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This study was supported by the South Dakota State University Foundation through a Thomas A. Daschle Career Papers Collection Faculty/Student Research Fellowship.

 RESEARCH ARTICLE

Finding Common Ground: Analyzing Thomas A. Daschle's Senate Leadership Speeches as a Model for Bipartisanship

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Abstract

The 2016 U.S. presidential election highlighted the contentiousness of U.S. politics. As rhetorical scholars invested in establishing common ground in U.S. politics, we analyzed the leadership speeches of Senator Thomas A. Daschle. Daschle is worthy of study because he is the only person in U.S. history to have served as both Senate majority and minority leader. Our research question is: How did Senator Thomas A. Daschle use his leadership speeches to work across the political aisle? This study uses the method of close textual analysis to analyze 23 of Daschle's leadership speeches. We suggest Daschle offers a model of bipartisanship. Through our rhetorical analysis, we found that Daschle used strategies of bipartisanship and polarization. We conclude with implications, limitations, and areas for future research.

Introduction

The 2016 U.S. election highlighted the contentiousness of U.S. politics (Drury & Kuehl, 2018). That contentiousness makes it difficult to find common ground across political differences, especially in discussing public policy. We identify as rhetorical scholars who are invested in using discursive strategies that can establish common ground in U.S. politics. Because of this commitment, we looked to the past and analyzed leadership speeches of Senator Thomas A. Daschle, someone who successfully used public discourse to build common ground during his time as Senate leader. Daschle is a rhetor worthy of study because he is the only person in U.S. history to have served as both Senate majority and minority leader, from 1994-

2004 (United States Senate, 2019b). Our research question is: How did Senator Thomas A. Daschle use his leadership speeches to work across the political aisle?

To answer this question, we first establish the context. We then discuss “wicked problems” (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p. 160) and bipartisanship rhetoric. Third, we outline research on convention speeches, which often define and reflect our national values and differences (Drury & Kuehl, 2018; Stuckey, 2005). We then explain the sample and method. Through our rhetorical analysis, we found Daschle used strategies of bipartisanship and polarization. We conclude with implications, limitations, and areas for future research.

Historical Context of Daschle’s Senate Leadership from 1994-2004

To understand the constraints of the context, we first explore Daschle’s role as Senate leader. We explain news coverage about Daschle’s audience, including partisanship. Finally, we describe the purpose of Daschle’s leadership speeches – to pass policy through Congress.

Daschle as Leader

Senator Thomas A. Daschle was born and raised in Aberdeen, South Dakota. In 1969, he earned a Bachelor’s degree in Political Science from South Dakota State University. He went on to have a career in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate (South Dakota State University Archives and Special Collections, 2020). During his terms as minority and majority Senate leader from 1994 to 2004, Daschle was admired by his constituents and peers from both parties for his leadership qualities (Kranz, 2001). He was not boastful in his achievements, even at the peak of his career (Lancaster, 2001). He was known for his interpersonal skills (Lancaster, 2001) and was well-liked even by those who disagreed with him (Frommer, 2000). Daschle was distinguished for his communication skills, often referred to as “soft-spoken” but able to be commanding when needed (Frommer, 2000; Lancaster, 2001).

Daschle was a “talented negotiator” (Daschle, 2003). Daschle’s fellow Democratic Senators were inspired by his ability to unite them (Cohen, 1994). Because he was a Democrat representing a majority Republican state of South Dakota, he saw the need to be moderate and viewed issues from multiple perspectives (Hatcher, 2011). When Daschle became majority leader in 2001, he wanted to be remembered as an inclusive leader who worked with Republicans (Kranz, 2001). Daschle’s combined qualities shaped a powerful *ethos* of working across the political aisle.

Audience and Political Partisanship

Despite his negotiator *ethos*, Daschle was unwilling to deviate from certain values, such as his criticism of President George W. Bush’s tax policies. This unwillingness to work with the president may have cost him re-election in 2004 (Hatcher, 2011). Even at the start of his final term as Senator, many South Dakotans were beginning to feel that his bipartisanship appeals were not in earnest (Kranz, 2001; Lancaster, 2001). When Daschle was first elected minority leader in 1994, the political atmosphere was less partisan than when he lost re-election in 2004. Perhaps his values did not fundamentally change, but rather South Dakotans’ attitudes towards Daschle and Washington, D.C. had soured over time (Pew Research Center, 2017).

Daschle's last years in the Senate were turbulent for the United States. He was minority leader during President Bill Clinton's impeachment, in which the United States witnessed extreme partisanship at the time (Mitchell, 1999; Pew Research Center, 2017). Daschle believed the Senate reached a just decision in acquitting former President Clinton from both articles of impeachment (Daschle, n.d., *Statement of Democratic Leader*). He was also minority leader during the election of President George W. Bush, when Bush won the electoral vote but Vice President Al Gore won the popular vote (Glass, 2018). 9/11 occurred during Daschle's Senate leadership (CNN Library, 2019), and shortly thereafter, Daschle's office was attacked with a letter containing anthrax (CNN Library, 2018).

