

War of Words

Tracking Changes in Presidential Speech Drafts

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Abstract

This study examines the presidential speech writing and review process in the White House. The study seeks to illuminate the origins of presidential speech and examine some of the institutional conflicts within the presidency. The study uses multiple drafts of presidential addresses from the archives of the Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan administrations. Content analysis is used to track changes in presidential rhetoric as speeches work their way through the White House staffing process. The results suggest that there is significant conflict within the executive branch and that the presidency is in some ways a set of institutions rather than a single institution.

War of Words*

“This is where my heart was plucked from my breast and dragged along Wet Exec, hauled along every pebble and pothole. This was my Heartbreak Hill, my Hanoi Hilton, this was... the staffing process.”¹

Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan

The White House presents a serene façade to the outside world. United behind the singular Chief Executive we expect the executive branch to share a single perspective and work together toward one goal. The people in the White House labor to present a unified front. Despite this, occasional leaks and public eruptions suggest that much more is going on inside the gates of the White House complex. Generally, scholars study the presidency as a single institution, occasionally acknowledging the political and personal conflicts within the institution but dismissing these battles as aberrations caused by personal ambition or political incompetence.

The study of the writing of presidential speeches presents a new angle to take a fresh look the presidency. In his work of the rhetorical presidency, Jeff Tulis has described the speechwriting office as “an institutional locus of policy making in the White House, not merely annex to policymaking.”² Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan asserted that “speechwriting in the Reagan White House was where the philosophical, ideological, and political tensions of the administration got worked out.”³ While the speechwriters are not developing public policy and political strategy, they are working with those offices at critical moments in the process. This makes the speechwriting process is a unique opportunity to watch the political forces at work inside the White House. The institutionalization of the speech clearance process has given many political and institutional interests places at the editing table and can help us see the careful balancing of political and institutional demands to be managed before a president speaks.

The speechwriting process may be a unique opportunity for study because of the paper trail it establishes. While many of the policy debates and political strategy sessions in the White House are meetings in which little is written down, the speech writing and drafting process requires that ideas be put to paper, allowing researchers to examine speech drafts for evidence of some of the differences between

individuals and offices throughout the administration. This paper uses an analysis of changes to speech drafts to construct a kind of crude rhetorical seismograph to detect and measure institutional conflict within the White House. The results presented here demonstrate that the White House is not of one mind and that the institution of the modern presidency is best viewed as being composed of many offices with similar, but not identical, goals, supporting Terry Moe's description of the presidency as "a maze of supporting expectations and relations."⁴ While the differences within the White House walls may be relatively subtle, the lessons learned from these struggles are valuable in forming a more realistic view of the presidency.

Why study speechwriting and clearance

There are many reasons why political science needs to pay more attention to presidential speechwriting. While presidential phrases have always enjoyed a special place in American politics, communication has become the central focus of media coverage and scholarly treatments of the presidency. Whether described as the "bully pulpit" or "going public" citizens, reporters, and scholars increasingly evaluate presidents based on their public performances. Even before the rise of the modern presidency, formal addresses played an important role in how presidents portrayed themselves, their office, and the nation.

While presidential speeches are one of the most visible elements of president power, surprisingly little study has been dedicated to the process behind the president's words. Presidential speech has been the focus of some of the most influential books on the presidency. In The Rhetorical Presidency Jeff Tulis argues that modern presidents' appeals for public support has fundamentally transformed the presidency and undone the intention of the authors of the Constitution.⁵ In Going Public, Sam Kernell makes a similar claim that presidential appeals to the public for support have undermined the compromise and bargaining needed to make representative democracy work.⁶ Lawrence Jacobs and Robert Shapiro have argued that presidents have increasingly engaged in a strategy that they label "crafted speech."⁷ Despite research by George Edwards that argues that the impact of presidential speech is overstated⁸ scholarly

interest in presidential speech remains high, suggesting that we need to spend some time studying the crafting of presidential speech.

While the connection between presidential rhetoric and presidential power make the crafting of presidential speech significant on its own, we can also examine the speechwriting process as a means of studying power within the modern White House. As William Muir, a speechwriter for Vice President Bush noted, “Within the quiet and the unity of the presidency, the circulation of a draft speech aroused strong-willed individuals. Those who knew what mattered in government converged on speeches.”⁹

Speechwriting presents a unique chance to study power in the White House for several reasons. As Karen Hult and Charles Walcott point out, “presidential speeches can be catalysts for the formulation of public policy and political strategy, compelling presidents and their advisers to make policy decisions in order to be able to articulate them.”¹⁰ Often there is nothing to fight over until a speech is produced. Drafts of presidential addresses are often the first time specific positions are committed to paper and circulated throughout the administration. George W. Bush’s communications director Karen Hughes noted that speechwriting “forces the policy decisions to be finalized.”¹¹ Ideas may be brewing in some corners of the White House, but until the words hit the page and are circulated, there is no focus to the discussions and no forum for the clash of ideas. This makes speechwriters interesting witnesses to the exercise of power because of their role in resolving disputes between the most important players in the administration.

Speechwriting sometimes becomes an intense battlefield before a specific policy is developed or even discussed within the White House because the president will be spelling out broad principals that once publicly stated, cannot be easily reversed. It is for this reason that speechwriters often become, in the words of one Reagan speechwriter, “the referee among warring factions.”¹²

In addition, the speechwriting process itself can generate policy ideas as the need for inspiring language can alter policy goals. Franklin Roosevelt once took a pencil and raised the number of planes that he was calling for in a speech draft. When Harry Hopkins questioned why the President was now

calling for production beyond what military and production advisors had given, Roosevelt remarked: “Oh, the production people can do it if they really try.”¹³ The significance of presidential phrasing goes beyond the response of the public because presidential speech plays an important role in the policy process as offices throughout the government pour over presidential comments searching for an endorsement of their office’s priorities. As Bradley Patterson eloquently puts it, “A slight verbal nuance could set hundreds of thousands applauding but may commit hundreds of millions in resources.”¹⁴ Budget Director Charles Schultze once complained to Nixon speechwriter Will Sparks, “the real menace to a balanced budget around here isn’t the departments: it the speech writers.”¹⁵

The battles over presidential speech in the White House may be the best place to study White House politics because they reveal the full array of personal, bureaucratic, interest group, and even geographic conflicts. While they often present a unified front to the outside world, within the walls of the White House, these forces feel free to fight among themselves. While generally out of sight, these battles can be unearthed in the changes to drafts of speeches stored in the archives.

The Speechwriting Process in the Modern White House

The speechwriting process is more inclusive and institutionalized than many expect because by the time of Franklin Roosevelt presidential rhetoric had become too valuable to be dispensed without the greatest care. The process had developed because of the close scrutiny applied to presidential speech. One of the pressures toward cautious speech is the vast audience for each presidential statement. As he moved from the Congress to the presidency, John F. Kennedy understood that the audience of his speeches had changed. “The big difference,” he told speechwriter Ted Sorensen, “is all the different audiences that hear every word. In the Senate we didn’t have to worry so much about how Krushchev and Adenauer and Nehru and Dirksen would react.”¹⁶ Looking back on Bush’s speech to Congress after the September 11 attacks, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, acknowledged that Bush was addressing many audiences: “He was speaking to the American people, foreign leaders, to the Congress and to the Taliban.”¹⁷ Kennedy was not the first president to worry about the impact of presidential

speech, Calvin Coolidge noted that: “Everything that the President does potentially at least is of such great importance that he must be constantly on guard.”¹⁸ One presidential speechwriter recoiled at the objections to the scripting of presidents. “Why can’t he just wing it? The answer is that everything the president says is engraved eternally in stone.”¹⁹ Today, the culture of Washington is, according to columnist Tish Durkin, one in which, “each syllable needs to be bubble-wrapped in euphemism, so that the meaning is muffled out of it and no one can possibly be offended—or rather, so that no one has occasion to jump on the streetcar named ire.”²⁰

The worry over the choice of presidential words has led to a process designed to both maximize its impact while minimizing mistakes. By the time of the Johnson and Nixon administrations this would take the form of full-time speechwriters, eventually having an office dedicated specifically to speechwriting during the Nixon administration. While the appearance of speechwriting on the organizational charts might have looked like a promotion, the segregation of that function to individuals with little connection to the policy process would limit the speechwriters’ role in the policy process.²¹

The speechwriting process in the White House today involves seven steps: (1) scheduling, (2) assignment, (3) drafting and editing, (4) circulation and comment, (5) staff revisions, (6) presidential revision, and (7) presidential ad-libbing.²² While the system has evolved in some regards, some elements of the process remain the same from Franklin Roosevelt to the present. These steps are more formalized in the modern White House, but they represent the basic process going back as far as Roosevelt.

