfer training in formal logic or identification of informal fallacies. He notes that to “achieve transfer means that students must acquire not only a set of competences, but also something like a ‘critical spirit’ or habit of mind” (p. 27). Rehg believes that it is the argumentation scholar who is best situated to influence students to become better participants in deliberation. A pedagogical focus on argumentation needs to be resuscitated, perhaps across the curriculum but certainly in a sufficient number of classes that all students will be assured of training in the essential skills of citizenship. Classes where such training might be expected – such as dedicated classes in

argumentation, debate, or public speaking – need to rededicate themselves to the task of citizen preparation. Writing about the connections between public speaking competency (including advocacy and critical skills) and democracy, McGee and McGee note a “worrisome retreat from the founding assumption of public speaking pedagogy” (p. 167), linking citizen competence in the arts of public speaking and the vitality of democracy. “If these trends continue,” they warn, “the future cultivation of speaking competencies necessary to democracy may now become a happy accident, a leftover from earlier generations, a well-worn but now-neglected pathway [to democracy], rather than a product of any specific instructional design or serious commitment on the part of communication faculty to cultivating such competencies” (pp. 167-168).

4. Conclusion

Democracy, as Dewey would have it, is a habit of mind. It is fundamentally a way of engaging in the world – reaching decisions about courses of action and interacting with others. Democracy demands citizen engagement, and engaged citizens demand democracy. Although the political scene may often seem a detached spectacle – a super-sized football match between competing parties, presented in Technicolor on a big-screen television, complete with passionate but ultimately incoherent color commentary – life itself is not a spectator sport. Placing the locus of action, and of responsibility for that action, on the individual ultimately means that in a democracy each person must have the tools for critical engagement. Gordon Mitchell underscores the point:

The lifeblood of American democracy courses through the arteries of an active, deliberating citizenry capable of participating meaningfully in public argument on pressing issues of the day. Given this, the surfeit of commentary noting widespread citizen alienation and withdrawal from public affairs should not be taken lightly The fate of efforts to right the course of American deliberative democracy will depend largely on choices made by those who have power to influence prospects for citizen comprehension and engagement in argumentation over salient issues of public interest (p. 148).

Training students in argumentation and the arts of advocacy and criticism will help to prepare citizens in cultures of democratic communication. Viewing such skills as the agencies of democracy, recognizing that democracy and rhetoric are cognates, it is incumbent on cultures of democratic communication to cultivate the powers of the competitive toward the cooperative. As Shulman reports, “The wise John Adams understood that if a democratic society were to function as

intended, as ‘a social compact, by which the whole people covenants with each citizen, and each citizen with the whole people,’ such covenants can only be entered into by an educated citizenry blessed with virtue as well as wisdom and knowledge. Absent such intentionally sought accomplishments, a functioning democracy might well become a shattered dream” (p. viii, citing D. McCullough. 2001. *John Adams*. New York: Simon & Schuster, p. 221).

NOTES

[i] We have offered a discursive definition of democracy itself; other writers adhere to more clearly variegated definitions of “democracy,” which are then correlated with specific discourse practices. Roberts-Miller, for instance, writes, “Argumentation textbooks typically say that skill at argument is important in a democracy, but they do not make clear which model of democracy they imagine; in fact, very little (if any) of the current discourse regarding the teaching of democracy indicates awareness that there are different models Much of our disagreement about pedagogical practices is in disagreement about what it means (or should mean) to participate in a democratic public sphere” (3-4; as cited in Fulkerson). She offers 6 models of democracy, each with corollary implications for argumentation: the liberal model (“Enlightenment rationalism”), technocracy (“policy questions answered unproblematically based on information from experts”), the interest-based model (“in which special interest groups each seek to maximize power; difference often settled by bargaining”), the agonistic model (“rhetorical argumentation among competing views with the ‘strongest’ argument winning”), communitarianism (“groups somehow cooperate to subordinate different interest to the common good”), and the deliberative model. Her preference is for the latter, which she defines reflexively through her own approach to writing: “to be contentious and fair, to acknowledge weaknesses while still clearly advocating a policy, not to avoid conflict, but neither to rely on false controversy, and to interweave the personal and particular with more traditional notions regarding evidence” (p. 188; as cited in Fulkerson).

[ii] In addition to referencing the AIR study cited above, Mahaffey also cited other disturbing data reflecting on the preparedness of students as citizens in the American democracy; for example, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation Survey of 112,003 high school students in 2004: “36% believe that newspapers should get ‘government approval’ of stories before publishing.” Or, from a survey of 600 students age 13-17, National Constitution Center, 1998: “59.2% know the names of the three stooges. Only 41.2% know the names of the three branches of

government 89% know the father in Home Improvement. Only 32% know the Speaker of the House.”

[iii] Here we are specifically referring to trade texts such as Deborah Tannen’s *The Argument Culture*.

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