For a short time, terrorist attacks instilled patriotism in Americans, and Congress reflected this sentiment through bipartisan efforts to pass legislation (United States House of Representatives, 2016). One such example was the No Child Left Behind Act in January 2002 (Kuehl, 2012). At the time, it was seen as a bipartisan victory for Daschle, who had been pushing for education reform (Klein, 2015). Even before 9/11, Daschle had been laying the rhetorical groundwork for bipartisanship.

Senate Leadership and the Purpose of Passing Policy

A U.S. Senator's main purpose is to propose and pass legislation (United States Senate, 2019a). The Senate is also divided informally by party caucuses (United States Senate, 2019c). Leading these caucuses are the majority and minority leaders, who are elected by their fellow Senators of the same party, a practice that started in the early 1900s. These leaders are first recognized on the Senate floor, giving them the opportunity to speak for their party and to direct the legislative processes for each day, especially regarding proposals and amendments. The Senate equally represents each state; senators in states with a small population (e.g., South Dakota) have a unique responsibility to advocate for a minority of the U.S. population (The United States Senate, 2019a).

Daschle had the responsibilities of a typical Senator, as well the responsibilities of serving as Democratic minority and majority leader. In addition, he was representing South Dakota – a rural, conservative state (Hatcher, 2011). He had the challenge of advocating for a variety of policies to appeal to both his Democratic Caucus and his constituents in South Dakota. Daschle was considered a good listener, who made everyone, from the U.S. Congress to the rural constituents of South Dakota, feel that what they had to say was important (Daschle, 2003; Lancaster, 2001). Given this historical context, Daschle's bipartisan leadership qualities were important in his purpose of passing policy.

“Wicked Problems” and Bipartisanship Rhetoric

Most of the policy platforms developed by national political parties are in response to what Rittel and Webber (1973) called “wicked problems” (p. 160). These are societal problems that involve many different stakeholders who have many different opinions and conflicting values. “Wicked problems” are often problems that are intertwined with other public issues (Carcasson & Sprain, 2016). Bipartisan rhetorical appeals are one response to be able to create, pass, and implement policy on these public issues. Public opinion research suggests that a majority of the U.S. public favors bipartisan policy making (Paris, 2017; Villalobos & Sirin,

2012). In this section, we highlight characteristics of bipartisan rhetorical appeals, a primary strategy used by Daschle.

Bipartisan rhetoric is one attempt to take action on public issues through policy outcomes and representational legitimacy. Given the research about the audience context during Daschle's Senate leadership career, we know that the levels of partisanship increased from Daschle's first years as Senate leader to when he was voted out of office in 2004 (Pew Research Center, 2017). Bipartisan rhetoric can help pass policy through Congress (Keremidchieva, 2012; Paris, 2017), as well as through the U.S. Presidency in terms of agenda setting (Villalobos & Sirin, 2012). Keremidchieva (2012) wrote about how bipartisanship was the primary method for the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues, in order to obtain representative legitimacy.

Several rhetorical strategies shape bipartisan rhetoric. "Strategic ambiguity" is one such strategy. Pietrucci (2012) explains strategic ambiguity through the work of Ceccarelli (1998), defining it as "a kind of polysemy that occurs when a text is rhetorically designed by its author to allow distinct groups in the audience, characterized by diverse ideologies and attitudes, to see different meanings arising from the same text" (p. 292). Pietrucci (2012) argued that this rhetorical strategy of strategic ambiguity allowed Silvio Berlusconi to appeal to multiple publics for different reasons.

Two other rhetorical strategies that shape bipartisan rhetoric include using metaphors such as "progress" and "common ground." Heidt (2013) suggested that metaphors are useful for "structuring worldviews, simplifying depictions of complicated and difficult to understand situations, and organizing public conceptions in particular directions" (p. 235). Metaphors enable an audience to see one idea in the terms and characteristics of another concept (Heidt, 2013). For example, with the archetypal metaphor of "life is a journey," that metaphor enables the audience to "see" the idea of life through the lens of a journey, including all of the characteristics of a journey. Some of those characteristics that can illuminate how one sees the term "life" through that metaphor include the following: running into roadblocks, experiencing the lengthy duration of a journey, and feeling highs and lows along the way.

More specifically, "progress" is one key metaphor used in bipartisan rhetoric. Smith (2019) wrote about how President Barack Obama used progress as a metaphor for immigration, defining "progress as something that moves through space, or something that one moves towards. Moreover, many of Obama's metaphors relate to the ideas that the United States is an engine and that the United States is an unfinished product" (p. 274). Similarly, Daschle used progress as a metaphor in his leadership rhetoric to highlight the importance of developing U.S. public policy despite politicians' political differences. For Daschle, passing policies became one way to advance American progress.