Scheduling

Presidential speeches may be scheduled for different reasons. Most begin as events in search of a speech. These most often will become minor speeches that must be written to accommodate the president’s needs after they have agreed to attend a particular event. During the presidency of Lyndon Johnson a young speech writer named Peter Benchley coined the phrase “Rose Garden Rubbish” to describe the flood of small speeches pressed upon the president. According to Nixon speechwriter James C. Humes, Rose Garden Rubbish is composed of “the concoctions of commendations, felicitations, and

salutations that come forth from the president when he exits the Oval Office into the Rose Garden to deliver greetings to the Easter Seal Poster Girl or the ‘seasonal wishes’ when he lights the National Christmas Tree.”²³ These minor addresses are generally scheduled and passed on to the speechwriting staff with little or no guidance from the president. Speechwriters generally shun the “rubbish” label since even minor speeches reach a world audience. As one Clinton speechwriter noted, “We realized that every time the President went into the Rose Garden it could be carried on C-SPAN and every cable station. There is no hiding from the press scrutiny. Everything counts. So, even the Rose Garden Rubbish had to be scripted, or at least thought out.”²⁴

Major addresses usually begin as policy proclamations in search of the best venue and generally take shape in meetings of the president and their closest advisors. Based on that discussion, the president and senior staff come up with an outline of what the president wants to say and what audience and event would best serve the goals of the speech.

These meetings today often do not usually include the speechwriters. While many of the speeches written for from Roosevelt to Johnson had been drafted by general policy advisors who would write speeches on the topics they advised on, by the time Gerald Ford assumed the presidency in 1974, the speechwriters in the White House had become narrow specialists. As Hult and Walcott note, the Nixon speechwriters had been segregated into the Office of Speechwriting and were writing specialists, playing no significant part in policy or political advising.²⁵ Carter speechwriter James Fallows asked for permission to sit in on policy meetings because “I think the more familiar I am with the arguments and assumptions that lie behind your decisions, the more successful I will be in helping present them.” Carter’s response was a less than enthusiastic: “OK-don’t overdo it.”²⁶

Assignment

Once the speech is set, the head speechwriter (or director of speechwriting) must decide who will write the speech. With few exceptions, speeches were given to only one speechwriter. Specialization is usually avoided to keep all of the writers informed on a range of issues and to keep the rhetoric on a topic

as fresh as possible.²⁷ Rotating assignments also has the advantage of keeping writers from having a sense of ownership of topics that could result in the expectation of control over the policy itself. While rotating speeches may have kept the speechwriters fresh, it also diminished their clout in internal battles, making it harder for them to control the text.

Under Nixon, the speechwriting staff had included up to eight speechwriters at a time. Ford opted to reduce the number of speechwriters to six speechwriters, where the number has stayed since. One of the ironies of the Ford presidency is that while he was not regarded as a strong speaker, he quickly became of the most active speech-givers to inhabit the White House. The speechwriting staff estimated that by the end of 1976, they had produced 1,142 speeches, 174 proclamations, 68 veto messages, 154 bill signing statements, 196 executive orders, 405 communications to Congress, 81 memos to head of federal departments and agencies, and 143 news conference statements and “Q and A’s.” By their estimation, this brought the “Presidential Word Count” up to 2,732,563.²⁸ The volume of speeches given to Ford’s speechwriters helped insure that they would be too busy to intrude into policy and Ford’s chief speechwriter, Robert Hartman urged the President to speak less²⁹ often perhaps hoping this would allow him to return to the role of chief policy advisor that he had enjoyed during Ford’s service in the House.

Drafting and editing

After the head speechwriter has decided which of the speechwriters gets the assignment, one of the speechwriters sits down to the task of writing the speech. Generally, the writers work alone, occasionally showing drafts to the other speechwriters, but usually sticking to themselves. Speechwriters often go through several drafts, often dramatically re-writing their earlier drafts.

The speechwriters today are usually assisted by researchers who help locate general background readings and other materials. These researchers also systematically fact check every word in every sentence in drafts to ensure that no factual errors occur. One of the most awkward tasks is fact-checking the president. Reagan’s stories were often hard to corroborate. Reagan frequently told the story of a Congressional Medal of Honor winner who received the award for staying aboard a crippled B-17 rather

than to leave a wounded ball-turret gunner to crash alone. According to Lou Cannon, “The only serious debate within the White House was whether Reagan knew what he was doing when he told a made-up story or whether he had reached a point where he actually could not distinguish films from facts.”³⁰

Eventually, the speechwriter produces a draft and passes it along to the head of the speechwriting office. That person reviews the draft and may offer suggestions for improvement. When the head speechwriter determines the speech is ready they prepare the draft for wider circulation in the administration.

Circulation and comment

While some elements of presidential speechwriting have been relatively consistent over time, the circulation of speech drafts throughout the EOP has become more expansive and standardized since the 1970s. For example, during the Kennedy Administration, the circulation speech drafts would vary from speech to speech. In some cases, Kennedy deliberately avoided some departments. For example, Kennedy didn’t want drafts of his speech at American University (the “Peace Speech”) circulated for review because he expected resistance from the State and Defense departments. In a draft of his remarks for the annual Gridiron Club Dinner, Kennedy pointedly joked, “This speech has not been submitted to the State Department for clearance... so I have been asked to announce that these views are not necessarily theirs - - which is all right, since their views are not always mine.”³¹

While there was a legitimate need for a systematic process, staffing would grow, according to Hult and Walcott, “out of control.”³² When a reporter asked how many speechwriters worked in the Ford White House, Robert Orben turned to another speechwriter and said, “I don’t know Milt [Freeman], how many are there now? Is it five or six hundred?”³³

The speech review process should not be dismissed as a routine clerical matter left to minor administration officials. While cabinet secretaries often leave the initial review of most speech drafts to assistants, the process often involves many of the top people in the administration. Major speeches often involved significant disagreements. Ronald Reagan’s famous June 1987 speech at the Brandenburg Gate

generated a great deal of debate within the administration with both Deputy National Security Advisor Colin Powell and Secretary of State George Shultz objecting to different versions of the draft in part because of the language behind urging “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!” While Robinson considered the NSC draft timid, the NSC staff considered Robinson’s draft “a mediocre speech and a missed opportunity.”³⁴ The speech went to the NSC staff and State Department twice, both times returning extensively marked up with strongly worded criticisms filling the margins on some pages. Reagan would eventually approve the strong language saying to Robinson with a smile, “The boys at State are going to kill me but it’s the right thing to do.”³⁵

In addition, we should not assume that the process is only inclusive in a few cases. An excellent example is the seemingly innocuous process of finding the right words to light the National Christmas Tree. After drafting the remarks for George H.W. Bush’s 1989 tree lighting ceremony, the speechwriters circulated their draft to 17 key officials in and around the White House. The memorandum asked for “action” by eight individuals including Brent Scowcroft (National Security Council), Boyden Gray (White House Counsel), Fred McClure (head of Congressional Relations), and Roger Porter (Director of Policy Development). Nine others were given copies “FYI.” Those who were informed without their advice being sought included Chief of Staff John Sununu, Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater, presidential image-maker Sig Rogich, Deputy Assistant to the President for Communications Chriss Winston, and Vice President Dan Quayle.³⁶ Clearly, almost everyone in the Bush White House got a chance to review these documents.

National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft was known by the Bush speechwriters as a careful editor who closely scrutinized speech drafts. As one speechwriter put it, “There were many evenings when there were two lights on in the White House, Scowcroft’s and mine as I waited for him to review a speech.”³⁷ Bush’s tree lighting speech, while not a major policy address received extensive review from the NSC which saw little need to risk the creation of any ill will with a minor address. Scowcroft suggests deleting the phrase “From the Atlantic to the Urals” from the speech’s claim of a “far better Christmas than

Europe has ever known.” As Scrowcroft noted in the margins, the phrase “Echoes Soviet contention regarding a ‘Common European house.’” Scrowcroft also circles a reference to “Unconquerable people” and notes, “In fact, the Czechs have a history of yielding without a fight.”³⁸

The debate in the staffing process can rise from any number of concerns. A good example is a memo from a member of Gerald Ford’s NSC staff who complained “the fact remains that if we do not break the continued absence of any reference to Africa in the President’s speeches, the adverse impact this creates in Africa will only increase.” Horan, as a representative of the National Security Council, was not simply narrowly representing the interests of the agency. He was instead trying to find presidential language that would dissuade the perception on that continent that Africa is unimportant to the United States.³⁹ The language of George W. Bush’s speech to a joint session of Congress after the September 11 attacks was edited due to similar concerns. In the original draft Islamic extremists were compared to the Nazis and Communists who had disappeared “History’s graveyard of discarded lies.” However, the word “communist” was changed to “totalitarianism” to avoid offending China whose vote would be needed in the U. N. Security Council.⁴⁰ International constituencies even found their way into Reagan’s famous address at Pointe du Hoc on the anniversary of the Normandy invasion. After being lobbied by the State department, Peggy Noonan added a reference to the Soviet Union’s role in defeating the Germans to the speech that honored the Rangers from U.S. forces. As she complained at the time, the added reference interfered with the flow of the speech: “It sounds like we stopped the speech dead to throw a fish to the bear.”⁴¹

