Political Rhetoric

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1.0 Introduction

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The topic of political rhetoric concerns the strategies used to construct persuasive arguments in formal public debates and in everyday political disputes. The study of political rhetoric therefore touches upon the fundamental activities of democratic politics. As Kane and Patapan (2010, p. 372) observed, "because public discussion and debate are essential in a democracy, and because leaders are obliged to rule the sovereign people by means of constant persuasion, rhetoric is absolutely central". Going further, Dryzek (2010) noted that rhetoric is also central to grass-roots political action: "Rhetoric facilitates the making and hearing of representation claims spanning subjects and audiences … democracy requires a deliberative system with multiple components whose linkage often needs rhetoric" (p. 319-339)[1].

Since the previous edition of the *Handbook* in 2003, academic writing on political rhetoric has greatly increased in volume and diversified in perspective. This work now spans a range of disciplines, including linguistics, political theory, international relations, communication studies and psychology. At the time of writing, there existed no integrative accounts of this body of literature. The task of summarizing the field is complicated by the fact that dialogue between academics working in different disciplinary contexts is often limited. In addition, the topic of political rhetoric is not always clearly demarcated from cognate constructs including political narrative (Hammack & Pilecki, 2012), framing (Chong, this volume), communication (Valentino & Nardis, this volume), conversation (cf. Remer, 1999), discourse (e.g. Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012), or deliberation (see Myers & Mendelberg, this volume).

Despite the diversity of approaches adopted, and the overlap with other topics addressed in political psychology, it is nevertheless possible to identify some distinctive aspects to theory and research on political rhetoric. First, contemporary scholars of political rhetoric tend to draw inspiration directly from classical writings on the subject. In the case of rhetorical psychology, this has involved the use of classical scholarship as a source of insights about human mentality as well as about the structure and function of persuasive argument. Second, authors who write on the subject of political rhetoric often adopt a critical perspective in relation to their academic discipline of origin. In political science, the study of rhetoric may be presented as an alternative to established perspectives on political beliefs and decision-making. In social and political psychology, interest in rhetoric arose as part of the "turn to language", a movement that involved a rejection of cognitivism, and a commitment to approaching talk and text as strategic communicative action rather than as expressions of inner psychological processes, states or traits (e.g. Burman & Parker, 1993; Edwards, 1997; Harré & Gillett, 1994; Potter, 2000; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Shotter, 1993).

Although the subject of rhetoric clearly pertains to spoken and written language, empirical research has generally proceeded independently of methodological advances in the analysis of communication. However, some linguists have recently begun to advocate closer dialogue between students of rhetoric and researchers concerned with the fine details of discourse and stylistics (Foxlee, 2012), and scholars in communication studies have begun to consider the application of field methods to the *in situ* study of the rhetoric of protest movements (Middleton, Senda-Cook, & Endres, 2011). Similarly, unlike many other perspectives that originated from the "turn to language", rhetorical psychologists have not traditionally promoted

any specific methodological technique. On the contrary: Billig (1988a) originally advocated traditional scholarship as an alternative to methodology for the interpretation of ideological themes in political rhetoric. More recently, psychological researchers have studied examples of political rhetoric using a variety of research techniques, including discourse analytic approaches to assist the identification of interpretative repertoires, and conversation analysis for the fine-grained analysis of the details of political speeches and arguments. Researchers with an explicitly political agenda may also adopt critical discourse analytic methods.

2.0 Changes and continuities in scholarship on political rhetoric.

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2.1 What is "Rhetoric"?

In his monograph, *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric*, Booth (2004, p. xiii) noted a "threatening morass of rival definitions". On the one hand, the term *rhetoric* can pertain to vacuous, insincere speech or political "spin" (Partington, 2003), as reflected in English expressions such as "mere rhetoric", "empty rhetoric", or "rhetorical question". Bishop Whatley introduced his textbook *Elements of Rhetoric* with the comment that the title was "apt to suggest to many minds an associated idea of empty declamation, or of dishonest artifice" (1828, p. xxxi). Were Bishop Whatley writing today, this cautionary note to his readership might still be warranted. Contemporary writers are still inclined to cast political rhetoric as the antithesis of action (e.g. Browne & Dickson, 2010; McCrisken, 2011), or reality (e.g. Easterly & Williamson, 2011; Hehir, 2011). On the other hand, the term *rhetoric* may also be used in a more positive sense: to refer to the practical art of effective communication. In *Institutio Oratoria*, the Roman rhetorician Quintilian defined rhetoric as the science of

"speaking well". An alternative, related, use of the term pertains to the study of the art of effective communication. This is illustrated by Aristotle's (1909, p. 5) well-known assertion that the function of rhetoric is "not to persuade, but to discover the available means of persuasion in each case". It is this, more neutral, conception of rhetoric that currently predominates.

Classical accounts of rhetoric focused on formal, public speech (the term *rhetoric* derives from the Greek, ρήτωρ, meaning *orator*). However, contemporary authors have extended the scope of rhetorical scholarship to include informal talk (e.g. Billig, 1991); texts (e.g. Spurr, 1993); photography and visual images (Hill & Helmers, 2004); maps (Wallach, 2011); cartoons (Morris, 1993); film (Morreale, 1991); digital communication (Zappen, 2005); architecture (Robin, 1992), graphic art (Scott, 2010), and even food (Frye & Bruner, 2012).

Classical work on rhetoric was not confined to the political sphere. Aristotle described *political* (deliberative) oratory as argument that is concerned with weighing up alternative future courses of action relating to finances, war and peace, national defense, trade, and legislation. He distinguished this kind of talk from *judicial* (or forensic) oratory, practised in the law courts, which focuses on questions of accusation, justice and truth concerning past events, and from *epideictic* (ceremonial) oratory, concerned the attribution of praise or censure in the present[2]. Contemporary scholars have further extended the sphere of application of rhetorical studies, often believing like Booth (2004 p. xi) that "[r]hetoric is employed at every moment when one human being intends to produce, through the use of signs or symbols, some effect on another". However, as Gill and Whedbee (1997) noted, it is still commonly supposed that, "the essential activities of rhetoric are located on a political stage" (p. 157).

2.2 Changing Contexts of Political Rhetoric

Current studies of rhetoric continue to draw inspiration from classical works, such as Cicero's *De Oratore*, Qunitilian's *Institutio Oratoria* and Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. At the same time, it is recognized that the contexts in which, and media through which, political rhetoric now operates are in many respects very different from the situation facing the classical Greek or Roman orator (see also Valentino & Nardis, this volume).

In the classical period, political oratory required a loud voice and formal gestures, as orators spoke in person to mass audiences. In the modern world, political oratory is typically mediated to distal audiences by textual or electronic means of communication often blurring the distinction between politics and entertainment (van Zoonen, 2005). This has impacted upon political rhetoric in a number of ways. For example, political leaders now often adopt an informal, conversational style as evidenced in particular in the genre of the televised political interview. The distinction between public and private aspects of political discourse is collapsing (Thompson, 2011), resulting in a rise of self-expressive politics and the personalization of formal political rhetoric. In addition, whereas classical work on political rhetoric focused on oratory, more recent work has come to focus on what Barthes (1977) called the "rhetoric of the image" that was not envisaged by the purely verbal logic of traditional rhetoric (Roque, 2008)[3].

The fact that political rhetoric is now often conveyed through television, newsprint or e-communication has resulted in a diversification of potential audiences. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) distinguished between the *particular audience* (the people being specifically addressed in a particular communication) and the *universal audience*, comprised of all those who might in principle hear or dis/agree

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with the message. In either case, the audiences may be *composite* in character, composed of subgroups with multiple, often competing, views and interests. Van Eemeren (2010) distinguished between two types of composite audience: *mixed* audiences comprised of individuals and subgroups with different starting points in relation to a communicator's topic or message, and *multiple* audiences comprising individuals and groups with different (possibly incompatible) commitments in relation to the issue under discussion. The increased use of mediated communication increased the potential diversity of the audiences that a political communicator is expected to address in a single speech or text. In addition, the situation may be further complicated by the fact that the audiences being addressed in a particular communication need not always correspond with the constituencies that a speaker is claiming to represent, or towards whom she or he may be held politically accountable[4].

The increasing importance of the mass and electronic media has also resulted in the effective rhetorical context of formal political communications becoming extended both temporally and spatially. The British MP Harold Wilson once famously remarked that, "a week is a long time in politics". However, the fact that records of political debates, speeches and other forms of communication are increasingly easy to retrieve through electronic search-engines means that political rhetoric can now have an infinite half-life, with the consequence that that words uttered or written at one point in time may be retrieved and used in a different context (e.g. Antaki & Leudar, 1991).