"Common ground" is a second metaphor used to cultivate bipartisan rhetoric. Geurts (2019) defined common ground as a metaphorical place where information is "in the open," and that openness can be characterized as "mutual (or common) knowledge or belief" (p. 16). Daschle's direct appeals to common ground relied on shared knowledge or belief when it came to identifying shared policy goals or outcomes with Republicans and Independents. For Daschle, passing policies is possible in the metaphorical place of common ground. Both metaphors of progress and common ground illustrate to Daschle's audiences *how* to pass policy amidst differing political ideologies, which is Daschle's primary rhetorical purpose as Senate leader.

Politicians often use "ingratiation" as another rhetorical strategy to develop bipartisanship across political ideologies. Ingratiation is used by a speaker to develop a positive affinity with another person or audience. Tal-Or (2010) defined ingratiation as a set of tactics, which can

include “opinion conformity, the doing of favors, and enhancing the other through flattery and compliments” (p. 163). In the case of politics, ingratiation is when politicians thank or applaud the work of another politician or political party, in order to boost that politician’s feeling of self-importance and to recognize the achievements of that other politician or political party. It can often set the metaphorical stage for bipartisanship to occur.

Bipartisan rhetoric also raises the overall awareness of a public issue. A U.S. president’s bipartisan appeals may increase citizens’ perception of the importance of an issue (Villalobos & Sirin, 2012). For example, the Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues’ use of bipartisanship can be credited for raising awareness of how public policies differently affect men and women (Keremidchieva, 2012).

Although bipartisan rhetoric increases citizens’ awareness and perception of importance of these public issues, such rhetoric does not translate into citizens’ approval of policy outcomes. Citizens may be *less* responsive to bipartisan rhetoric when the U.S. president presents actual policy initiatives (Villalobos & Sirin, 2012). For example, citizens might support free public university tuition in theory as a bipartisan issue, but when presented with implementing and paying for such a policy through a tax increase, they may be less likely to support it. Paris (2017) found that citizens reward legislators’ bipartisan rhetoric, regardless of the outcome of the bill that they propose.

U.S. National Convention Speeches and Polarization

We turn next to the rhetorical genre of U.S. national convention addresses, and how they rely on polarization (Benoit et al., 2000; Harpine, 2001; Murphy & Burkholder, 2004). In this section, we outline functions of the genre of U.S. national convention addresses. Regardless of whether they are nomination acceptance speeches, or keynote speeches in support of the nominee, they rely on polarization to bolster the audience’s commitment to that party’s U.S. presidential nominee. Given that Daschle gave three different speeches in support of the Democratic presidential nominees during his Senate leadership career, this research is important to understanding how and why he might use polarizing rhetoric in these addresses as well as in some of his other leadership speeches.

U.S. nominating conventions emerged in the 1930s and were a response to reforming the caucus system (Jarvis, 2001). Changing communication technologies, such as television, have changed some facets of national conventions (Jarvis, 2001). U.S. national convention speeches have consistently met a few rhetorical purposes, however, given the consistent rhetorical situation. This reoccurring rhetorical situation includes a supportive audience of political party enthusiasts and an exigence of a presidential election, which includes highlighting the characteristics of that party’s presidential nominee. Neville-Shepard (2016) argued that the functions of the U.S. Republican and Democratic national convention nomination acceptance addresses were to: a) unite the party after a contentious primary (Benoit et al., 2000); b) legitimize the nominee as the party’s spokesperson (Jarvis, 2001); and c) highlight the nominee’s campaign themes (Benoit et al., 2000). Additionally, when analyzed as a genre, these speeches present a particular vision for America (Hallmark, 1992; Rowland & Jones, 2007). That vision solidifies that party’s narrative of our American identity (Cos & Martin, 2013; Murphy & Burkholder, 2004; Stuckey, 2005). Although Daschle did not present nomination acceptance speeches, he did speak at all three Democratic National Conventions (DNC’s) while he was Senate leader.

We suggest that these above qualities of the U.S. national convention nomination acceptance address are not unique to *only* the acceptance address. Instead, these characteristics become part of the genre for *all* U.S. national convention speeches. For example, Gibson and Heyse's (2010) analysis of Sarah Palin's 2008 Vice Presidential nomination acceptance address included the above functions of the presidential nomination acceptance address (Neville-Shepard, 2016). Presidential nominees' spouses also unified the party, legitimized their spouse as the party's spokesperson, and highlighted campaign themes, although with more of a focus on personal experiences (Vigil, 2014). Sarah Palin's 2008 speech unified that party by celebrating conservatism, legitimized John McCain as the spokesperson, and used personal stories to highlight campaign themes (Gibson & Heyse, 2010). Similarly, Daschle's convention rhetoric, as well as his leadership speeches more broadly, included some of these same rhetorical strategies to meet the above functions for the convention genre, such as the articulation of an optimistic vision for America's future (Hallmark, 1992).