The president’s annual “state of the union” speech is the premier battleground for presidential rhetoric as department’s angle for a place in the speech to give them a foothold in policy and budget battles to come. As Aram Bakshian, a veteran of three administrations, points out, everyone wants to get into this speech: “Every little crappy agency wants their stuff, their agenda, included.”⁴² Clark Clifford suggested that, “Every department, of course, would want the State of the Union message devoted practically exclusively to their problems.”⁴³

Some of the battles are more political than institutional. The Reagan speechwriters generally considered themselves the ideological heart of the White House. John Ehrlichman complained that in the writing of one of Nixon's speech on Vietnam as "all the ideological factions of the White House staff—came creeping out of the bushes."⁴⁴

Representational forces also come into play during the review process. During the Reagan administration, Elizabeth Dole, who as head of the Office of Public Liaison, asked to see a draft of the 1982 State of the Union address so that she could see how well the draft reached key constituencies. Dole wrote head speechwriter Aram Bakshian: "Since you are well aware of our mandate, I am sure you can appreciate my interest in having the opportunity to see one of our SOTUA drafts. From a constituency standpoint, it is critical that we have a solid acknowledgement of the importance of women, Hispanics, Blacks, and ethnics."⁴⁵

Rounding out the conflict in the White House is personal ambition. As one veteran of the White House observed, personal conflicts overlay the complex politics of the executive branch: "Amidst the vortex of controversy, personal ambitions would swirl."⁴⁶ Putting it more colorfully, Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan complained about, "cheap jockeying" and "sleazy backstabbing in the White house."⁴⁷

By the end of the review process, speeches have been reviewed by many officials, all with their own motives. The task of reassembling the drafts then returns to the speechwriters.

Staff revisions

Comments on speech drafts find their way back to the speechwriters, usually according to a schedule set up by the staff secretary or someone else charged with managing the flow of paperwork. Incorporating the feedback that comes from around the White House is a unique combination of art and diplomacy as speechwriters try to incorporate conflicting advice from a large number of administration officials who usually outrank them. As one Nixon speechwriter noted, "Successful Washington speech writing is one percent literary talent and ninety-nine percent political in-fighting."⁴⁸ Michael Gerson, who was head

speechwriter during George W. Bush's first term, commented, "I tell new writers that I hire that the job is half-writing and half-diplomacy." ⁴⁹

The position of the speechwriters in the process and the conflicting advice of others in the Administration allow speechwriters to maintain some control over the prose. As one Carter speechwriter noted, if they used all the input the speech would become "hodgepodge."⁵⁰ Reagan speechwriter Peter Robinson recounted, "Officials marking up a foreign policy speech at the State Department and Pentagon, for instance, might insert contradictory comments forcing the speechwriter to spend a lot of time on the telephone persuading the officials to sort out their differences." ⁵¹

Although the Reagan speechwriters were usually able to maintain some control over the process and return the speech in a coherent form, speechwriters in other administrations sometimes found themselves unable to reject enough suggestions to put together a cohesive speech. In these cases the fate of the speech ultimately goes to the president, allowing them the opportunity to regain control over the content and put the speech back together. However, this might be difficult if the speechwriters have not laid a solid foundation. In his attempt to placate both sides of the battle over the 1976 State of the Union, Ford took bits and pieces of the competing drafts and, according to head speechwriter Robert Hartmann, "strung them together like a string of beads. He thought that was pretty dandy. Nobody was willing to tell him how terrible it was."⁵²

Presidential revisions

After the speech has been sent to various offices around to various aides in the White House and Cabinet, the presidents have a chance to edit the speech. Generally, this is the first time the president sees the speech. In the case of some major addresses, especially the annual state of the union address or major foreign policy addresses, the president may request an earlier look at a draft to ensure that the speech is heading in the right general direction.

Each president has their own style for reviewing speeches. For example, Ford would sit down with Hartmann, Hartmann's deputy (who was a kind of chief speech editor), and the speechwriter who had

written the speech in order to go over the draft. Ford often reviewed the speech line by line giving the speechwriter a chance to defend his draft if changes had been made. In other administrations, the speechwriters had to content themselves with seeing the president's handwritten edits to the speech drafts. By contrast, Nixon and Reagan generally worked alone, leaving speechwriters to sort out presidential wishes based on written comments.

Presidents also vary in what they edit. Kennedy's staff praised him as an excellent editor, but his handwritten revisions to speech drafts are relatively sparse compared to the grammatical tinkering of an Eisenhower or the extensive revisions made by Nixon and Carter. Kennedy seemed to be as comfortable with the drafts he received as any president studied, reflecting the degree to which Ted Sorensen understood and anticipated the President's wishes and the Kennedy style of speaking. However, the absence of written feedback should be interpreted carefully. Given the access the speechwriters enjoyed, many of Kennedy's instructions may have been transmitted verbally rather than in writing.⁵³

If speaking your mind and being independent of speechwriters is what Americans wanted, they should have found it in Jimmy Carter. Carter was an aggressive editor and his comments on speech drafts are generally clear and direct. In response to one draft of the Energy speech that Gerald Rafshoon had been working on with several others, Carter returned the draft with the comment, "Jerry, this is the one of the worst speeches I have ever seen. After the first half-hour, nobody—no, after the first five pages nobody but the Mobil Oil public relations man would be awake." When Rafshoon read the President's comments back to speechwriter Rick Hertzberg, Hertzberg's comment was, "He seems pretty sure of himself."⁵⁴

Reagan would occasionally rewrite entire speeches, especially his short Saturday radio addresses. Early in his presidency, Reagan would occasionally re-draft large sections by hand, usually attaching notes apologizing to the speechwriters for not making more use of their labors.

Sometimes, the speechwriters travel with the president to provide last minute help before the speech and provide feedback after the speech about the appropriateness of the event, the President's delivery

style, and the audience's response. For example, Robert Orben followed the Ford on a trip that included the commencement speech at the University of Pennsylvania. Orben credited the President with "a good range of emphasis and tonal changes" that gave "a fine dramatic reading to the speech." However, Orben noted that while the style of delivery would have been good as part of a shorter program or as the first or second speech of the event, "Appearing at the end of almost one and a half hours of ceremony, a faster tempo might have been indicated."⁵⁵

Usually, the last task of the speechwriting office is to take the president's revisions and re-type them into the final draft of the speech. For earlier presidents, this usually meant typing "reading copies" of speeches, large print drafts put on special paper designed to minimize the noise caused by page-turning. Beginning with Reagan, teleprompters would become common with the speech entered into the machine. During the Clinton administration, this last phase of the speechwriting process could be the most exciting because of Clinton's habit of changing speeches at the last minute. As one speechwriter described it "Everything was last minute. Everyday was a fire drill." On at least one occasion, a speechwriters found himself sitting at the keyboard of the teleprompter making changes as the director counted down the last 30 seconds to airtime.⁵⁶

Presidential ad-libbing

In some ways, the final revision is improvisation as the president speak. On major speeches, presidents generally stick closely to the prepared text. However, in minor speeches, presidents frequently take more liberties, in part, perhaps, because they have spent less time on earlier versions of these drafts. For example, Kennedy often departed the text on minor speeches, frustrating the speechwriters who saw their labors evaporate from the page and journalists who had often already written their stories based on the pre-speech press releases put out by the White House.⁵⁷ Clinton frequently departed the text. However, as one speechwriter noted, Clinton understood pretty well the limits of improvisation.

You watch Clinton skip over five paragraphs that you'd written and do something else and you'd say, "God, is he good!" On one hand you'd say, "Use that quote, I love that quote" but then you'd say, "Damn, is he good." At first it's a blow to the ego, but after the first few times, you get used to it. Also, he

knew which lines not to blow off on the “deliverable” – Sometimes we’d put the language we really wanted to get onto television in bold to say “We really worked hard on this, it’s good, say this” and he’d usually say it.⁵⁸

Carter’s staff worried that his impromptu remarks tended to get the most attention and drew reporters’ coverage away from the planned purpose of a trip. Another speechwriter urged Carter to avoid the overuse of extemporizing speeches, even though they were his strength. “You are extraordinarily good at impromptu speaking, and plainly more comfortable with it than with a prepared text. But it’s the wrong piece of equipment for formal occasions. While Arthur Ashe would no doubt feel more comfortable on the golf course with a racket in his hand, he would do better with a nine-iron.”⁵⁹ Carter proved resistant to many of the speechwriters’ plans. In a memo urging the President to reevaluate his style, Jerry Rafshoon warned Carter, “I know you think it’s phony and that you’re fine the way you are but that pride is, by far, your greatest political danger.”⁶⁰

Reagan had his own way of dealing with lines he disliked. When a line that he disliked remained in speech drafts Reagan would intentionally stammer, pause, or do something in the middle of the line to minimize its impact and make sure that the networks didn’t use it.

Presidential eloquence is, in the eyes of many, threatened by the elaborate process and hoards of assistants who swarm across the pages of speech drafts. While the damage they do might be reversible, the president lacks the time to reassemble the shattered rhetoric when the speechwriters lack the clout to undo what the more senior policy advisors have done. When Gerald Rafshoon took over as Director of Communications for Carter, the speechwriting staff urged him to do what he could to check the problem of “too many cooks.”