Since the previous edition of the Handbook in 2003, academic authors have been paying increasing attention to the impact of new media technologies on political rhetoric. Bennett and Iyengar (2008) suggested that the potential impact of new

technologies might eventually render previous academic perspectives on media effects obsolete. In particular, they drew attention to the ways in which new technologies afford increasing selective exposure to political information, the fragmentation of audiences, and the decline of inadvertent citizen exposure to political information through the media. Some authors have emphasised the democratizing potential of new technologies, which afford cosmopolitan communication between citizens (Mihelj et al., 2011) and which are capable to bridging different social networks (Hampton, 2011). New technologies may facilitate direct communication between citizens and decision makers, citizens' active production of political messages, and collective political protest. Facebook and Twitter certainly facilitated the informal political communication of protesters in the Arab revolution, *indignados* in Madrid, and the *Occupy* movement.

However, some authors have been more sceptical about the actual effects of the digital revolution on political rhetoric and engagement. For example, Jouët, Vedel and Comby (2011) observed that French citizens still obtain political information primarily from the mass media, and Jansen and Koop (2005) reported that internet discussion boards during British Columbia's election were dominated by a relatively small number of users. Deacon and Wring (2011) suggested that that the promise of the Internet as a campaign tool in the British general election of 2010 turned out to have been overrated. Similarly, in their analyses of videos and comments posted to YouTube in response to the Dutch anti-Islam video *Fitna*, van Zoonen and colleagues argued that YouTube enabled the airing of a wide variety of views, but at the same time actually stifled dialogue between those supporting or opposing the stance of the video (van Zoonen et al, 2010, 2011).

2.3 Recent Trends in Research on Political Rhetoric

Early contributions to rhetorical psychology often drew attention to the rhetorical aspects of everyday political attitudes. Subsequent research in this vein has considered the argumentative strategies employed by members of the general public to justify political participation and non-participation (Condor & Gibson, 2007), and to present views concerning immigration, racism, multiculturalism and citizenship in such a manner that conforms to norms of public reason (Figgou & Condor, 2007; Gibson & Hamilton, 2011).

More commonly, research on political rhetoric focuses on real-world contexts of political engagement. This has included work on the rhetorical strategies adopted by social movements (Chavez, 2011; Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011); protest groups (Griggs & Howarth, 2004; Sowards & Renegar, 2006) and E-activist groups (Eaton, 2010; Sommerfeldt, 2011). However, most empirical studies of political rhetoric continue to focus on formal political communication including parliamentary debates (e.g. Every & Augoustinos, 2007; Vanderbeck, 2011); political campaigns and marketing (e.g. Fridkin & Kenney, 2011; Jerit, 2004; Payne, 2010), and high-profile speeches, texts or films and historical documents (e.g. Terrill, 2009; 2011; Tileagă, 2009a;b; 2012a;b). Popular awareness of Barak Obama's rhetorical skill has led to a recent revival of academic interest in the oratory styles of particular political leaders (e.g. Coe & Reitzes, 2010; Isaksen, 2011; Grube, 2010; Toye, 2011; Utley & Heyse, 2009).

The substantive topics investigated in studies of political rhetoric tend to reflect political concerns of the day. Current research continues to focus on issues related to political rhetoric in debates concerning national identity (Condor, 2011; Finell & Liebkind, 2010); immigration and citizenship (e.g. Boromisza-Habashi,

2011; Every & Augoustinos, 2007); foreign policy (Kratochvil, Cibulková & Beneš, 2006), and the legitimation of war (Bostdorff, 2011; McGarr, 2011; Oddo, 2011). Recently, researchers have turned their attention rhetoric concerning climate change (Harrison & King, 2011; Kurtz, Augoustinos & Crabb, 2010), terrorism (De Castella & McGarty, 2011), and the "war on terror" (Esch, 2010; Kassimeris & Jackson, 2011; Kaufer & Al-Malki, 2009).

Empirical analyses of political rhetoric often focus on specific argumentative devices, tropes or commonplaces. In this respect, researchers are inclined to foreground the micro-features of communication that are often overlooked in research that treats political discourse as a reflection of cognitive activity rather than as a form of communicative action. For example, analyses of conceptual or integrative complexity in political talk and text typically treat clichés ("cryptic or glib remarks"), idioms, satire and sarcasm, as unscoreable (Baker-Brown et al. 1992). In contrast, in rhetorical analyses, figures of speech are typically treated as important argumentative devices. Contemporary research has focused on questions related to the strategic use of metaphors (Ferrari, 2007), proverbs (Orwenjo, 2009), slogans (Kephart & Rafferty, 2009), satire (Woodward, 2011), humour (Dmitriev, 2008; Timmerman, Gussman & King, 2012), politeness (Fracchiolla, 2011; Shibamoto-Smith, 2011), and appeals to common-sense values such as "change" (Roan & White, 2010), "choice" (Gaard, 2010) and "community" (Buckler, 2007) in political talk and texts. Over the past few years, scholars have demonstrated an increased concern over the use of religious language and idioms in formal political rhetoric (e.g. Kaylor, 2011; Marietta, 2012; Stecker, 2011; Terrill, 2007).

In view of the range of work that now exists on the subject, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive account of academic perspectives on political rhetoric in a

single chapter. In the following pages we will focus specifically on the ways in which recent studies of political rhetoric relate to two key topics of interest to political psychologists: argument, and identity.

3.0 Political Rhetoric and Argumentation.
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The term "argument" may be applied to a range of phenomena, including disputes between individuals or groups, and to coherent sets of statements justifying a single premise ("line of argument"). In its most inclusive sense, all verbal behaviour might potentially qualify for the label of "argument". For example, Potter (1997) suggested that descriptive discourse necessarily has offensive (critical) aspects in so far as it explicitly or implicitly seeks to undermine rival versions of events, and defensive (justificatory) aspects in so far as speakers attempt to shore up their accounts from attack by rivals[5].

Authors who focus on the argumentative aspects of political rhetoric often position themselves in direct opposition to other existing academic accounts of political opinions, belief and action. In *Arguing and Thinking*, Billig (1987) presented rhetorical psychology as an alternative to standard social scientific approaches to reasoning, attitudes, and ideology. Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins (2004; 2006; 2009) set their rhetorical approach to social and self-categorization processes as an alternative to reified social psychological perspectives on context, identity and leadership. Finlayson (2006; 2007; Finlayson & Martin, 2008) offered rhetorical political analysis (RPA) as an alternative to established political science perspectives on ideas and beliefs. In all of these cases, the authors suggested that a focus on rhetorical argument might counter a tendency on the part of social scientists to prioritise consensus over contestation. In fact, theorists who foreground the

argumentative character of political rhetoric often treat the very idea of political "consensus" itself as a strategic rhetorical construction (e.g. Beasley, 2001; Edelman, 1977; Weltman & Billig, 2001), and analyse the ways in which speakers may work up images of unanimity in an effort to represent a particular state of affairs as indisputable (e.g. Potter & Edwards, 1990).

In this section of the chapter we will focus on three areas of work of particular relevance to political psychology: the rhetorical psychology perspective on the argumentative nature of thinking and attitudes; the ideological dilemmas perspective on the argumentative aspects of ideology, and the Rhetorical Political Analysis perspective on the argumentative aspects of policy decision making.

3.1 Rhetorical Psychology.

3.1.1 Arguing and Thinking

Rhetorical psychologists adopt the view that the same principles underlie both public oratory and private deliberation. The idea that human thought evidences similarities with public arguments draws on a long tradition of scholarship. For example, Francis Bacon suggested that "the solitary thinker uses rhetoric to excite his own appetite and will in a sort of intrapersonal negotiation – that is … to 'talk oneself into something'" (Conley, 1990, p. 164). Billig similarly suggested that the principle difference between deliberative oratory and the internal deliberations of thinking "is that in the latter one person has to provide both sets of arguments, as the self splits into two sides, which debate, and negate, each other" (Billig 1991, p. 48)[6]. More recently, Billig (2008) has pointed out that in the eighteenth century, the third Earl of Shaftesbury also viewed thinking as being argumentative and argued that many of the

ideas of current approaches to critical psychology can be traced back to Shaftesbury's largely forgotten work.

Billig contrasted this perspective on thinking as argument with cognitive psychology models which characterise human reasoning, problem-solving and decision-making as a matter of information processing or rule following. Drawing from the sophist Protagoras' famous maxim, "In every question, there are two sides to the argument, exactly opposite to each other", Billig contended that just as public argument is two-sided, so too is the solitary psychological process of thinking. Because both sides to an argument can produce reasonable justifications, and both can counter the criticisms of each other, the process of thinking is not necessarily motivated by a drive towards consistency. On the contrary, in the course of deliberation people often find themselves moved by the spirit of contradiction. Rhetorical psychology hence substitutes the conventional psychological image of the human thinker as a rule-following bureaucrat with the image of the human thinker as a deliberator "shuttling between contrary opinions" (Billig, 1996, p.186).