Overall, U.S. national convention presidential nominees' acceptance speeches tend to be positive in tone (Neville-Shepard, 2016). In keynote addresses *not* given by the presidential nominee, however, speakers use polarization to create greater partisanship (Murphy & Burkholder, 2004). Polarization asks the audience to abandon middle ground; in the case of a national convention speech, to commit to that political party (Harpine, 2001).

One fundamental function of the national convention keynote is to attack the opposing candidate and party, via the rhetorical strategy of "*kategoria*" (Benoit et al., 2000; Ryan, 1982). *Kategoria* is simply defined as persuasive attack, and can include attacks on the following: the opposing party's policy, an opposing candidate's character, or an opposing party's ideals or goals. Convention keynotes may attack policy, including past deeds and future plans of the opposing party's nominee. The convention keynote may attack the opposing party and candidate based on character, including through attacking that candidate's personal qualities and leadership ability. Gibson and Heyse (2010) noted that in Palin's 2008 speech, she feminized Barack Obama's personal qualities and character. Selby (2013) argued that Mike Huckabee's speech at that same convention also attacked Obama by portraying him as an "imminent threat" (p. 387), questioning his personal qualities and leadership, specifically for Christians. Finally, such keynote speeches may also attack the opposing party's ideals (Benoit et al., 2000). Such attacks can be useful to voters, however, because ... "we can only expect the opposition to reveal a candidate's or party's weaknesses" (p. 74). Since Daschle was a speaker at three DNC's throughout his tenure as Senate leader, these speeches used polarizing rhetoric, and specifically attacked the Republican party to appeal to Democrats.

Justification of Sample and Method of Close Textual Analysis

We accessed most of Daschle's leadership speeches at the Senator Thomas A. Daschle Career Papers archive at South Dakota State University. Our sample included Daschle's leadership speeches during 1994-2004, when he served as Senate majority and minority leader. We used this sample because: a) Daschle is the only person in U.S. history to serve as both Senate majority and minority leader (South Dakota State University Archives & Special Collections, 2020); b) Daschle is under-studied as a historical rhetor; and c) Daschle is a Democrat who won three different elections in a conservative state of South Dakota.

Our sample included 23 speeches.¹ These speeches ranged from Democratic National Convention speeches, to all of the opening remarks given in the Senate during the 104th – 108th U.S. Congresses in which he was a Senate leader. We also analyzed historically significant speeches, such as remarks about President Clinton's impeachment and a speech to announce his candidacy for President of the United States, which he never delivered (Anderson, 2003).

To answer our research question, we used the rhetorical method of close textual analysis (Leff, 1986). This method asks researchers to conduct a close reading (line by line) of a rhetorical artifact, here a set of speech "texts," in order to make claims about these texts' persuasiveness. Often, through doing close reading, researchers find that specific themes or language strategies emerge across texts, similar to qualitative thematic analysis. Leff (1986) argued that close textual criticism should produce a theoretical understanding of a particular text or texts rather than generating theory more broadly. In this study, both researchers closely read (line by line) Daschle's speeches after having immersed ourselves in research about national convention speeches and bipartisan rhetoric. After conducting a close reading of the 23 speech texts, we suggest that the functions of national convention speeches could be applied to Daschle's rhetoric, particularly in those specific national convention contexts and in speeches directed to supportive audiences. Leff (1986) posited that foundational conceptions in a text, often expressed as metaphors, frame public discourse and influence its progression. In Daschle's rhetoric, we used close textual analysis to posit that metaphors such as progress and common ground framed his discourse about bipartisanship, which we next explore through the rhetorical analysis.

Rhetorical Analysis of Daschle's Leadership: Bipartisanship and Polarization

¹ This sample included the following 17 rhetorical artifacts, located in the Thomas A. Daschle Career Papers Collection at South Dakota State University, specifically in DA 3.4 Political Records - Speeches: Box 9, Folder 18, Announcement of Candidacy for President of the United States; Box 9, Folder 21, Impeachment of Clinton remarks – 1998-1999; Box 9, Folder 33, Democratic Leader Acceptance Speech, 1994; Box 9, Folder 35, DNC – Remarks, 1996, August 26; Box 9, Folder 38, Elected/Legislative Leaders of our Caucus; Box 9, Folder 46, Introducing the First Democratic Leadership Bills in America's First 50/50 Senate - Remarks : 2001 January 22; Box 9, Folder 49, Joint Commemorative Session of the United States Congress, Federal Hall, New York City : 2002 September 6; Box 9, Folder 51, Making a Difference - America and the Senate One Year After the Jeffords Switch, National Press Club - Remarks : 2002 May 22; Box 9, Folder 57, Opening of the 104th Congress, 1995 January 4; Box 9, Folder 58, Opening of the 106th Congress : 1999 January 6; Box 9, Folder 59, Politics of Common Ground Talking Points; Box 9, Folder 80, Speech Notes (five speeches, including: a) a speech given to the Democratic Caucus when they first realized they had the majority and Daschle would be the Senate majority leader for 17 days, b) a speech he gave when he decided *not* to run for President of the United States in 2003, c) a speech delivered in the middle of a Congressional session – after they returned from a three-month hiatus and at the beginning of the allegations of Clinton's impeachment process, d) a speech that appears to be at the beginning of the 107th Congress, and e) a speech dated 1/20/04, mid-session, but when he would have been minority leader, directed to the Democratic Caucus); and Box 9, Folder 82, Welcomes back colleagues & staff – 1/2/04 in the middle of the 108th Congress).