You know as well as I that no six people can write a decent speech, even though every one of them may be marvelously gifted and wise. Nonetheless, almost every speech that’s come out of here has been a committee product... I understand that it is essential to get ideas wherever possible, to circulate drafts, to make sure that all viewpoints have been considered. But some one person needs to be in charge of this situation—in charge of collecting ideas, registering complaints, and finally seeing that the agreed-upon policy is written

down in a coherent and literate way... My suspicion is that the President thinks he is that person; he no longer has the time to be.⁶¹

By the end of this process, any claim of authorship is greatly clouded. As the writers and the analysts square off, all sides jealously guard their turf--with good cause. The speechwriters produce better speeches, but the policy makers know the policy.

Data and Measures

To examine the development of the speechwriting process and to compare its impact over time, speech drafts from administrations of Franklin Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan were examined.⁶² A few speeches from each administration were selected for detailed analysis. A complete list of speeches included in the current study is included in Appendix A

The cases do not reflect a random sample of speeches for several reasons. First, while having a random sample of all speeches from each administration might be desirable for the study of some hypotheses, such a sampling is not possible. Because the retention of drafts was often uneven, drafts of some speeches either were not produced or not retained. Some speech drafts were sacrificed to the process, their pages cut and pasted into a new version of the speech. The speeches that received more staff attention were more likely to be chosen for in study since they produced the multiple speech drafts required for comparison. Secondly, even if a random sample was possible, the time and expense required to gather, copy, and code multiple drafts of enough speeches to be a reasonable sample is not practical for a multi-administration study.

Finally, a representative sample is not sought here because this study attempts to examine conflict within the EOP by focusing on the cases most likely to provide significant disagreement. The argument is not that conflict manifests itself on all speeches. The presence of conflict over drafts of speeches like the National Christmas Tree lighting statement is not the standard sought here, even though an earlier study has found an active editing process and some lively debate on that speech as well.⁶³ Instead, this study

identified and studied especially significant presidential speeches because those cases were of more general interest and more likely to produce evidence of the internal tensions we are looking to study. Even then, the presidential libraries did not always yield enough drafts for analysis. For example, Ford's brief statement upon being sworn in was not included because sufficient drafts were not available.

Drafts of the inaugural addresses for every president studied were sought because these were important addresses. The initial inaugural address can serve as a case of presidential speech constructed before the formal White House staff structure was in place.⁶⁴ At least one State of the Union address was utilized as well because it represented the only other major policy address common to all presidents. Campaign speeches were deliberately avoided because they often utilize different sets of speechwriters and reviewers.

Multiple drafts of each of these speeches were either photocopied or digitally photographed from the respective presidential libraries, or in the case of Nixon speeches, from the National Archive II outside Washington DC. The drafts were then put into machine-readable form for analysis using content analysis software. Because the drafts were often hand-written or included hand-written revisions, automated scanning was not sufficient and most passages had to be manually typed. In some cases a single paper draft was entered twice, in one form to reflect the original typed version with a second version that includes handwritten revisions and additions by the president or others in the White House.

The DICTION software used to analyze these drafts was initially developed by Rod Hart for his 1984 book, Verbal Style and the Presidency,⁶⁵ and has been refined in the 20 years since. While other analytical tools were considered, the prominence of Hart's study makes DICTION a logical choice because its results will be familiar to some scholars in the field and comparable to other studies in political communication. While a case might be made for other tests, the precise nature of the variables measured is not a central issue here because *change* is the primary concern. In some regards, this is an attempt to create a seismograph for presidential rhetoric, a device to study the movement of rhetoric. Rhetorical seismology, like its geological counterpart uses the measurement of motion to detect broader

forces buried from direct observation. In this case, the instrument is designed to detect the fault lines within the White House and uncover the stress points in the organization.

The DICTION software evaluates the use of language by looking for the frequency of words from thirty-one different sets of words or “dictionaries.” Each dictionary (described briefly in Appendix B) yields a semantic score based on the frequency of words from that dictionary. The DICTION software constructs five “master variables” that summarize the tone of speeches in more general terms: certainty, optimism, activity, realism, and commonality. A more detailed description of these variables and their means of computation is reported in Appendix C.⁶⁶

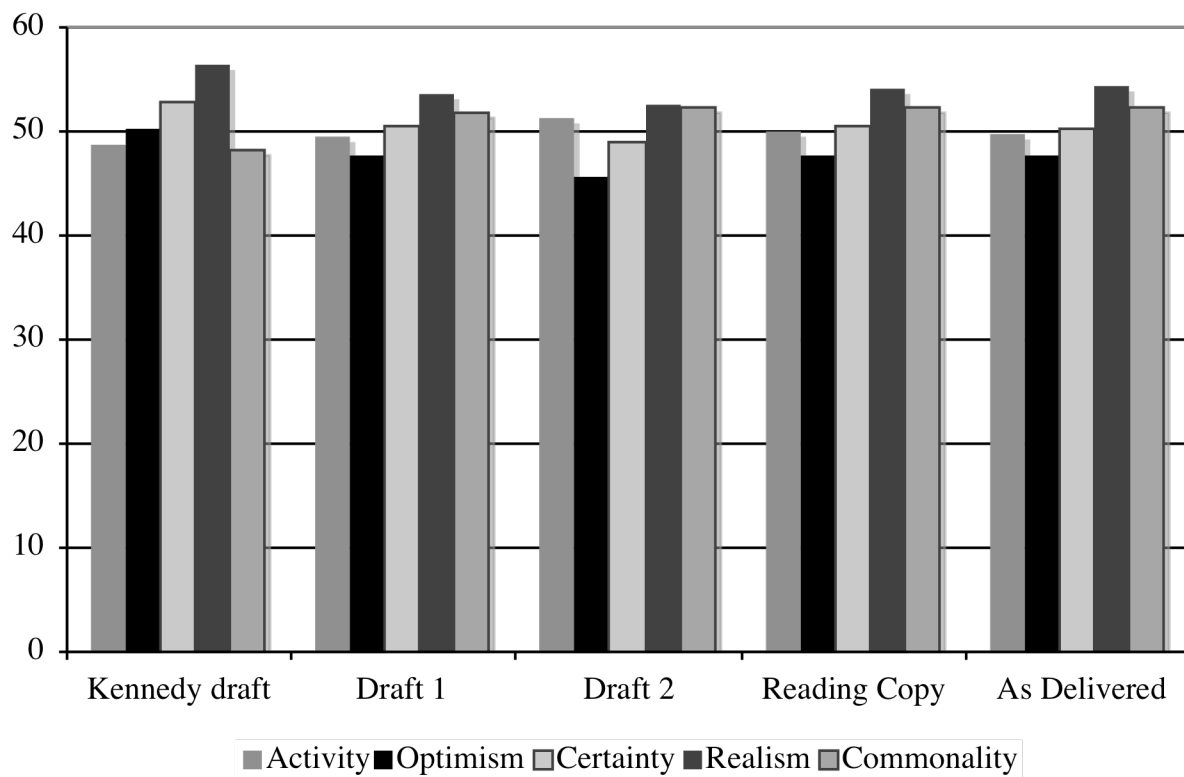
While some of these narrow scores may be of interest, the broader master variables are used in this study to make sure that changes in narrow components of the rhetoric do not receive too much attention. The DICTION software is especially useful because it incorporates results from a database that allows the user to compare their texts to a variety of speech types. The basis for comparison utilized here is “public policy speeches,” a normative profile that the DICTION software calculated based on 615 policy speeches delivered by presidents from Harry Truman to Bill Clinton. These policy speeches closely match the kind of presidential addresses studied here. The software reports a “normal range” that spans scores within ± 1 standard deviation of the mean of the scores from these 615 presidential speeches.

Although Hart originally used the normal range to compare types of speeches and presidents, the normal range is used in this study to provide a standard for evaluating changes across drafts of the same speech. For example, based upon the 615 presidential speeches in Hart’s database, the normal range for the “Commonality” variable ranges from 49.91 to 52.37.⁶⁷ The difference between these two (2.46) can be interpreted as the amount of variation normally found across different presidential speeches. This variable labeled “*normal variation*” focuses on the degree of *change* in rhetoric to more easily summarize the data so that changes across drafts and rhetorical characteristics can be more easily compared. Normal variation, the scores for individual master variables, and other scores for speech drafts from the Reagan administration are reported in Appendix D.

This use of the *normal variation* measure is similar to ANOVA analysis that compares variation across groups to variation within groups. In some regards, the decision to measure change between drafts of the same speech to differences between policy speeches from these presidents sets a high standard. The possibility that the different versions of a single speech might vary more than speeches on a variety of policies promoted by different presidents speaking to different generations might seem remote. However placing impact of the internal forces of the White House next to the historical forces of all presidential speeches makes a compelling argument.

The basic shape of the data and the need for revisions of the data is illustrated in Figure 1 which reports the scores of the five different drafts of Kennedy's inaugural address.