Psychologists have long considered the process of categorization to be "the foundation of thought" (Bruner, Goodnow & Austin, 1956), and it has often been held that categorization involves an economy of mental or discursive effort. For example, Morley (1886) described labels as "devices for saving talkative persons the trouble of thinking" (p. 142). More recently, Rosch (1978) famously described the function of category systems as "to provide maximum information with the least cognitive effort" (p. 28). In contrast, Billig suggested that these accounts of categorization presented a distinctly one-sided image of the capacities of human beings as reasoning subjects. To accept the argumentative, two-sided, nature of

thinking is to appreciate the capacity of people both to employ categories, but also to engage in the opposite cognitive and rhetorical operation of particularization.

In so far as categories are understood as rhetorical phenomena, the process of categorization need not be understood to save people the trouble of thinking. On the contrary, when used in the course of communication, categories typically constitute objects of deliberation and the topics of argument. Any act of generalization can always be potentially negated by a particularization, treating a particular object or event as a "special case". In the course of conversation, generalizations are typically qualified, as a speaker employs a category while also acknowledging the existence of exceptions. Moreover, people can debate the merits of classifying people or events in one way rather than another, the defining attributes of a category, the inferences that may be drawn from knowledge of category membership, and the appropriate use of labels.

These considerations have particular relevance to political psychology in so far as many of the basic categories of contemporary political discourse are essentially contested (Gallie, 1956), that is, they are the subject of continual disputes which cannot be settled by "appeal to empirical evidence, linguistic usage, or the canons of logic alone" (Gray, 1978, p. 344), such as "power", "democracy", "representation", and "liberty". Conventionally, social and political psychologists have been inclined to treat political constructs as variables that can be relatively easily operationalized and measured. For example, researchers investigate the "effects of power" on political cognition or action, the situations under which intergroup behaviour is "determined by fairness motives", the extent to which individuals or groups differ in their understanding of "equality", and so forth. In contrast, researchers adopting a rhetorical perspective are more disposed to study the ways in which actors pursue

political projects through flexible and strategic appeals to particular understandings of power, fairness and equality. For example, Summers (2007) analysed debates in Western Australian parliamentary speeches supporting or opposing the Lesbian and Gay Law Reform Act, and observed how *both* sides of the debate used appeals to equality, human rights, democracy, and the interests of children, which the speakers treated as rhetorical bottom-lines. Similarly, research has noted how arguments designed to support, and to oppose, various forms of ethnic discrimination may both appeal to shared liberal values of equality, fairness and individualism (e.g. Augoustinos, Tuffin & Every, 2005).

Nick Hopkins, Steve Reicher and Vered Kahani-Hopkins adopted a rhetorical approach to social categorization in a programme of research investigating the strategies used by politicians and political activists for the purposes of political mobilization (e.g. Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins 2004; Hopkins & Reicher, 1997; Hopkins, Reicher & Kahani-Hopkins, 2003; Kahani-Hopkins & Hopkins, 2002; Reicher & Hopkins, 1996; 2001). These authors based their work on self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987) but argued that a reliance on laboratory experimentation could lead social psychologists to overlook the extent to which social categories may represent the object of, rather than merely a prior condition for, political contestation. As Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins (2004) put it:

> Whilst experimental research has many strengths, there is a danger that an exclusive reliance on laboratory-based paradigms restricts the development of theory. Most obviously, as such paradigms are weak in exploring processes of argument there is a danger that theories of categorization underplay the importance of rhetoric and dispute. (p. 42).

As an example of work combining self categorization theoretic perspectives with a rhetorical approach to categorization we may consider Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins's (2004) analysis of the rival social category constructions mobilized in texts by groups of Muslim activists in Britain. On the one hand, the Muslim Parliament of Great Britain represented Islam and the West as entirely incompatible categories, such that any accommodation to Western societies or values would necessarily compromise Muslim identity. This category scheme did not simply sharply differentiate Muslim from non-Muslim Britons, but it also facilitated identification between British Muslims and the global Muslim *ummah*. Advocates of this position adopted the view that categories of ethnicity and nationality were incompatible with Muslim identity and, further, that these constructs were themselves part of an ideological strategy promulgated by Western governments aiming to undermine Muslims' political consciousness.

In contrast, members of the UK Imams and Mosques Council argued that British Muslims were an integral part of British society. Rather than viewing the West as embodying the antithesis of Islamic values, these activists pointed to the existence of shared values. Proponents of this position not only challenged the idea that participation in a Western community subverted Muslim identity, but also argued that identification with non-Muslims was in fact an integral aspect of Muslim identity. In this case, the Islamic *ummah* was construed as a heterogeneous group which instantiated the very values of tolerance and diversity necessary to function actively and effectively in a modern multicultural society.

Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins's analysis highlighted a series of issues that are often overlooked in experimental studies of self-categorization processes. First, they did not consider category homogeneity, distinctiveness or entitativity simply as the

cognitive antecedents to, or consequences of, social categorization. Rather, these phenomena were viewed as the subject and outcome of active debate. Second, by treating social categorization as a rhetorical phenomenon, Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins were able appreciate how the meanings of Islam and The West were established in an extended line of argument in which the speaker also constructed a version of group interests, social context, and the legitimacy of particular future courses of action. Finally, by approaching these competing category schemes as aspects of strategic rhetoric, the authors were able to appreciate their dialogic qualities. The two representational schemata that Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins identified in British Muslim activists' rhetoric were not simply two mirror-image versions of the categories of Muslim and the West. Rather, each version was produced in such a way as to address, and to attempt to undermine, the other.

3.1.2 Attitudes as advocacy

Although rhetorical psychologists draw attention to the flexible, and often contradictory, ways in which people can describe and evaluate political actors and events, they do not overlook the extent to which individuals and groups may display consistency in political opinions (cf. Caprara and Vecchione, this volume). For example, Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins (2004) did not find members of the Muslim Parliament of Great Britain switching back and forth between arguing that Western policies of cultural accommodation threatened the integrity of Muslim identity, and arguing in support of the UK Government's Community Cohesion programme. On the contrary, the various British Muslim political activists maintained a relatively clear and consistent line of argument. Billig suggested that when social actors adopt and defend a particular point of view, their behaviour might be likened to that of a

public advocate, "who has decided upon a single stance and is orating upon the virtues of the chosen position" (1996, p.186).

Rhetorical psychology does not treat an individual's assertion of attitudes and opinions as a straightforward report of their subjective appraisals[7]. Rather, the act of claiming an attitude or offering an opinion involves an intervention into a public controversy[8]. This means that not all beliefs qualify as attitudes (Billig, 1988b). Within a given social context there will be certain matters that are treated as non-controversial, common sense. It is only on potentially disputable matters that an individual can be said to hold opinions or express attitudes.

In so far as attitudes constitute stances in a public debate, any line of argument (*logos*) only makes sense in relation to alternative arguments (*anti-logoi*). Sometimes a speaker may explicitly set out the *anti-logoi* to his or her own position. In other situations, a speaker may leave their *anti-logos* implicit. However, merely to declare oneself to be pro-capital punishment is, by implication, to take a stance against the abolition of the death penalty; to declare oneself pro-life is to oppose pro-choice arguments; to proclaim one's support for gun control is implicitly to take issue with the arguments of the firearms lobby; to argue in favour of multicultural policies of social integration is to take a position against the view that Muslim identity is fundamentally incompatible with Western values.

In ordinary social life, advocacy does not simply involve adopting a position for or against some state of affairs, as is normally required of research respondents when faced with an attitude scale or opinion survey. When expressed in the course of everyday conversation, attitude avowals are typically accompanied by reasons, whether these are direct justifications for the views proposed or criticisms of competing positions. The internal consistency of these lines of argument may

represent an important consideration, but not because human beings have an inner drive or need for cognitive consistency. Rather, the internal coherence of attitude avowals, and the reliability with which an individual adopts a particular stance over a period of time, may be rhetorically motivated in so far as charges of inconsistency may weaken the force of an argument. It follows that individuals need not always attend to the logical consistency of their accounts. Indeed, discourse analysts have often pointed to variation in positions that a speaker may endorse in the flow of mundane talk. However, in so far as a speaker is publicly adopting a particular stance on a controversial issue, the need to maintain (or at least be seen to maintain) a consistent argument may become a relevant concern.