This sample also included the following six rhetorical artifacts, including four found in the Congressional Record, via the Congress.gov database, last accessed on July 9, 2019: a) Congressional Record, January 7, 1997; "The 105th Congress;" S19; b) Congressional Record, January 21, 1997; "Senate Democrats' Agenda" S127-S130 (also found in the Thomas A. Daschle Career Papers Collection at SDSU, in DA 3.2, Box 1, Folder 106); c) Congressional Record, January 7, 2003; "Democratic Leadership Priorities for the 108th Congress;" S38-S64; and d) Congressional Record, January 7, 2003; "Opening of the 108th Congress;" S8-S9. We also found two leadership speeches' transcripts via C-SPAN closed captioning: a) DNC Convention from 2000 – gave a speech/not the keynote; and b) DNC Convention from 2004 – gave a speech/not the keynote.

Upon conducting close textual analysis, we found two primary rhetorical strategies that Daschle used as Democratic leader: bipartisanship and polarization. Within each of these strategies, Daschle used different rhetorical resources to build his arguments. Each rhetorical situation was different, yet he consistently relied on these resources across the different rhetorical situations throughout the 10-year span of his leadership.

Bipartisanship

Daschle made direct rhetorical appeals to bipartisanship, which can be effective given his rhetorical purpose of trying to pass and implement policy, particularly through Congress (Keremidchieva, 2012; Paris, 2017). Within bipartisanship, he used two different metaphors (Heidt, 2013) to justify reaching across the aisle: progress (Smith, 2019) and common ground (Geurts, 2019).

Progress. Daschle used rhetorical appeals that referenced the importance of negotiation or compromise, in order to make progress on policy. Daschle (2001) argued that Democrats must be willing to negotiate with Republicans, yet not sacrifice Democrats' core principles (p. 4). He also said that Democrats must work with Republicans if they want to achieve any kind of progress with policy (Daschle, n.d., *Intro remarks*, p. 4). Daschle often used the rhetorical strategy of ingratiation (Tal-Or, 2010) to appeal to newly elected Republican leaders, including in opening remarks to new sessions of Congress (149 Cong. Rec. S8, 2003). Daschle (1995) also spoke of the importance of "compromise legislation" (pp. 21-22). The use of the progress metaphor is an example of strategic ambiguity (Ceccarelli, 1998; Pietrucci, 2012), which allows multiple audiences, including Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, to feel connected to him as a rhetor. After all, what Senator would be against passing policies to ensure American progress? In that way, it serves as an ideograph (McGee, 1980) amongst all Senators, regardless of political affiliation.

Another component of the progress metaphor is the notion of achievement, as a result of bipartisanship. For example, Daschle argued for the "unlimited potential of achievement through bipartisanship" (143 Cong. Rec. S127, 1997) and for "consensus and bipartisan achievement" (Daschle, 2004a). As Paris (2017) argued, citizens tend to reward legislators for bipartisanship, especially when used in rhetoric. By using such strategic ambiguity (Ceccarelli, 1998; Pietrucci, 2012) as a bipartisan strategy, Daschle attempted to persuade Senators that working together could have a tangible benefit of voters' approval.

Beyond achievement, Daschle also argued that bipartisanship can have concrete results in relying on the metaphor of progress. Daschle (1994) spoke of how Americans expect results from the Senate, rather than a focus on Democratic or Republican labels of their Senators (p. 2). In a speech draft he prepared to announce his candidacy for President of the United States, he stated: "We don't care much for labels. It doesn't matter if you're a Republican or Democrat ... but if you have the good ideas, strong values, and are willing to work with others ... you can get the job done" (Daschle, n.d., *Remarks by Senate*, p. 2). Daschle relied on the metaphor of progress, to try to persuade American voters that he could "get the job done" in terms of policy results.