Figure 1
Measures of master variables for drafts
Kennedy's Inaugural Address

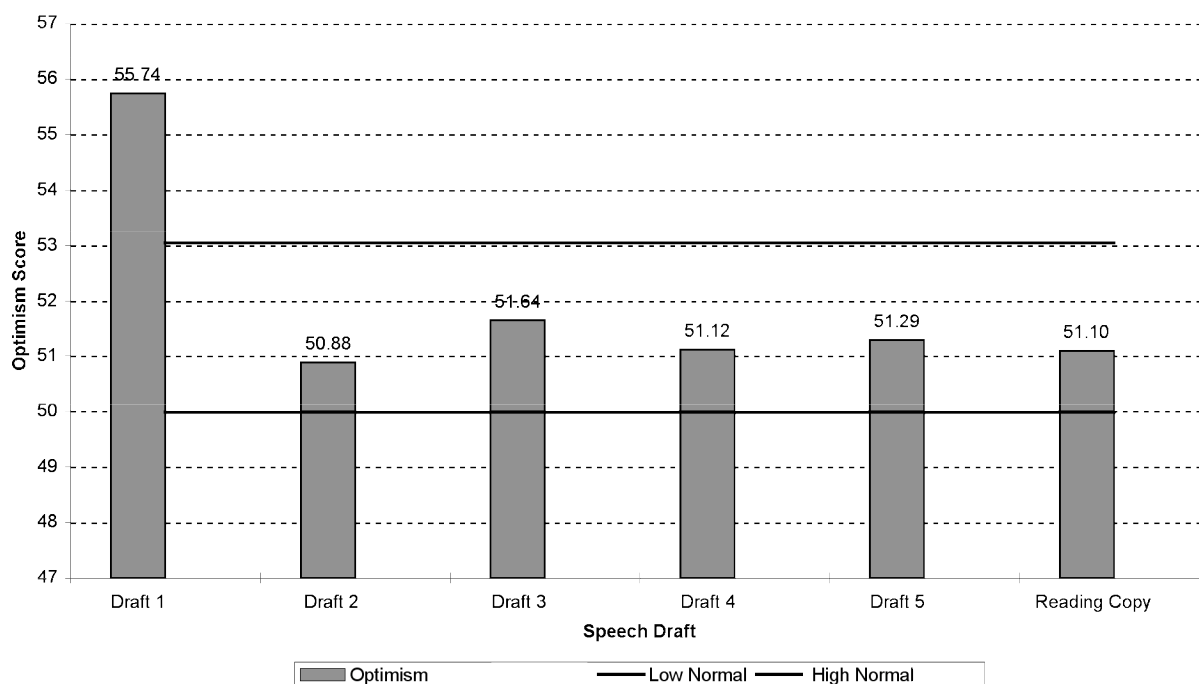


In general, the process behind Kennedy's speeches resembles a stable and relatively orderly process in which speeches change little from draft to draft. Dramatic shifts in tone are generally rare. This result is

especially interesting in that we can see scores from a handwritten draft scribbled by Kennedy (“Kennedy draft”) is very consistent with subsequent drafts (labeled “Draft 1” and “Draft 2”) as well as the reading copy typed for Kennedy to take to the podium. While this consistency initially seems to offer the reassuring image of a consistent process, it points to some of the risks of political research. Recent scholarship on Kennedy’s inaugural address suggests that the rough handwritten draft allegedly scribbled by Kennedy as he sketched out his speech on his own was actually copied from drafts produced by others.⁶⁸ A similar draft appears for Roosevelt’s 1933 inaugural address. According to Raymond Moley, “He [FDR] read over my draft carefully and then said that he had better write out the text himself because if Louis Howe (who was expected the next morning) failed to see a draft in his (Roosevelt’s) handwriting, he would ‘have a fit.’”⁶⁹ The representation of the Kennedy and Roosevelt handwritten drafts as the origins illustrates both the intense desire to protect image of the president and the need to approach even original archival materials with caution.

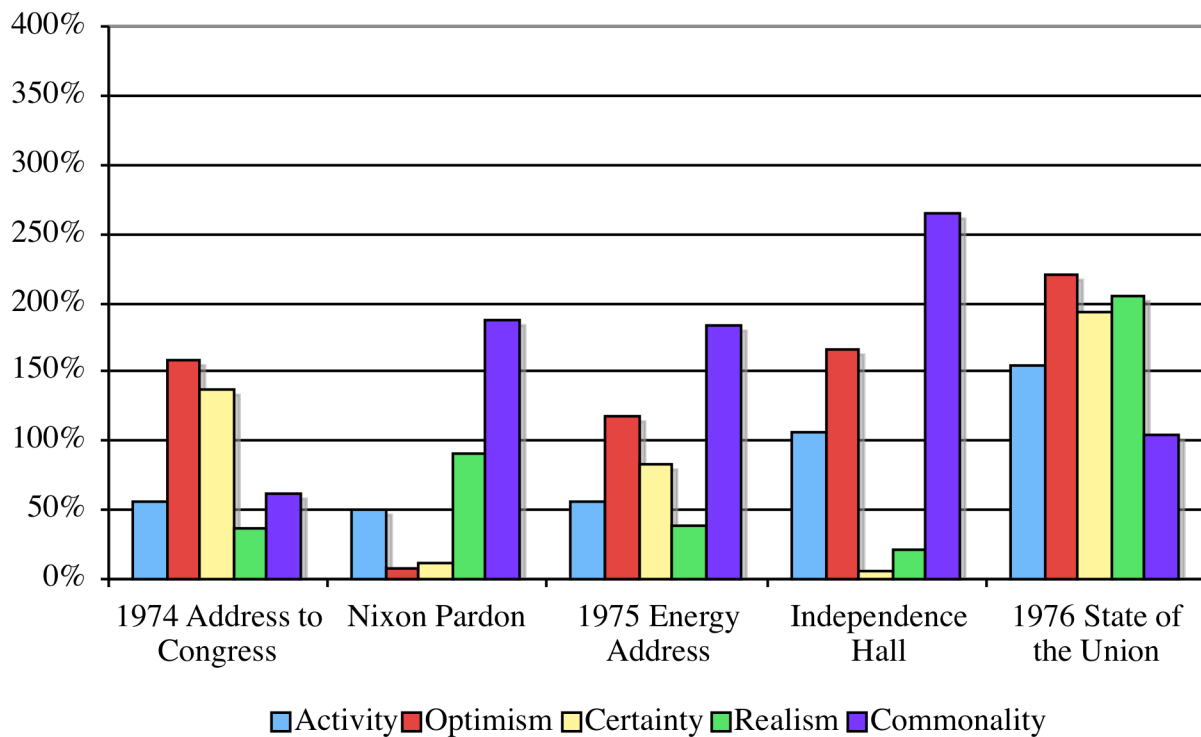
Even though the consistency of the scores for Kennedy’s address suggests stability of rhetoric, we need to be sure that the lack of change observed is a product of stable rhetoric rather than a lack of sensitivity in the measures. There are several ways of evaluating the stability of rhetorical scores. One possible standard is to compare the fluctuations in drafts to presidential speeches overall. Figure 2 charts the shift in optimism scores for Ford’s first address to Congress. Figure 2 also includes the “normal” range for presidential policy speeches, putting the change in drafts of Ford’s speech next to the range of scores for presidential speeches in general. The “normal variation” described earlier in this paper is illustrated by the distance between the two horizontal lines on Figure 2.

Figure 2:
Optimism Scores by Speech
Draft



While the “normal variation” measure helps us create a standard across speeches, one further refinement is needed. Comparisons across different rhetorical scores are difficult because, while these variables were computed in a way to have similar means across *all* kinds of rhetoric, presidential speeches will have different means and deviations because presidents sound different than other kinds of speakers. For example, while the *activity* score for presidential speeches normally ranges by over five points (from 47.25 to 52.53), the *commonality* score varies only 2.46 (from 49.91 to 52.37). To standardize measure of the changes in these scores relative to other presidential speech scores specific to each variable, the variation between speech values was divided by the *normal variation* for that variable. This created a *percentage of normal variation* measure that compares the changes on this specific characteristic for a speech to the degree to which that rhetorical score varies across all presidential speeches. These measures for all five Ford speeches are charted in Figure 3.