An interactional requirement for consistency need not, however, lead to rhetorical inflexibility. When presenting their attitude on a particular issue, people do not merely have a set of relevant considerations that they present identically on each occasion the topic arises. Instead, they tailor their argument to the rhetorical context in which they are talking[9]. Even individuals with strong, crystallized, political views show a good deal of flexibility in their talk. For example, in a study of the way that families in England talked about the British Royal Family, Billig (1991; 1992) noted one case in which everyone agreed that the father had strong views against the monarchy. He constantly argued with his wife and children on the topic. However, in his arguments the father did not merely repeat the same statements, but flexibly managed his arguments to counter those of the other members of his family. Moreover, he alternated between radical and conservative rhetoric, as he counter posed his *logoi* to the *anti-logoi* of his family, presenting himself at one moment as a radical opposing the Establishment, and at other times as the defender of British values.

Billig (1989) distinguished two ways in which individuals may be understood to hold a view in relation to a public controversy. *Inter-subjective* perspectives presume the existence of a singular, ultimately discernable, empirical reality. In this case, disagreement may be attributed to initial error on the part of at least one of the parties concerned. In contrast, *multi-subjective* perspectives treat dispute as the result of plural, and potentially irreconcilable, values or points of view. Like anything else, the inter-subjective or multi-subjective character of a dispute may, itself, constitute an object of contestation. Moreover, individuals need not always adopt a consistent position on whether a particular clash of political views should be regarded as a disagreement over matters of (singular) fact or of (multiple) competing values. For example, Condor (2011) reported how the same UK politicians could treat an attitude in favour of multiculturalism as a matter of multi-subjectivity when discussing the EU (displaying respect for the rights of other EU states to adopt assimilationist policies of social integration) whilst treating this as a matter of inter-subjectivity in a UK context, in which case all alternative perspectives were presented as irrational and misguided.

3.2 Ideological Common Places and Ideological Dilemmas.

Billig (1987) noted how classical rhetoricians advised speakers to advance their cases by using common places (*topoi*): references to facts or moral values that will be shared by audiences. Formal political rhetoric often involves the use of common places that appeal to the common sense of audiences. McGee (1980) coined the term *ideograph* to describe this phenomenon:

> An ideograph is an ordinary-language term found in political discourse. It is a high order abstraction representing commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and

guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable." (p. 15).

We noted in section 2 that a good deal of current empirical research involves identifying the use of *virtue words* (McGee, 1980 p. 6) such as "community", "change" or "choice", and mapping their rhetorical functions in specific arguments. McGee suggested that ideographs may provide a basis for shared understanding between speakers and grounds for coordinated action, "when a claim is warranted by such terms as 'law,' 'liberty,' 'tyranny,' or 'trial by jury,' ... it is presumed that human beings will react predictably" (McGee, 1980, p. 6). However, the fact that the key terms of political debate are essentially contestable means that although speakers often *treat* appeals to values such as fairness, the national interest, or human rights as if they were non-contentious there is no guarantee that their audience will necessarily accept their argument. In practice, it is always possible for these appeals to be opened up for critical consideration or for exceptions to be made for particular cases.

Many social scientific accounts of ideology treat social actors as the passive recipients of inherited belief systems. From this kind of perspective, ideology is views as a conservative force, preventing challenges to the political *status quo* (Jost, Federico & Napier, 2009) and imposing an overarching consistency to thoughts, beliefs and values (cf. Nelson, 1977). Billig suggested that an understanding of ideology as systems of social and psychological "constraint" could be corrected by attending to the presence of contrary themes within ideological systems. Social scientists often draw attention to the contradictory nature of social maxims (many hands make light work *but* too many cooks spoil the broth). Conventionally, such contradictions have been viewed as evidence of the irrationality of common sense (cf. Billig, 1994; Shapin, 2001). In contrast, Billig argued that the contrary aspects of

cultural common sense in fact represent the preconditions for two-sided argument, and consequently for rhetorical deliberation within and between members of a particular society. From this perspective, the ordinary person, "is not a blind dupe, whose mind has been filled by outside forces and who reacts unthinkingly. The subject of ideology is a rhetorical being who thinks and argues with ideology" (Billig, 1991a, p. 2).

Billig's (1987) ideas concerning the productive potential of opposing *topoi* were developed in the text, *Ideological Dilemmas* (Billig, Condor, Edwards, Gane, Middleton & Radley, 1988), which presented a series of case studies illustrating how contradictions within liberal ideology (between competing values of equality versus respect for authority, of fairness as equity or equality, of individualism versus the common good) played out in everyday debates concerning gender, education, prejudice, health and expertise. The ambivalent quality of these arguments was not seen to reflect a lack of engagement or sophistication on the part of the speakers. On the contrary, it was precisely the availability of opposing themes that enabled ordinary people to find the familiar puzzling and therefore worthy of deliberation.

Although Billig and his colleagues assumed a liberal democratic political culture as part of the background against which everyday talk took place, they did not explicitly consider how dilemmatic themes operate in deliberation over political issues. However, subsequent research has applied the ideological dilemmas approach to everyday political reasoning on issues such as unemployment (Gibson, 2011), gender inequality (Benschop et al., 2001; Stokoe, 2000) and nationality and citizenship (e.g. Bozatzis, 2009; Condor, 2000; 2006; Condor & Gibson, 2007; Sapountzis, 2008).

Billig and his colleagues noted that communicators do not always attend to

dilemmatic aspects of discourse overtly. On occasions, "[d]iscourse which seems to be arguing for one point may contain implicit meanings which could be made explicit to argue for the counter-point" (p. 23). An example of implicit ideological dilemmas is provided by Condor's (2011) analysis of political speeches in favour of "British multiculturalism". Condor observed that the speakers often referred explicitly to their *anti-logoi*: arguments in favour of ethnic or cultural nationalism, exemplified by Victorian Imperialist discourses. However, analysis of the texts of these speeches showed that the arguments put forward by advocates of British Multiculturalism rested upon the claim that the contemporary UK represented a "special case". Consequently, far from opposing the general ideology of ethnic nationalism, the speakers were in fact presupposing a normal social order of national ethnic homogeneity. Moreover, the specific *topoi* that the speakers invoked in the course of justifying British Multiculturalism in fact closely echoed the ideograms employed by previous generations of politicians in epideictic rhetoric celebrating the aesthetic, moral, economic and political value of British Imperialism.

3.3 Rhetorical Political Analysis

Although the rhetorical turn in the social sciences often involved a specific focus on political oratory and argument, until recently, this work has been relatively neglected by political theorists (Garsten, 2011) and political scientists (Finlayson, 2004; 2006; 2007). Arguing that approaches based on rational choice theory embraced "too narrow a concept of reasoning" (2007 p. 545), Finlayson's alternative, which he termed rhetorical political analysis (RPA), recast political decision-making as a collective, argumentative activity.

Finlayson noted that democratic politics is premised on the assumption of the "irreducible and contested plurality of public life" (p. 552), and that political ideas and beliefs "are always turned into arguments, into elements of contestable propositions…which, if they are to survive, must win adherents in a contest of persuasive presentation" (2007, p. 559). Politics is hence not characterised by beliefs or decisions *per se*, but by "the presence of beliefs in contradiction with each other" (p. 552). Finlayson argued that political rhetoric deals both with areas of empirical uncertainty (in Billig's terms, *inter-subjective* disagreement) and also disputes which result from the fact that citizens approach the same issue from different perspectives (Billig's *multi-subjective* disagreement).

Like Billig, Finlayson suggested that political categories typically constitute the object of contestation. Taking the example of poverty (cf. Edelman, 1977), he observed that political deliberation does not only concern "the best policy instrument for alleviating poverty but how poverty should be defined (and thus what would actually constitute its alleviation), whether or not poverty is a problem, and if it is, then the kind of problem it might be (a moral, economic, social or security problem)" (p. 2007, p. 550).

Finlayson argued that political reasoning is necessarily dialogic, in so far as any political theorist needs to justify their beliefs to others who may well adopt very different points of view. Moreover, he suggested that political ideas and beliefs are not simply expressed in the course of debate, but rather that political concepts, values and intentions are in fact formulated through an on-going process of argument. Similarly, although policy-making involves the formation of political consensus, this process need not involve the discovery of common interests or views, but rather the construction of agreement through the process of argument.