In many speeches during the opening of a congressional session, he spoke of the importance of bipartisanship in working with Republicans to achieve progress on passing policy. For example, he talked about the importance of working with Republican colleagues to achieve "a most productive session" (Daschle, n.d., *Speech notes: Speech delivered in the middle of a*

Congressional session; Daschle, n.d., *Speech notes: Speech given to the 107th Congress*, p. 1, number 11). In another speech, he said he wanted the 107th Congress to be historic not just in following the 9/11 attacks but also for its ability to make progress on policy (Daschle, 2004b). Daschle's connection between bipartisanship and results used the strategic ambiguity (Ceccarelli, 1998; Pietrucci, 2012) of progress to make the argument to his Republican, Democratic, and Independent colleagues that the best path forward is to work together to pass policy.

Finally, Daschle relied on the progress metaphor when speaking about how debate and discussion produce better legislation and move America forward. He discussed the power of debate to produce better bills (Daschle, 2002a, p. 2). Later in that speech, he used antithesis to state the importance of asking questions rather than being silent, noting that "silence is not patriotism" (Daschle, 2002a, p. 3, emphasis in original). Indeed, in a speech given after Democrats lost control of the Senate, he argued that the election "...shouldn't discourage working across the aisle – but support it...it certainly should not prohibit productive discussion with the new [Republican] administration..." (Daschle, n.d., *Speech notes: Speech given to the Democratic Caucus*, p. 4, emphasis in original). In all of these speeches, he argued that productive discussion produced the best legislation, which was his rhetorical purpose as Democratic leader. He also used the rhetorical strategy of negation by arguing that "honorable debate and compromise has been in short supply...its absence has prevented us from doing many things we ought to do" (Daschle, 2001, p. 16). Daschle used bipartisan rhetoric to appeal to his colleagues across the aisle, and specifically to meet his purpose to pass bills and produce successful policy, using the metaphor of progress as a rhetorical resource.

Common ground. The other metaphor Daschle used in his bipartisan rhetoric was common ground (Daschle, 1995, p. 33; Daschle, 1999, p. 2). While progress is a bipartisan strategy grounded in strategic ambiguity (Ceccarelli, 1998; Pietrucci, 2012), the common ground metaphor more explicitly targeted his audience of Democrats as a strategy for their success (Daschle, n.d., *Talking points*, p. 1). He argued that there were a growing number of "common ground" Republican Senators, such as John McCain and Lindsey Graham (Daschle, n.d., *Talking points*, p. 1), whom Democrats could work with in this metaphorical place of common ground (Geurts, 2019). Indeed, he expressed frustration with the House of Representatives for their partisan handling of the impeachment of President Bill Clinton, arguing for the need for common ground (Daschle, n.d., *Statement of Democratic Leader*, p. 1).

Building common ground was accomplished through working in another location – the political center – although Daschle did not explicitly identify as a moderate. Early on in his career as Democratic leader, he self-identified as a politician who was part of a group of Senators "...who try to work in the [political] center" (Daschle, 1995, p. 30). In his announcement to run for President of the United States, which appeared to have been written in late 2002 or early 2003, he stated the need to bring Washington back to the [political] center, "away from the extremes of both parties" (Daschle, n.d., *Remarks by Senate*, p. 4). Daschle likely appealed to the political center as a rhetorical resource given what we know about the historical context surrounding his leadership – he was a Democrat from South Dakota, and therefore had to appeal to such rhetoric to be electable in South Dakota.

Polarization

Although Daschle was known for bipartisan rhetoric, at times he also used polarization (Harpine, 2001), especially when giving speeches at the Democratic National Convention or to

the Democratic Caucus. Daschle used polarization in three ways: a) blaming Republicans for inaction; b) blaming Republicans for what he perceived as bad policies; and c) attacking the George W. Bush administration.

Blaming Republicans for inaction. Daschle first blamed the Republicans for their inaction, which is an attack on the opposing party's character and is a function of national convention speeches (Benoit, Blaney, & Pier, 2000). In contrast, Daschle positioned Democrats as the party of action, grounded in faith in our democracy (Daschle, 2002b, p. 3). In his address at the Democratic National Convention in 2000, Daschle stated, "Democrats proposed ideas and Republicans opposed them. Each of them. Every chance they got. They're still doing it. But they were wrong then, and they are wrong now" (C-SPAN, 2000). Daschle asserted that Republicans were not representing Americans and their concerns, but that he and other Democratic Senators would "put our money where the Republicans' mouths are" (149 Cong. Rec. S38, 2003). For example, he applauded Congress for working together to pass national security measures after 9/11, but said that Republicans needed to recognize that people's economic security and access to education were just as important as the war on terrorism, blaming Republicans for inaction (Daschle, 2002a). He used polarization to position Democrats as the party of action in comparison to Republicans' character (Benoit, Blaney, & Pier, 2000) as the party of inaction.