Figure 3
Shifts in Rhetorical Variables as a Percentage of Normal Variation
Franklin Roosevelt

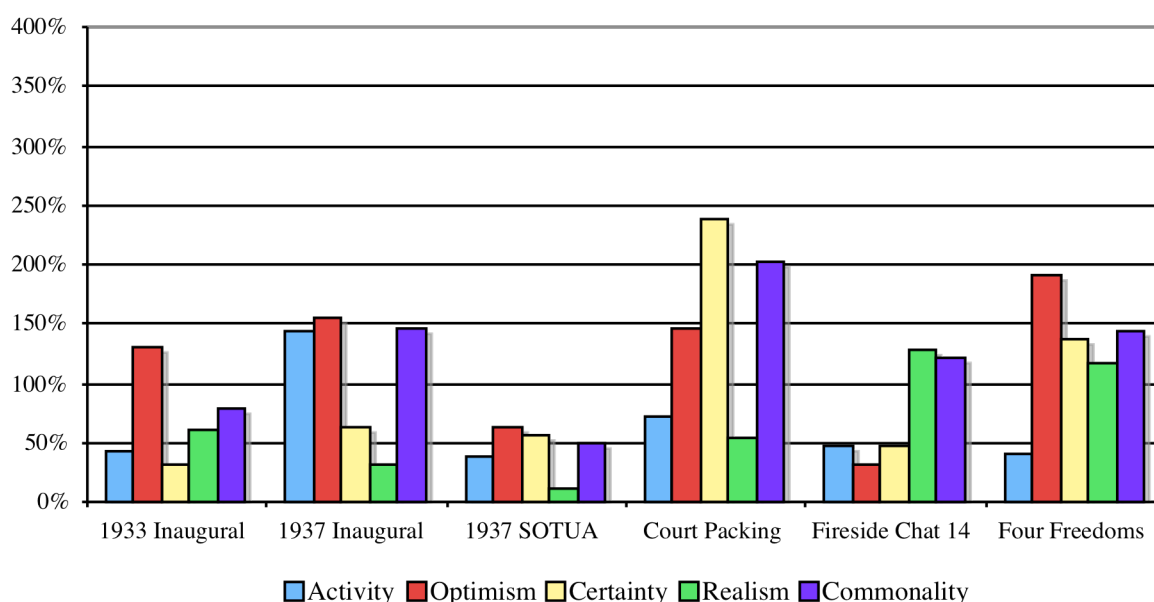


As Figure 3 shows all of the Ford speeches exhibit at least one shift great than 100% indicating that the change in rhetorical variables over the drafting process was as large as the differences across presidential speeches. At the same time, some variables on some speeches are quite stable. The changes in the 1976 State of the Union Address are especially interesting. As Figure 3 indicates, all five of the rhetorical characteristics of that speech vary by 100 percent, with three of the five shifting 193% or more. These results demonstrate that the DICTION variables are sensitive enough to detect differences between speech drafts and that the percentage of normal variation measure can discriminate between stable cases and more volatile cases.

Results

As the first presidency studied, the Roosevelt administration makes an obvious starting point for our comparisons. As Figure 4 shows, the changes of the Roosevelt rhetoric in the four speeches analyzed thus far are smaller than those in the Ford speeches used in Figure 3 to illustrate the methods. While the speeches generally show a relatively stable rhetoric, FDR's radio address defending his "court packing" plan demonstrates more instability than the other address. Roosevelt's court packing proposal generate considerable debate in the White House and this is reflected in speech drafts. This result suggests that the software is successfully discriminates between stable cases and those cases that generate more divisions within the White House.

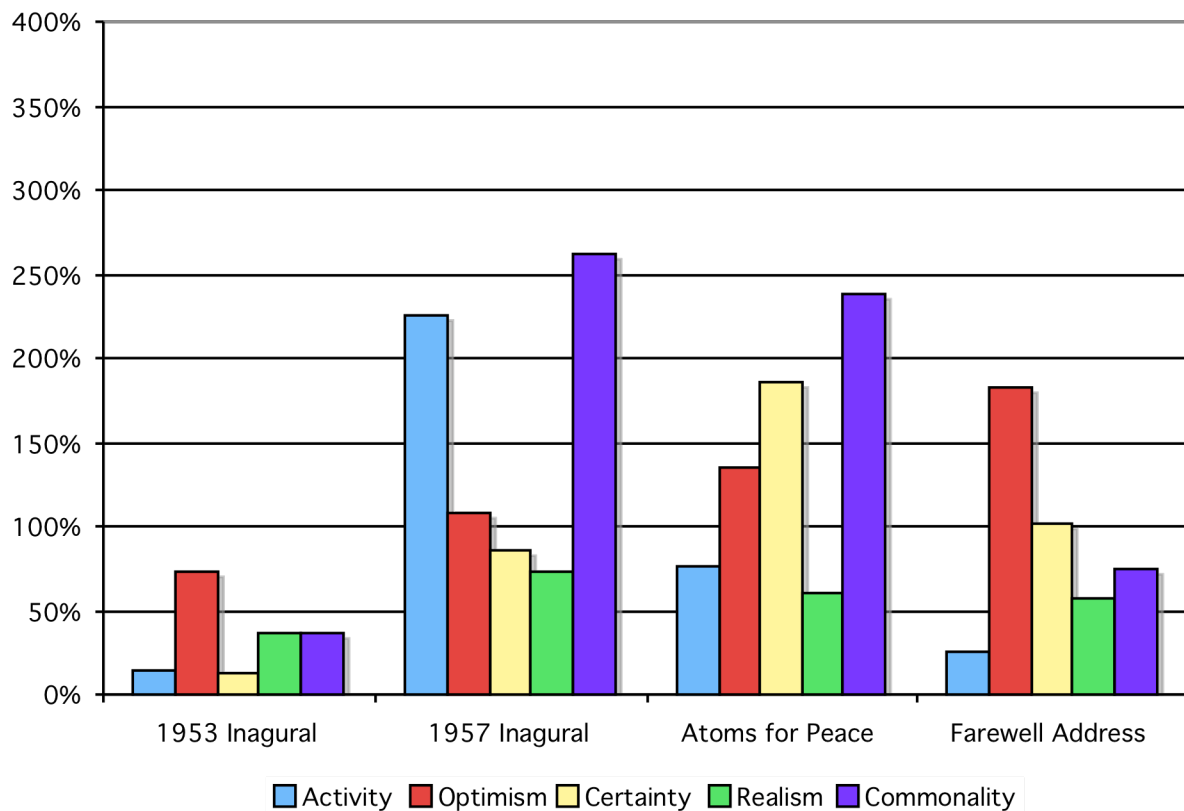
Figure 4
Shifts in Rhetorical Variables as a Percentage of Normal Variation
Franklin Roosevelt



Results from another early administration, that of Dwight Eisenhower, are included in Figure 5. The four speeches reflect slightly more variation than the Roosevelt drafts with some speeches demonstrating remarkable stability while the 1957 Inaugural address and the "Atoms for Peace" speech generating some changes. While the shifts in the Eisenhower speech drafts may seem a little surprising given Eisenhower's reputation for wanting an orderly White House, the shift reflects his style of delegation and editing. FDR

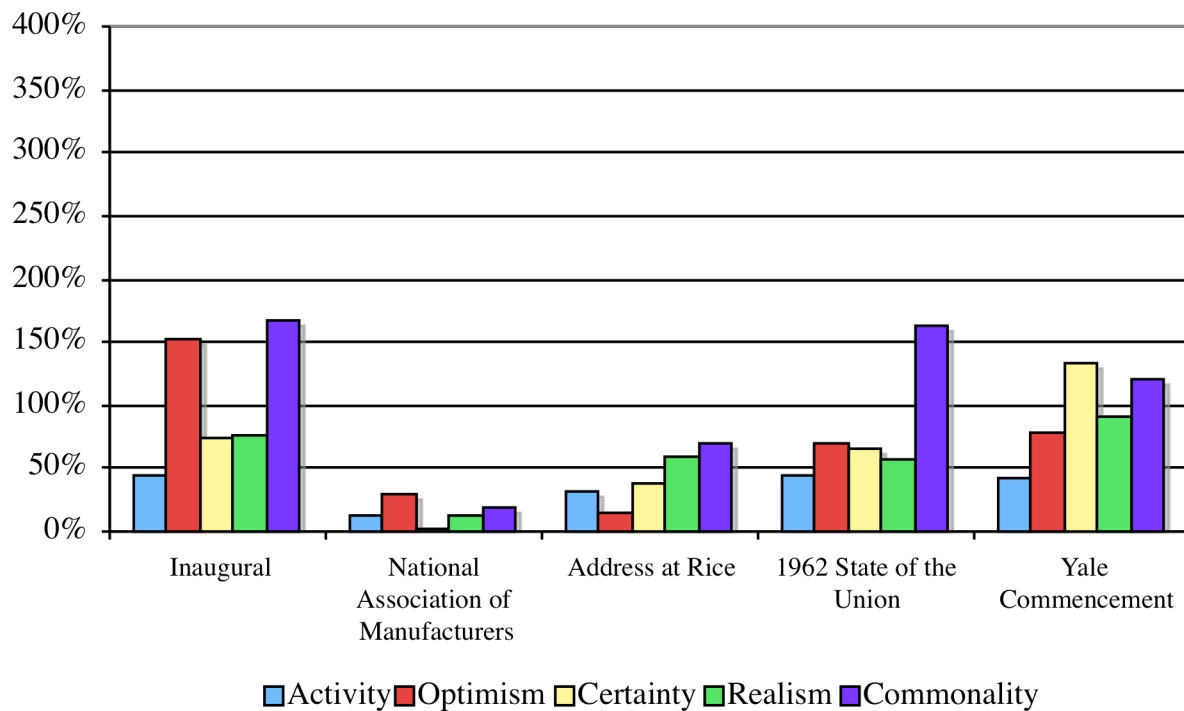
had a little more interaction with his speechwriters during the initial drafting. Eisenhower seems to have delegated the basic drafting of speeches to staffer, but edited extensively. Despite Eisenhower's reputation as being detached, he asserted extensive control over speeches, but in a different way than Roosevelt.