At present, little research has been conducted within the RPA perspective (although see Finlayson & Martin's [2008] analysis of Tony Blair's last speech to the UK Labour Party Conference in 2006). However, Finlayson (2006; 2007; 2008) provided a general outline of the ways in which future empirical work might develop[10]. First, RPA would approach any particular political debate in relation to its original rhetorical context, and also with a view to the ways in which the mediated character of contemporary politics can serve to render rhetorical situations fluid and ambiguous. Second, analysis should consider how the topic (the point of the controversy or bone of contention) is itself argumentatively established. Specifically, this would involve (1) *Factual conjecture*: if/that a state of affairs exists (e.g. has Iraq attempted to purchase yellowcake uranium from Niger?); (2) *Definition*: naming the issue, (e.g. "the Iraq war", "war in Iraq", "Operation Iraqi Freedom", "preventive war", "occupation of Iraq", "illegal invasion"); (3) *Assessment* of the nature of the act or policy (e.g. is Western military intervention in Iraq a defence of national interests, a response to human rights violations, "the central front in the War on Terror" or a "fatal mistake"?); (4) *The boundaries of legitimate argument*: the rules concerning who, when and where an issue may be discussed.

Third, RPA would analyse the substantive content of any particular political argument. This would include attention to, (1) The ways in which the policy under dispute is framed in relation to the axes of the universal and the particular; (2) The formulation of specific states of affairs through metaphor, and narrative sequencing, and the use of rhetorical common places; (3) Modes of persuasive appeal: whether the speaker is appealing to ethos, pathos or logos; (4) Genre: how speakers cast their talk as deliberative, forensic or epideictic; (5) How particular policy recommendations are rhetorically linked to general ideological or party political commitments.

In many respects, Finlayson's RPA is similar to Billig's approach to rhetorical psychology. However, there are three important differences between the perspectives. First, RPA focuses on formal political decision-making, emphasising public clashes of views between individuals or groups, each adopting one-sided (largely institutionalised) standpoints. In contrast, rhetorical psychology often focuses on private deliberation on the part of individuals. This is reflected in the different ways in which the two perspectives consider the "ideological" aspects of political argument (rhetorical psychology emphasising conflicts within widescale ideological systems, RPA stressing the consolidation of distinct political belief systems).

Second, because RPA focuses on political decision-making, the resolution of dispute, and the ways in which political actors may construct robust arguments that can subsequently form the basis for collaborative action. In contrast, rhetorical psychology tends to stress the open-ended quality of argumentation. Billig has drawn on Shaftesbury's idealised view of a society in which there is a wonderful mix of "contrarieties", filled with debate, difference and mockery: "In this image of utopia, the lion does not lie down in silence with the lamb, but the Epicurean and stoic meet again and again to argue, to seek truth and to laugh" (Billig, 2008, p. 134).

Third, RPA does not consider issues relating to the construction of self or social identity, matters which Finlayson devolved to discursive psychology (e.g. 2006, p. 539). As we shall see in the next section, rhetorical psychology, in common with many other perspectives on political language and communication, regards identity concerns as centrally and necessarily implicated in all political rhetoric.

4.0 Political Rhetoric and Identity.

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As we noted in section 2, Aristotle argued that audiences could be swayed not only by the style and content of an argument, but also the character projected by the speaker (*ethos*). Classical theorists identified three categories of ethos: *phronesis* (involving wisdom and practical skills), *arete* (morality and virtue) and *eunoia* (goodwill towards the audience).

In contemporary studies of political rhetoric, questions relating to ethos are often framed as a matter of the "identity" of the communicator. The term identity is ambiguous, and academic discussions of political rhetoric have approached the issue of communicator identity in various ways. Some theorists have simply refused the identity construct, in so far as it might be understood to imply a singular or fixed sense of self (see Charland, 1987). More commonly, researchers have focused communicator identity as a rhetorical production. In *A Rhetoric of Motives* Burke (1969) suggested that identification lies at the heart of all persuasive rhetoric for "you persuade a man [sic] only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his" (p. 55). Burke called this projected commonality between speaker and audience *consubstantiality*. In this section, we will limit ourselves to discussing some of the strategies that contemporary political communicators may use to achieve consubstantiality when faced with composite audiences of the type outlined in Section 2. First, we consider how speakers may present their own rhetorical projects as exercises in political consensus. Second, we consider cases in which politicians appeal explicitly to broadly defined ingroups. Third, we examine the ways in which political commentators address aspirational categories, representing consubstantiality as a future project rather than a current condition. Finally, we discuss how speakers may implicitly display allegiance with mixed and multiple audiences, focusing in particular on the

use of first person pronouns.

4.1 Taking and Avoiding Sides.

One way in which a political communicator may deal with the problem of audience diversity is simply to side with one group against another. An example of the way in which a speaker may orient towards the establishment of consubstantiality with a distal community of representation rather than their immediate audience is provided by Rapley's (1998) analysis of the maiden speech of Pauline Hanson, the independent Australian MP elected on an anti-immigration stance. Hanson did not claim commonality with the fellow members of parliament that she was ostensibly addressing. Instead, she stressed her commonality with the broader public. Hanson claimed to speak "just as an ordinary Australian" and not as "a polished politician", asserting that "my view on issues is based on commonsense, and my experience as a mother of four children, as a sole parent, and as a business-woman running a fish and chip shop" (Rapley, 1998, p. 331).

Rhetorical strategies are often polyvalent, serving a number of communicative functions simultaneously. In this case, through the act of siding with the "ordinary people" in opposition to the "the elite", Hanson was also rhetorically enacting her commitment to populist political ideology. However, in democratic political contexts, communicators who identify with more mainstream political parties are often confronted with a rhetorical dilemma. As Ilie (2003) observed, formal political debate often involves competing normative injunctions:

> Parliamentary debates presuppose, on the one hand, a spirit of adversariality, which is manifested in position claiming and opponent-challenging acts, and, on the other hand, a spirit of cooperativeness, which is manifest in joint decision-making and cross-party problem-solving processes in order to reach

commonly acceptable goals regarding future policies and suitable lines of
action at a national level. (p. 73)

More generally, although democratic political discourse operates within what Atkins
(2010) termed *the context of hegemonic competition*, at the same time, politicians who
adopt an overtly adversarial stance may be criticised for their adherence to a particular
ideology (Kurtz et al, 2010), charged with prioritising partisan party interests over
common national interests (Dickerson, 1998), or accused of negative political
campaigning (cf. Fridkin & Kenney, 2011). Moreover, when an individual or group is
attempting to mobilise support in a majority rule political system, it is often in their
interests to appeal to as many sectors of their universal audience as possible.

   One strategy that a politician may employ to avoid being seen to side with a
particular section of their audience or community of representation involves
presenting their argument in such a way as to appear to incorporate a range of
divergent points of view. Fløttum (2010) reported a strategy that she termed the
polemical not, in which a speaker suggests that his or her rhetorical project goes
beyond current divisive arguments. As an example, Fløttum quoted from an address
by Tony Blair to the European Union in 2005:

> The issue is **not** between a "free market" Europe and a social Europe, between
> those who want to retreat to a common market and those who believe in
> Europe as a political project.

Here we can see Blair advocating an understanding of the "issue" which will move
beyond the petty squabbles between those holding incompatible views on the
European Union. Significantly, Blair's account of his own position was evasive (cf.
Bull, 2008). At no stage did he explicitly state what the "issue" actually was.

   A related technique that politicians commonly use in formal public addresses is

to present adversarial politics, itself, as their own personal anti-logos. In the US, this kind of rhetorical strategy may be given a particular inflection when it is used in conjunction with an appeal to what Beasley (2001) termed the "shared beliefs hypothesis", according to which American national identity is essentially grounded in an adherence to a shared set of political principles. As an example, we may consider Barak Obama's famous (*Yes We Can*) speech presented after his success in the Democratic presidential primary in South Carolina in 2008.

> We're up against decades of bitter partisanship that cause politicians to demonize their opponents instead of coming together to make college affordable or energy cleaner. It's the kind of partisanship where you're not even allowed to say that a Republican had an idea, even if it's one you never agreed with.
> […]
> So understand this, South Carolina. The choice in this election is not between regions or religions or genders. It's not about rich vs. poor, young vs. old. And it is not about black vs. white. This election is about the past vs. the future. It's about whether we settle for the same divisions and distractions and drama that passes for politics today or whether we reach for a politics of common sense and innovation, a politics of shared sacrifice and shared prosperity.

Once again, we can see the use of the *polemical not*, this time applied to a gamut of forms of "divisive" identity politics and "bitter" partisan political positions. By opposing opposition, and demonizing demonization, Obama presented himself and his policies as opposing nobody.

4.2 Explicit Appeals to Common Ingroup Membership.

When faced with the need to appeal to mixed or multiple audiences, political communicators often attempt to regroup a composite audience into a single rhetorical entity (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1968). We have already seen how self-categorization theorists have drawn attention to the ways in which grass roots political activists attempt to mobilise support by formulating common category memberships. Extending this to the sphere of formal political action, Reicher and Hopkins (2001)

argued that political leaders act rhetorically as *entrepreneurs of identity.* According to this perspective, effective political leadership requires, (1) Regrouping diverse communities into a single overarching identity category; (2) Framing the (aspiring) leader's own political project as the instantiation of the norms and values of that identity category, and (3) The (aspiring) leader's self presentation as a prototypical ingroup member.