In addition to blaming Republicans for inaction, Daschle also attacked Republicans' character through arguing that they used "division and polarization to deepen division in America" (Daschle, n.d., *Talking points*, p. 1). This was a speech given to the Democratic Caucus, and although he was trying to applaud Democrats for their action, he was simultaneously expanding the partisan divide by attacking Republicans' character (Benoit et al., 2000). We suggest that attacking the opposition's character may be a rhetorical strategy when facing any supportive audience, and specifically the Democratic Caucus. While this rhetoric did unite the Democratic Caucus, it also may have diluted Daschle's other bipartisan appeals, especially to his South Dakota constituents, who were less likely to associate with the Democratic party later on in his Senate career (Pew Research Center, 2017).

Blaming Republicans for bad policies. Daschle used a second rhetorical strategy of polarization by blaming Republicans for what he perceived to be bad policies for the American working class. The strategy of blaming the opposing party for their policies is another function of national convention speeches (Benoit et al., 2000). Daschle was on good terms with many Republican Senators (Lancaster, 2001); however, he stated that Republicans' policies, even when paired with good intentions, were often misguided (Daschle, n.d., *Remarks by Senate*). In a couple of DNC speeches, Daschle articulated that Democrats and Republicans had different visions for the United States (Hallmark, 1992), particularly when it came to representing America's working class families (C-SPAN, 2004; Daschle, 1996). He outlined similar themes in another address to the Democratic Caucus in 2002, expressing frustrations with Republicans for spending the economic surplus and blocking regulations that ensured workplace and environmental protections (Daschle, 2002a). In his opening statement of the 104th Congress, he blamed Republicans for several issues, including the national debt and the lack of lobbying reform (Daschle, 1995). These examples represented Daschle's chief exasperation with Republicans: their unwillingness to put American working class families, and their futures, at the center of policy.

Attacking the George W. Bush administration. Finally, Daschle started his last term as Senate leader wanting to work with the Republican President George W. Bush; he sought to have a good relationship with Bush, despite their differing views (Frommer, 2000; Kranz, 2001).

Daschle soon realized, however, that compromising with a Republican president while Democrats had the minority in Congress was a challenge. In one instance, Daschle said of President Bush, "When it comes to bi-partisanship - [the] President's words appear to be in conflict. He spoke of unity and bi-partisanship in his inaugural address. But he has used different language in his remarks since" (Daschle, 2004b, p. 6). Daschle again expressed irritation with the Bush administration for not passing compromise legislation (Daschle, 2004a). Because Daschle upheld bipartisanship in his leadership rhetoric, President Bush's inability to work with Democrats became a frustration to Daschle's rhetorical purpose of passing policy.

Daschle also attacked the Bush administration and the broader Republican platform due to their unwillingness to fight for working class or "middle income" American families (149 CR, S39, 2003). In response to Bush's tax plan, Daschle said, "The President has made clear his priorities – more tax cuts for those who need them least" (149 CR, S39, 2003). He reiterated these criticisms again in his announcement for the Presidency speech: "President Bush promised to govern as a moderate and change the tone in Washington. He has done neither. This Administration lets Washington special interests call the shots" (Daschle, n.d., *Remarks by Senate*, p. 4). This critique of the opposing party's leadership is a common function of national convention speeches (Benoit, Blaney, & Pier, 2000), and can be expected in a speech that Daschle wrote in considering his own presidential candidacy. Daschle was surprised by Republicans' unwillingness to support policies that would ensure a bright future for American working class families, which was his vision for America (Hallmark, 1992). His disappointment with the Bush administration stemmed from the fact that they claimed to want the same policies and outcomes as Daschle and the Democrats, but then refused to work together and follow through with action.

Implications, Limitations, and Future Research

Given this rhetorical analysis, how did Senator Thomas A. Daschle use his leadership speeches to work across the political aisle? We found that he relied on the rhetorical strategies of bipartisanship and polarization to achieve his purpose of guiding the Senate to pass policy. Specifically, he used metaphors (Heidt, 2013) such as progress (Smith, 2019) and common ground (Geurts, 2019) to appeal to bipartisanship. Within polarization, he blamed Republicans for inaction, blamed Republicans for passing bad policies, and attacked the George W. Bush administration. In what follows, we discuss applied and theoretical implications for the genre of national convention speeches, limitations, and future research directions.

Our analysis of Daschle's leadership speeches has applied implications. Given the contentious political climate of 2020, especially since the 2016 U.S. presidential election (Drury & Kuehl, 2018), we see Daschle's rhetorical appeals of bipartisanship and polarization as rhetorical resources of invention, especially for other politicians and citizens. This study has applied implications for how citizens might better communicate across political ideologies, including using bipartisan appeals to common ground through strategic ambiguity (Ceccarelli, 1998; Pietrucci, 2012). To elaborate, a citizen or politician could use the metaphor of common ground (Geurts, 2019) in talking about shared policy goals or outcomes. For example, take the "wicked problem" (Rittel & Webber, 1973) of preferred gender pronouns in the university classroom. With this controversial public issue, citizens or politicians might disagree on how to develop a preferred pronouns policy for all students, to include students who might use non-binary gender pronouns (e.g., they/them/theirs). In this case, if the citizens or politicians who

have differing political ideologies are using a rhetorical strategy of common ground, they might focus on the shared policy outcome of students' feelings of safety and inclusion in school. By focusing on this common ground, they can then discuss different ways to achieve that shared outcome, even given their differing political ideologies or beliefs.