Figure 5
Shifts in Rhetorical Variables as a Percentage of Normal Variation
Dwight Eisenhower



The process in the Kennedy White House is remarkably stable. As Figure 6 shows, rhetoric changes relatively little over the course of the process. This results from the strong position of Ted Sorensen. Sorensen and Arthur Schlesinger served both as architects of policy and speeches. The stability of speech drafting was facilitated by the blending of the policy development and writing process. Equally important, Sorensen's close working relationship with Kennedy helped him anticipate the President's wishes and his strong position in the administration meant that Sorensen's drafts would survive most challenges.

Figure 6
Shifts in Rhetorical Variables as a Percentage of Normal Variation
John F. Kennedy



In contrast to the early presidents, more recent administrations have produced more shifts in rhetoric. For example, Figure 7 charts similar numbers for the Carter administration.⁷⁰ At times, the Carter speeches reveal even more variation than the Fords speeches. However, these most extreme results should be approached with caution given the presence of Carter's "malaise" speech since that speech was originally drafted as an energy address before turning into a speech bemoaning the nation's gloomy mindset. Since the intention of the speech changed over the course of the drafting process, higher levels of changes than other speeches should be expected.

Figure 7
Shifts in Rhetorical Variables as a Percentage of Normal Variation
Jimmy Carter

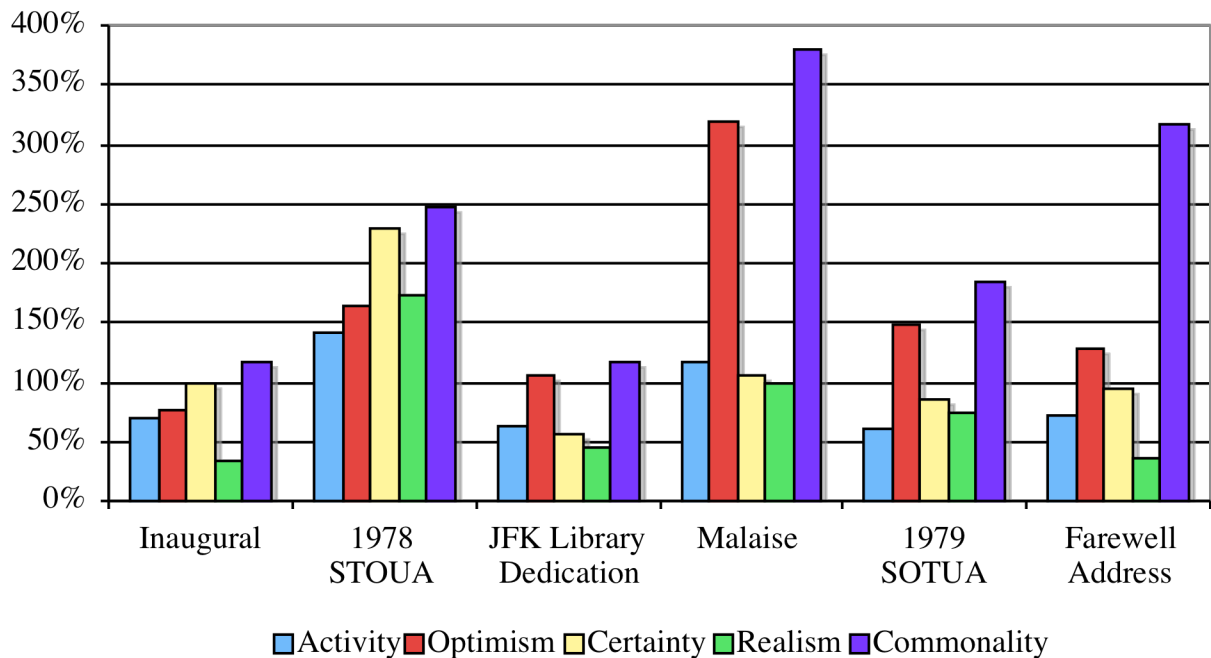
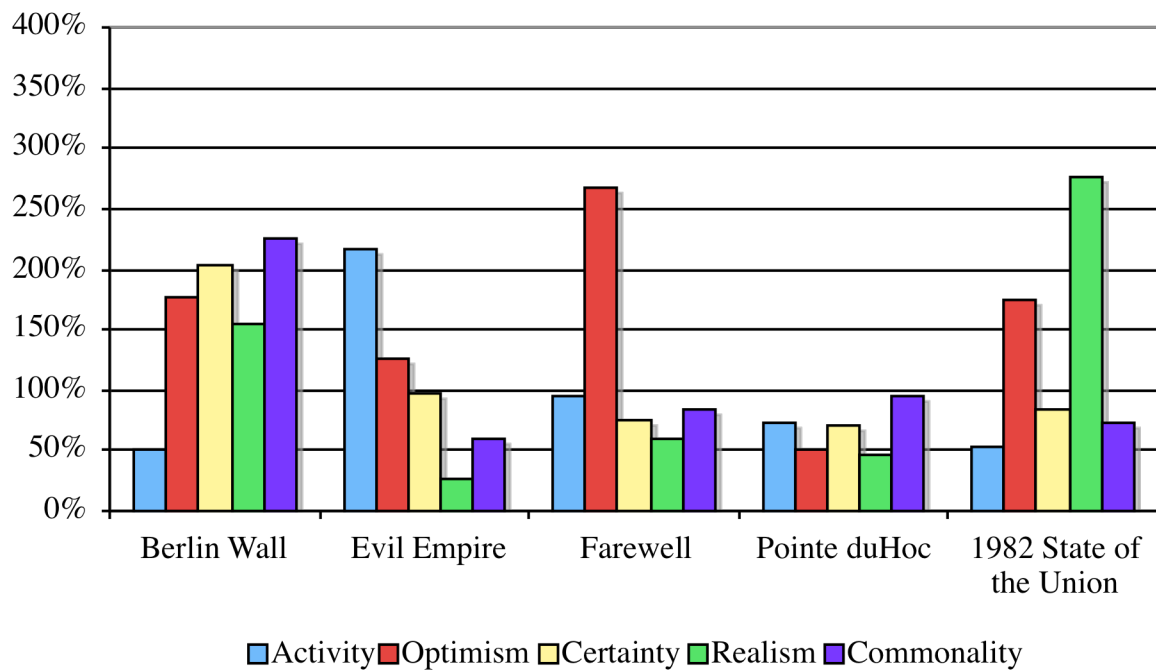


Figure 8 includes results from five Reagan speeches. As the figure shows, while some Reagan addresses are very stable, other speeches have a more turbulent birth. However, given the broad policy implications of Reagan's proclamation of the Soviet Union as the "evil empire" or telling them to tear down the Berlin Wall, it is not surprising that the resistance from the State Department and National Security Council would have an impact on drafts. The lack of change in Reagan's speech at Normandy is interesting given speechwriter Peggy Noonan's complains about attempts to change the speech. The change in the Farewell address is interesting because that process involved Reagan and Noonan with very little involvement from others. Reagan's impact on the speech was large, reflecting Reagan's tendency to have the biggest impact on the speeches with the broadest vision.

Figure 8
Shifts in Rhetorical Variables as a Percentage of Normal Variation
Ronald Reagan

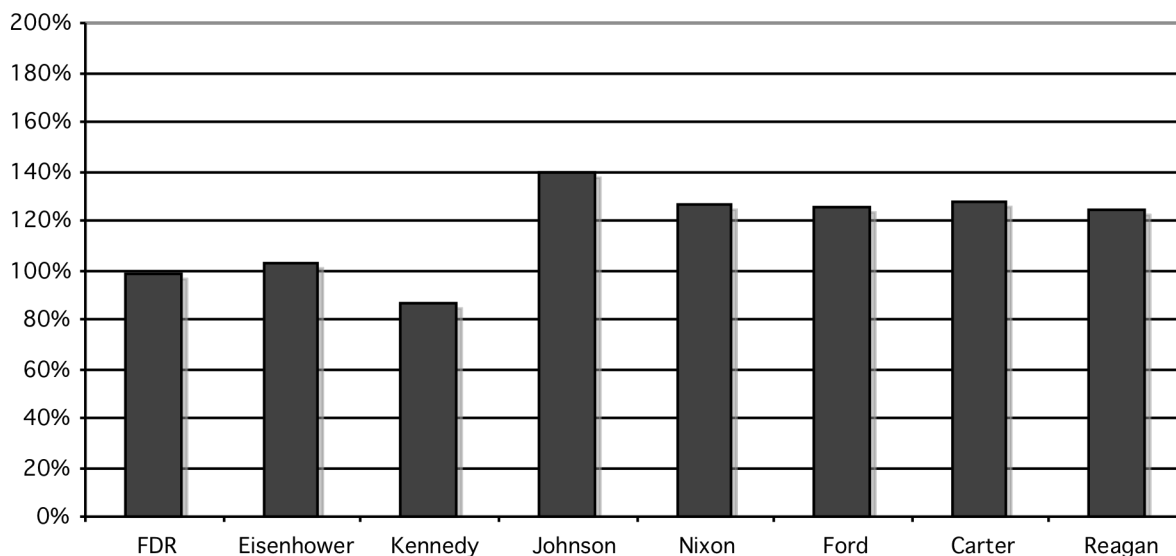


Comparisons across administrations are difficult, especially until the data set and measures are refined further. However, the data analyzed so far show signs of supporting the hypothesis that change is more common after the institutionalized process brought more people and perspectives into the process. Figure 9 reports the average percentage of normal variation across all of the speeches. The shifts for the first three administrations appear to be noticeably different than the last four administrations, suggesting that presidential rhetoric changed less in early administrations with less extensive reviewing processes.