Reicher and Hopkins (2001) illustrated this process in a programme of research conducted in Scotland, in which they showed how electoral candidates attempted to maximize their appeal by framing both themselves and their audience in national terms. However, each candidate defined this superordinate national identity in such a way as to present their own party's political programme as expressing the qualities and values that they attributed to the Scottish people in general. Members of the left-wing Labour Party characterized Scots as inherently egalitarian, welfarist and opposed to privilege. In contrast, Conservative Party candidates characterized Scots as hard working and entrepreneurial. In all cases, the candidates presented themselves as prototypical members of the national community, not simply endorsing but also instantiating the virtues ascribed to their imagined community of representation.

As we noted earlier, rhetorical strategies are often polyvalent. A clear example of the ways in which the act of appealing explicitly to a common rhetorical ingroup may also entail framing a political issue in a particular way and establishing the legitimacy of a particular course of action (cf. Finlayson, 2006) is provided in Tileagă's (2008) analysis of the former president Ion Iliescu's addresses in the Romanian Parliament during official commemorations of the Romanian revolution of 1989. These official commemorations took place in the context of a series of on-going political controversies, including competing accounts of over the "events" of the

revolution (the thousands of innocent deaths), and debates concerning Iliescu's own role in the overthrow of Ceauşescu and his own sudden rise to power. In addition, commentators were questioning the absence of specific policies designed to confront the legacy of the communist past, for example, the failure to establish laws limiting the political influence of former members of the Communist Party or collaborators of the secret services).

Tileagă noted how, against this background, Iliescu used the occasions of the official commemorations to establish a particular identity in relation to the Romanian people, which also served to promote his own preferred version of the revolution. In the opening section of his speeches, Iliescu used both formal forms of address ("Ladies and gentlemen senators and deputies", "Distinguished members of the legislative bodies") and informal forms of address ("Dear friends from the days and nights of the December revolution", "Dear revolutionary friends"). The formal forms of address indexed Iliescu's institutional identity and representative capacity. Through the informal forms of address, Iliescu positioned himself within the imagined community of "revolutionaries" (a post-1989 descriptor conferred to anyone who was seen as having actively taken part in the Revolution). In so doing, Iliescu presented himself as the possessor of first-hand, insider, knowledge of the Revolutionary events. This identity claim thus established Iliescu's category entitlement to pass judgement on the events in question, which he used to warrant his preferred version of the events as "pure" revolution, and in so doing countered alternative versions of the Romanian revolution as a coup d'etat involving the Securitate (the secret police), or a foreign plot to force Ceausescu from office.

4.3 Constructing Aspirational Identities.

It is not always possible or expedient for a communicator to address a composite audience as a single group. One alternative involves a strategy that Frank (2010) termed *constitutive futurity*. This refers to a form of representation in which the object of political address (e.g. the "nation") is projected into an undetermined future. In this way, a speaker is not confined to constructing a common rhetorical ingroup located in the narrative here-and-now, but can speak to, and on behalf of, "a people that is not…yet" (p. 182).

Rogers (2012) suggested that the use of aspirational (rather than descriptive) appeals to common identity may have particular purchase when a speaker is acting as advocate for a group which is currently positioned outside, or on the margins of, a particular political community, as exemplified in Martin Luther King's (1963), *I Had a Dream* speech. Rogers focused in particular on the strategies that W.E.B. Du Bois[11] employed in his polemical essays, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), noting Du Bois's training in classic rhetoric at Harvard (Rampersad, 1976). Rogers argued that that Du Bois was faced with a specific rhetorical problem when addressing white audiences summed up by the question, "How will you move the people so that they will embrace an expanded view of themselves?" (p. 194). He suggested that Du Bois managed this by constructing an ingroup that shared a common *political horizon* rather than a common identity in the historical present (cf. Dunmire, 2005).

Du Bois started out by extorting his (white) readership to sensitivity concerning the experiential aspects of social and political exclusion. Having established the audience's normative commitment to his rhetorical project through appeals to empathy, Du Bois went on to evoke in the reader a sense of shame for complicity in the suffering of black folks ("Let the ears of a guilty people tingle with truth"). Throughout, Du Bois adopted a complex authorial footing which invoked a

distinction between (white) readers, the author and black folk, but at the same time presented them all as participating in a common ideological project "in the arrival of a truth hitherto unavailable" (p. 196). This shared horizon involved for the white audiences the prospect a new, extended sense of selfhood based on a sense of common emotional dispositions[12].

4.4 Implicit Displays of Rhetorical Alignment.

Although studies of the micro-features of political rhetoric often focus on the ways in which political communicators overtly proclaim their membership of a particular category, researchers have also drawn attention to the ways in which social identities may be flagged implicitly, though dress, body posture, style of speech and use of pronouns. The political alignments that people project through nonverbal media of communication do not always square with the ways in which they describe themselves. Condor and Abell (1996) consequently argued for the need to distinguish between explicit identity *avowals* (verbal acts of self-description) and implicit identity *displays* (the public performance of an identity).

An interesting example of the use of clothing to implicitly display multiple political allegiances is provided by Ahmed's (1997) analysis of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the Great Leader of Pakistan (see also Reicher & Hopkins, 2001, p. 171). Ahmed described how Jinnah (a liberal, Anglicised individual who did not speak Urdu) used clothing to signal his identification with Muslims throughout the Indian subcontinent by adopting the coat (*sherwani*) worn in Aligarh, the cap (*karakuli*) worn by Muslims in North India, and the trousers (*shalwar*) worn in the areas that were to become West Pakistan.

Perhaps the most obvious way in which a speaker may implicitly display alignment with others is through the use of first person plural pro-terms: "we", "us" or the possessive "our". Moss (1985 p.86) suggested that the repeated use of "we" in political rhetoric serves to coalesce speaker and audience "so that the immediate impression is one of unity and common purpose". In addition, we may note that a particular advantage of pronouns lies in their capacity to signal a supposed unity and common purpose implicitly.

Some research has mapped the ways in which historical transformations in political alignment have been signalled through a communicator's use of the first person plural. For example, Ventsel (2007) analysed speeches made by the new political elite after the Soviet occupation of Estonia in 1940. He noted that immediately after the occupation "we" was used simply to refer to the local communists who had carried out the coup, but it soon came to be used in a more inclusive sense, to construct a unified subject including both communist leaders and the people. However, within a year, a new addressee-exclusive "we" emerged, one that indexed the new leaders' alignment with The Party as opposed to The People.

Other research has compared the ways in which different politicians use personal pronouns to implicitly align themselves with particular groups. For example, Proctor and Su (2011) analysed the ways in which the various candidates used pronouns in interviews and debates in the run up to the 2008 US presidential election. They noted that, in interview settings, Sarah Palin generally used "we" and "our" to signal solidarity with Americans and Alaskans, but rarely to signal solidarity with her running partner, presidential candidate John McCain. In contrast, Hillary Clinton generally used "we" to identify with the US government and the Democrats, but more

rarely to indicate national identification. Barak Obama was most likely to use the first person plural to refer to his campaign crew and to Americans.

4.5 Who are "We"? Flexibility and Vagueness in the use of First Person Pronouns

Although there are some circumstances in which it may be expedient for a speaker to index their alignment with a particular section of their audience, as we have already noted, politicians are often concerned to maintain alignment with diverse groups. Some analyses of political rhetoric have emphasised how communicators adopt a *segmental technique,* addressing different sections of their composite audience sequentially. In this context, first person plural pronouns may represent a useful resource in so far as the use of "we" and "us" can enable a speaker to align him or her self sequentially with different (possibly conflicting) sub groups without obviously appearing to shift narrative footing. For example, Wilson (1990) and Maitland and Wilson (1987) analysed speeches presented by Margaret Thatcher while she was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Within the same speech, and even within the same sentence, she could use "we" to align herself with the Conservative party, the Government, the British citizenry, or all right-thinking people.

Myers (1999) observed that one problem with the segmental technique is that it does not enable a speaker to ingratiate themselves "simultaneously to the diverse components of a composite audience" (p. 56). Studies of political rhetoric have noted how communicators often employ strategic ambiguity, formulating arguments in a manner that is sufficiently vague as to admit a variety of possible interpretations. Vague formulations can serve a dual rhetorical function for a political communicator. First, they may be acceptable to (or at least difficult to challenge by) various sections of a heterogeneous audience. Second, whilst appearing decisive, they do not in fact

commit the speaker to any particular course of action, therefore allowing for future

flexibility in political rhetoric and policy decisions whilst maintaining an apparent

stance of ideological commitment and consistency of purpose. Fortunately for

political communicators, the precise referent of first person plural pronouns can be so

vague as to elude even professional linguists (Borthen, 2010).