In comparing Daschle's leadership rhetoric to presidential rhetoric in 2020, even Daschle's strategy of polarization was a respectful framing of how he disagreed with Republican ideals and the leadership of President George W. Bush. Daschle's use of polarization (Harpine, 2001) fit with the function of national convention speeches (Benoit et al., 2000), bolstering his vision of America (Hallmark, 1992) as one that respectfully differed from Republicans' vision. Politicians can and will disagree with other politicians' visions for America; however, Daschle's rhetorical strategy of polarization provides insight into how to do so in a respectful manner. A politician can use polarization to highlight policy differences rather than use rhetorical fallacies such as *ad hominem* attacks against a candidate. For example, Daschle focused on Republicans' "bad policies" in order to highlight what he felt were Democrats' "good policies." In this way, polarization can illustrate key differences between political parties' visions and policy platforms for America, which is useful information for voters (Benoit, Blaney, & Pier, 2000).

Beyond the applied implications, this study also offers theoretical contributions for the genre of U.S. national convention speeches. Daschle's use of the rhetorical strategy of polarization (Harpine, 2001) fit the genre of national convention acceptance speeches and their functions (Neville-Shepard, 2016), despite him *not* delivering a presidential nomination acceptance address. This study suggests that the functions of U.S. national convention acceptance speeches can be applied to other speeches within the rhetorical situation of a national convention, and also rhetorical situations with supportive audiences – in Daschle's case, the Democratic Caucus. In most of his leadership speeches, Daschle united his party around an optimistic narrative of America (Cos & Martin, 2013; Murphy & Burkholder, 2004; Stuckey, 2005), and he specifically centered this narrative on the working class family. Daschle's bipartisan rhetoric can serve as a model for how to disagree with opposition, because even though he used blaming and attacking as rhetorical strategies (Benoit et al., 2000), these strategies were respectful of the opposition. Such strategies acknowledged that both political parties shared similar end goals even if they disagreed on how to attain them.

One important limitation to this study is that we explored Daschle's rhetoric in a specific historical context that at the time might have been increasingly partisan (Pew Research Center, 2017), but pales in comparison to the political partisanship of 2020. Given the context of increased partisanship in 2020, our claims regarding the possibilities of bipartisan rhetoric are potentially limited. For example, perhaps politicians will decide *not* to attempt to use bipartisanship or reach across the political aisle at all, especially as President Donald J. Trump's 2020 presidential campaign becomes the first in U.S. history to attempt to focus solely on getting the Republican base out to vote (Bennett, 2019).

This study also has implications regarding focusing on Daschle as a significant historical rhetor who offered strategies for how to establish common ground in U.S. politics. While the study of U.S. Senate or U.S. House of Representatives leadership speeches is not an established area of study for rhetorical studies or political communication, we suggest that it might be fruitful to explore in more depth, across different leaders over time. More studies are needed to see if Daschle's strategies of bipartisanship and polarization are a common facet of all U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives leadership speeches, regardless of political party

affiliation, or if these strategies might be unique to him as a rhetor in a particular historical context during his Senate leadership.

Conclusion

This study shows that Senator Thomas A. Daschle can serve as a role model for 2020 and beyond, in considering how to talk about “wicked problems” (Rittel & Webber, 1973) or complicated public issues across divergent political ideologies. His strategies of bipartisanship and polarization were used with different audiences but allowed him versatility in terms of rhetorical resources for invention. As a bipartisan Senate leader, he used political metaphors (Heidt, 2013), specifically progress (Smith, 2019) and common ground (Geurts, 2019), to appeal across the aisle to Republicans and Independents. As a Democratic leader, he relied on polarization to showcase the Democratic party as the party of action – the party that had a hopeful vision for American working class families. These polarization strategies included criticizing Republicans’ policies and inaction and attacking President George W. Bush for not adhering to the values of unity and bipartisanship that he had promised to uphold as president. Such polarization allowed Daschle to contrast the Democratic party’s vision for America with the Republican party’s vision in a way that was forthright and candid but simultaneously respectful. Maintaining this level of respect between the two political parties was especially significant in the wake of a national emergency such as 9/11, and would be equally consequential given the numerous crises faced by the United States now and in the future. Therefore, the adaptability of these rhetorical strategies across bipartisanship and polarization can serve as rhetorical resources for those of us who are committed to talking about these “wicked problems” (Rittel & Webber, 1973) that continue to affect us as a nation. By using these rhetorical strategies, we can discuss and develop public policies that will create a better future for *all* citizens of the United States, regardless of political ideology.

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