Duncan (2011) reported a particular variety of strategic ambiguity that he

termed *polemical ambiguity*. This involves a speaker using strong dualistic

formulations, but expressing these through forms of wording which are so vague that

the precise nature of the argument is unclear to potential allies in the audience, while

potentially alienated groups perceive a clear message with which they can identify. As

an example, Duncan took the case of President George W. Bush's speech to a joint

session of the US Congress on 20 September 2001, in which he was addressing the

composite audience of the members of the United States Congress, and also the

universal audiences of the American people, and by implication, "the leadership and

citizenry of all other nations in the world, as well as terrorist groups…[in short] the

entire planet" (p. 457). Duncan noted Bush's heavy use of "globe-sweeping

antithes[es]" (p. 458): right vs. wrong, good vs. evil, us vs. them (see also, Coe et al.,

2004; Lazar & Lazar, 2004). This polemical style was, Duncan observed,

accompanied by the consistent use of vague and ambiguous referents, as illustrated by

the text's well-known climax:

> And **we** will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation
> in every region now has a decision to make: Either **you** are with **us** or **you** are with
> the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support
> terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.

The meaning of phrases such as "aid or safe haven to terrorism," or "harbor or

support terrorism" is unclear, and Bush's argument would be hard to refute on either

epistemological or moral grounds. Of particular relevance to our current concerns is

the ambiguity of Bush's use of pronouns: **we**, **us**, and **you**. In all cases, these pronouns clearly do not include "the terrorists" (whoever they may be). However, in context, **you** could refer to "any nation, nations, or peoples, whether currently an ally, enemy, or neutral" (Duncan, 2011, p. 458). **We** and **us** could mean "the United States, all Americans, Republicans, supporters of the Bush administration, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members, the Western world, peace-loving peoples, or just the winners" (p. 458).

4.6 Using Pronouns to Display Complex Political Allegiances

In English, as in many other European languages, the first person plural can be used in an inclusive or an exclusive sense. Terms such as "we" and "us" can, on occasions, exclude either the speaker or the audience. For example, a *speaker-exclusive* "we" (De Cock, 2011) can be used to signal allegiance rather than literal identification, as exemplified by Churchill's famous speech, made after the evacuation of Dunkirk in 1940: ''**We** shall fight on the beaches, **we** shall fight on the landing grounds''. As Wilson, (1990) observed, Churchill was not suggesting that he personally would be participating in the armed combat. The speaker-exclusive "we" may also be used to display goodwill towards, or shared common ground in relation to, those very communities of opinion with whom a speaker is currently disagreeing. The following example has been taken from W.E.B. Du Bois's 1928 speech, *The Negro Citizen*[13]

> So, too, in the matter of housing, recreation and crime **we** seem here to assume that a knowledge of the facts of discrimination and of the needs of the colored public are sufficient, with faith, hope and charity, to bring ultimate betterment...

Du Bois was arguing that mere knowledge of the disadvantages faced by African Americans would not be sufficient to ensure progressive social change. Consequently, he was not using **we** to signal his acceptance of a common point of view. Rather, his use of **we** in this context is indexing his empathy with, and goodwill towards, the audience.

In other situations, a political commentator may include themselves in the pronoun "we" but exclude their audience. The use of an *addressee-exclusive* "we" is perhaps most obvious in cases where a politician uses first person plural pronouns to refer specifically to their political party or to the government. The following example was taken from a speech by Vernon Coaker MP, delivered to the Centenary Conference of the Irish Labour Party in 2012[14]:

> **We** in the Labour Party will speak up for the peace and progress – as the party who in government helped with others to bring about the Good Friday Agreement and all that flowed from it – and **we** will stand up for fairness in tough times.

Even in cases such as this, the precise referent of the pronoun may remain underdetermined. Mr Coaker, a member of the British Labour Party, regularly slipped between using "we in the Labour Party" as (nationally) audience-exclusive and as (politically) audience-inclusive[15].

Addressee-exclusive we's can also be used to soften disagreement. Fløttum (2010) quoted the following extract from a from an address made by Tony Blair to the European parliament in 2005:

> **We** talk of crisis. Let **us** first talk of achievement.

Blair was presenting the discourse of "crisis" as his anti logos. Consequently, in this utterance, **we** actually means "they" or "you", and **us** means "me". One might reasonably suppose that Blair's objective in referring to his political adversaries as "we" was to display a general sense of empathy and goodwill. However, we cannot

tell whether audiences did, in fact, interpret his words in this way. Depending on context, speaker-exclusive "we's" can be interpreted as markers of empathy, or as coercive or condescending.

The referents of first person plural pronouns are not confined to the narrative present. As a consequence, a communicator can use terms such as "we" or "our" to display consubstantiality with historically expanded social categories, and to construct aspirational ingroups (Condor, 2006). This is illustrated in the following extract from a speech presented by George W. Bush to the Pentagon in 2003:

> **We cannot** know the duration of this war, yet **we know** its outcome: **We will** prevail…the Iraqi people will be free, and **our world** will be more secure and peaceful.

Bush's first two uses of **we** are within present-tense clauses, and conjure up the image of shared experience between people existing in the narrative here-and-now. However, his third and fourth use of the first person plural (**we** will…, **our** world will…), projects his rhetorical ingroup into an indeterminate future, possibly beyond the life-times of the people included in his first two synchronic we's.

4.7 Using First Person Plural Pronouns to Convey Ideological Messages

We have already noted how a speaker may use explicit identity appeals not simply as a generic means by which to enlist an audience, but also to establish their commitment to a particular ideological project. When speakers enlist audiences using first person plural pronouns, ideological messages may be imported into their arguments more subtly.

Linguists have noted how the referent of first person plural pronouns may "wander" (Petersoo, 2007) within speeches or texts and even within single sentences or phrases. The slippery nature of terms such as "we" and "us" means that they can be

used to link a potentially contentious political concept to a relatively benign one. For example, in political discourse, authors may start out by using "we" as a reference to themselves and their immediate audience, but then slip to using "we" to refer to the government, and to using "our" to refer to the economy or the armed services (e.g. "the strength of our economy"). In this way, a speaker may subtly elide the interests of the audience with those and with the government, the military, or corporate business (Fairclough, 2000).

This capacity for construct elision through referent slippage takes its most extreme form in what Billig (1995) termed the *syntax of hegemony*, in which the vagueness of first person plural pronouns establishes a functional equivalence between a particular group and universal humanity. As Billig (1995, p.90) observed, by mobilising a nonspecific "we", political orators can present the interests of their party, government, nation as coinciding with those of the entire world, "so long as 'we' do not specify what 'we' mean by 'we', but instead allow the first person plural to suggest a harmony of interests and identities".

This kind of rhetorical formulation has been most extensively studied in New World Order rhetoric on "the war on terror" (e.g. Coe et al., 2004; Leudar, Marsland & Nekvapil, 2004; Lazar & Lazar, 2004). As we saw from the quotation from George W. Bush's 2001 speech cited above, in US foreign policy statements, "we" can both be used to signify the United States and also to refer to a US-led, system of collective security. An example of the use of the syntax of hegemony can be seen in the quotation from George W. Bush's 2003 speech cited on , above:

> **We** cannot know the duration of this war, yet **we** know its outcome: **We** will prevail…the Iraqi people will be free, and **our world** will be more secure and peaceful.

From the context, "we" could refer equally to the US or to the coalition. However, "our world" could be interpreted as a universal referent, suggesting that the US national or international military alliance is defending universal interests and universal values of freedom, security and peace.

As we noted earlier, the allegiances that a communicator displays through the use of pronouns need not always square with the identities to which they explicitly lay claim. Condor (2006) coined the term *forked tongue strategy* to refer to a situation in which a speaker explicitly claims one identity and ideological commitment in principle, whilst displaying a different set of allegiances and ideological commitments through deictic reference. As an example, let us consider the following stretch of talk taken from the opening statement by the Chair of a meeting of the Scottish National Party, reported in Reicher and Hopkins, (2001, p. 165).

> Fellow Scots! It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all here tonight. And when I say "fellow Scots" I include all those categories excluded by Nicholas Fairbairn. And I also include all **our** English friends who live among **us**, and who have chosen to throw in their lot with **us**, more than a few.

Reicher and Hopkins's original analysis focused on the explicit message conveyed in this stretch of talk. They noted how the speaker was invoking an inclusive ingroup, thus potentially maximizing his potential constituency of representation. In his metadiscursive move ("And when I say 'fellow Scots'"), the speaker argued that this category construction reflects his Party's ideological commitment to a civic understanding of Scottish identity, one which was not shared by the Conservative Party (whose more exclusive definition of the category of Scots had been exemplified in a speech made four days earlier by the MP Nicholas Fairbairn). For present purposes, however, the significant aspect of this stretch of talk lies in the way in which, in the very course of proclaiming his inclusive understanding of Scottish identity, the speaker uses pronouns to

implicitly exclude people born in England ("*our* English *friends*") from the

Scottish national "*us*".

5.0 Concluding Remarks

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The study of rhetoric is necessarily a reflexive enterprise. Anyone who writes

on the subject of rhetoric is also using rhetoric. Throughout this chapter, we have

noted some of the difficulties involved in summarizing the topic of political rhetoric

for a mixed and multiple audience of political psychologists. In the first place, it is not

easy to place the subject into a tidy academic pigeonhole. Work on political rhetoric is

not the province of any particular discipline, and there is no single, essential, feature

which can be used to distinguish theory and research on political rhetoric from work

on political argument, debate, communication or discourse. In part, our aim in this

chapter has been to provide a coherent overview of theoretical and empirical work

that was originally conceived and written within a variety of academic traditions.

Any discussion of rhetoric in general, and political rhetoric in particular,

cannot easily be delimited historically. In this chapter we have emphasized recently

published work in order to update the information conveyed in the previous edition of

the Handbook. However, because contemporary scholars continue to use classical

terminology and to draw upon the writings of Aristotle, Plato and Cicero, we cannot

simply confine past writing on rhetoric to academic history. More generally, it is

difficult for an author to structure an overview of work on political rhetoric in the

standard narrative form conventionally used for reviewing a body of psychological

research. Many contemporary authors would resist the idea that their work is

"progressing" rhetorical scholarship beyond the classical tradition. Moreover, much

of the recent work on political rhetoric tends to take the form of individual piecemeal studies, rather than systematic, incremental, research programmes.

On the one hand, the disconnected character of much current research on political rhetoric might reasonably be regarded as a problem. Certainly, the lack of cross-referencing between articles on similar issues (especially common when this work has been conducted by academics with different disciplinary affiliations) is regrettable, not least because individual authors often coin neologisms, leading to a confusing diversity of terminology to refer to what are, essentially, similar considerations. On the other hand, it is important to recognize that many of the apparent problems which confront anyone attempting to review work on political rhetoric are also reflections of the very nature of the subject matter. Rhetoric is essentially and inevitably complex, reflexive, argumentative, fluid and contextual. Consequently, political psychologists who have been trained in the technê of operationalization and experimental control may find the study of rhetoric something of an intellectual culture shock.

In the worlds of political rhetoric, constructs cannot be marshalled into dependent, independent, moderating and mediating variables. Analyses of specific examples of political rhetoric do not treat context as a pre-designated setting in which, or towards which, individuals respond. Rather, the "rhetorical situation" is itself understood to be constituted through the process of argument. Analysis of the fine detail of political rhetoric reveals social categories and stereotypes to be the objects of continual contestation, and draws our attention to the ways in which political actors may attend to multiple facets of their identity simultaneously.

Consideration of the ways in which people structure and respond to political arguments shows that their actions are not solely determined by particular norms

rendered salient by a specific social context, nor are they motivated simply by a need to reduce subjective uncertainty. On the contrary, political communications are typically formulated with a view to dilemmatic epistemological and moral concerns, and to competing prescriptive norms for action. Kane and Patapan (2010) described political rhetoric as the "artless art", in recognition of the fact that political leaders need to use rhetoric without appearing to do so. Effective political communicators also need to deal with a range of additional competing demands, such as demonstrating consistency in defence of a particular ideological project whilst avoiding charges of partiality; or mobilizing identity categories whilst at the same time maintaining the appearance of rational disinterest (Potter & Edwards, 1990).

Billig (1987/1996) borrowed the sixteenth century rhetorician Ralph Lever's term "witcraft" to describe the skilful and creative ways in which professional politicians and ordinary social actors formulate arguments in the context of debate. By paying attention to the fine details of political argumentation we can appreciate how speakers can mobilise similar considerations to support quite different rhetorical ends, and how the same rhetorical project may be supported by an infinite number of possible lines of argument. In short, political communicators use language and other symbolic resources flexibly, creatively and ironically to construct new patterns of argument, and to undermine the newly constructed claims of their opponents. Consequently, any quest for general laws, which neatly map particular rhetorical forms onto specific functions, will necessarily be doomed to failure.

For researchers accustomed to parsing human behaviour into factors and levels, into stable entities or quantifiable dimensions, the study of political rhetoric confronts us with the apparent chaos of an underdetermined and monstrous realm where utterances are polyvalent, actions evasive, values dilemmatic, and where

factual assertions and appeals to consensual common sense may be successful in so far as they are, in practice, radically ambiguous. For the scholar of rhetoric, on the other hand, these complexities are regarded as evidence of witcraft, of the inventiveness, playfulness, and deadly seriousness, of human social and political life.

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NOTES

[1] Contemporary commentators often suggest that rhetorical scholarship may itself promote a democratic message in so far as it holds out the "promise of reason" against the "brute force" of violence, or authoritarian coercion (Gage, 2011). Theorists who adopt a rhetorical perspective often challenge deficit models of mass publics (Troup, 2009) in so far as they recognize, and celebrate, ordinary citizens' capacity to engage in open-ended reasoning and rational debate about public affairs.

[2] Garver (2009) has questioned whether actual instances of rhetorical argument easily fit into this classificatory scheme.

[3] Notwithstanding an in-principle recognition of the importance of the visual aspects of political rhetoric, most empirical research continues to focus on the spoken and written word, seldom even considering the ways in which information and evaluation may be conveyed through intonation, facial expressions or hand movements (cf. Mendoza-Denton & Jannedy, 2011; Streeck, 2008).

[4] Political "representation" may itself be understood in various ways (Pitkin, 1967; Saward, 2010). In democratic regimes, an elected representative may be positioned as a *delegate*, acting as spokesperson for their constituents or as a *trustee*, charged with using their expert skills to serve the best interests of those they represent, even if their arguments do not necessarily reflect the immediate will of the people themselves. Spokespeople for nongovernmental organizations may claim to represent the interests of a particular constituency without the members ever being consulted. Finally, an individual or group can adopt the stance of defending the interests or rights of animals or "the planet", a practice that might be understood as a form of *stewardship*.

[5] This inclusive notion of rhetoric is not universally accepted. For example, Bitzer (1968) restricted his construct of the *rhetorical situation* to settings in there is an exigency that is capable of being modified though discourse, and where there is an audience who is potentially capable of being influenced by the discourse and acting as mediators of change.

[6] Billig (1996; Shotter & Billig, 1998) noted parallels between rhetorical psychology and Wittgenstein's (1953) understanding of language as the vehicle of thought (remark 329), and Bakhtin's (1981) perspective on thought as inner speech.

[7] For a similar perspective on attitudes as evaluative discourse, see Potter (1998).

[8] In this respect, rhetorical psychology focuses on what social psychologists have traditionally termed verbal or public (as opposed to private and implicit) attitudes.

[9] At the time that Billig was developing rhetorical psychology, social psychologists typically endorsed what subsequent commentators called a *file draw model* of attitudes, according to which individuals hold opinions on all manner of issues and which they simply retrieve from memory for the purposes of responding to survey questions. More recent perspectives on attitudes as online constructions (e.g. Schwarz, 2007) differ from Billig's approach in so far as they regard attitudes primarily as mental phenomena, but share his concern for the ways in which attitude statements are formulated in local interaction.

[10] Although Finlayson distinguished RPA from linguistic and Critical Discourse Analytic approaches, in practice his account of the ways in which RPA might inform empirical research has much in common with these perspectives. In addition, Finlayson's focus on the use of rhetoric in political decision-making has clear parallels with Fairclough and Fairclough's (e.g. 2012) critical discourse analytic approach to *practical reasoning*.

[12] This observation has parallels with recent social psychological work that has considered the role of intergroup emotions such as empathy (Dovidio, Johnson, Gaertner et al., 2010) shame and guilt (Lickel, Steele & Schmader, 2011) in promoting support for minorities on the part of majorities.

[13] National Interracial Conference December 1928 Washington D.C.

[14] 17 April 2012 Speech reported on
http://www.publicservice.co.uk/feature_story.asp?id=19629

[15] In addition, when a politician uses a political-party or government "we", it is not always clear whether the speaker is necessarily signalling his or her own personal commitment to the content of a message. Bull and Fetzer (Bull & Fetzer 2006; Fetzer & Bull, 2008) have noted how politicians may on occasions use a collective (normally Party) "we" to avoid being held personally accountable for a potentially contentious view or course of action.