The Johnson administration stands out as both an exception to these results and in general. There are several possible explanations for the exceptional results from LBJ. One explanation is that the Johnson administration data contains many different sources off speech drafts. Johnson seems to be the exception to having single authors write the initial drafts of speeches. In some cases, two or three people are offering up speech drafts. Since many of these drafts seem to have received little serious consideration, their inclusion may be unfair. The Johnson results may also be the product of the transitional nature of the

early days of the administration. Johnson initially kept some of Kennedy's staff. While Ted Sorensen had excelled at writing for Kennedy, his style proved to be an uncomfortable fit for Johnson.

Figure 9
Average Shift as Percentage of Normal Variation by President



While this use of such rhetorical variables is new to the discipline, the results suggest that the DICTION software is sensitive enough to pick up variations between drafts. While the addition of more speeches and more presidents will strengthen the analysis, the results so far make a compelling case for the rise of debate over presidential rhetoric.

Conclusion

The conflict with policy advisors is a recurring theme coming from White House speechwriters. Reviewing a book by Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan, Carter speechwriter James Fallows concedes that, “My sympathies are entirely with Noonan as she fights against the policy nerds, but it’s easy to imagine them grinding their teeth about her ‘delicate yet vital’ prose.”⁷¹ Ford Speechwriter John Casserly

described the impact of conflict between the perspective of the speechwriters and those found thought the departments of the executive branch.

Declarative sentences, filled with ifs, buts and maybes, become dishwater. The ringing pronunciations of a President become hollow sixty-word sentences, dangling with participles...

As bureaucrats, they have done their jobs—protected their rear ends. In service to their President and the country, they have failed to communicate. That is my job.”⁷²

The data analyzed so far can only begin to demonstrate the differences between the “job” of the bureaucrats and how it differs from the job of the speechwriters. However, there is evidence to suggest that more people in the process creates more rhetoric changes. Kennedy speechwriter Sorensen himself noted that as White House offices continue to grow, each posses the potential to take a life of its own and “become only another department, another level of clearances and concurrences instead of a personal instrument of the President.”⁷³

Generally, presidential speech has been studied as power wielded against other political forces. What we can see in presidential speech can be used to learn about political forces that are seldom, if ever, visible to the scholar. However, the quantitative results presented here provide evidence to back the historical accounts of battles in the White House and suggest that the view of the presidency as a monolithic institution with one motive and view of the political world is too simplistic and in need of revision.

Appendix A Speeches Analyzed

Franklin Roosevelt

Inaugural Address, March 3, 1933
 Inaugural Address, January 20, 1937
 1937 State of the Union Address, January 6, 1937
 Fireside Chat #14, September 3, 1937
 Court Packing Radio, March 9, 1937
 The Four Freedoms, January 6, 1941

Dwight Eisenhower

Inaugural address, January 20, 1953
 Inaugural address, January 20, 1957
 Atoms for Peace, December 8, 1953
 Farewell Address, January 17, 1961

Kennedy

Inaugural address, January 20, 1961
 National Association of Manufacturers,
 December 6, 1961
 Rice University, September 12, 1962
 Commencement address at Yale, June 11, 1962
 State of the Union Address, January 11, 1962

Lyndon Johnson

Address to Joint Session, November 27 1963
 Voting Rights Act, March 15 1965
 University of Michigan, May 22 1964
 War on Poverty, May 8 1967
 Address to the Nation, March 31, 1968
 Johns Hopkins University, April 7 1965
 Civil Rights Act Signing, July 2, 1964
 State of the Union, January 4 1965

Richard Nixon

State of the Union Address, January 22, 1970
 Silent Majority, November 3, 1969
 University of Nebraska January 14 1971
 Watergate Address to the Nation August 15 1973
 Resignation, August 8, 1974

Gerald Ford

First address to Congress, August 12, 1974
 Nixon pardon, September 8, 1974
 Energy address, May 27, 1975
 Independence Hall, July 4, 1976
 State of the Union, January 12, 1976

Jimmy Carter

Inaugural address, January 20, 1977
 Dedication of the John F. Kennedy Library,
 October 20, 1978
 Malaise speech, July 17, 1979
 Farewell address, January 14, 1981
 State of the Union, January 19, 1978
 State of the Union Address, January 25, 1979

Ronald Reagan

State of the Union Address, January 26, 1982
 Berlin Wall, June 12, 1987
 Evil Empire, March 8, 1983
 Pointe duHoc, June 6, 1984
 Farewell Address, January 11, 1989

Appendix B

DICTION Dictionary and Score Descriptions⁷⁴

- ACCOMPLISHMENT:** Words that express completion of tasks (establish, finish, influence, proceed) and organized human behavior (motivated, influence, leader, manage). Includes capitalistic terms (buy, produce, sell), words related to expansion (grow, increase, generate, construction) and general functionality (handling, strengthen, succeed) and programmatic language (agenda, enacted, working, leadership).
- AGGRESSION:** Words that highlight competition and forceful action. This includes physical energy (blast, crash, collide), domination (conquest, attacking, dictatorships, violation), words associated with personal triumph (mastered, rambunctious, pushy), excess human energy (prod, poke, pound, shove), disassembly (dismantle, demolish, overturn, veto) and resistance (prevent, reduce, defend, curbed) are included.
- AMBIVALENCE:** Words expressing hesitation or uncertainty, implying a speaker's inability or unwillingness to commit to the verbalization being made. Included are hedges (allegedly, perhaps, might), statements of inexactness (almost, approximate, vague, somewhere) and confusion (baffled, puzzling, hesitate). Also included are words of restrained possibility (could, would) and mystery (dilemma, guess, suppose, seems).
- BLAME:** Terms designating social inappropriateness (mean, naive, sloppy, stupid) as well as downright evil (fascist, blood-thirsty, repugnant, malicious) compose this dictionary. In addition, adjectives describing unfortunate circumstances (bankrupt, rash, morbid, embarrassing) or unplanned vicissitudes (weary, nervous, painful, detrimental) are included. The dictionary also contains outright denigrations: cruel, illegitimate, offensive, and miserly.
- CENTRALITY:** Terms denoting institutional regularities and/or substantive agreement on core values. Included are indigenous terms (native, basic, innate) and designations of legitimacy (orthodox, decorum, constitutional, ratified), systematicity (paradigm, bureaucratic, ritualistic), and typicality (standardized, matter-of-fact, regularity). Also included are terms of congruence (conformity, mandate, unanimous), predictability (expected, continuity, reliable), and universality (womankind, perennial, landmarks).
- COGNITIVE TERMS:** Words referring to cerebral processes, both functional and imaginative. Included are modes of discovery (learn, deliberate, consider, compare) and domains of study (biology, psychology, logic, economics). The dictionary includes mental challenges (question, forget, re-examine, paradoxes), institutional learning practices (graduation, teaching, classrooms), as well as three forms of intellection: intuition (invent, perceive, speculate, interpret), rationalistic (estimate, examine, reasonable, strategies), and calculative (diagnose, analyze, software, fact-finding).
- COLLECTIVES:** Singular nouns connoting plurality that function to decrease specificity. These words reflect a dependence on categorical modes of thought. Included are social groupings crowd, choir, team, humanity), task groups (army, congress, legislature, staff) and geographical entities (county, world, kingdom, republic).
- COMMUNICATION:** Terms referring to social interaction, both face-to-face (listen, interview, read, speak) and mediated (film, videotape, telephone, e-mail). The dictionary includes both modes of intercourse (translate, quote, scripts, broadcast) and moods of intercourse (chat, declare, flatter, demand). Other terms refer to social actors (reporter, spokesperson, advocates, preacher) and a variety of social purposes (hint, rebuke, respond, persuade).
- COMPLEXITY:** A simple measure of the average number of characters-per-word in a given input file. Based on the idea that convoluted phrasings can make ideas abstract and implications unclear.
- CONCRETENESS:** A large dictionary possessing no thematic unity other than tangibility and materiality. Included are sociological units (peasants, African-Americans, Catholics), occupational groups (carpenter, manufacturer, policewoman), and political alignments (Communists, congressman, Europeans). Also incorporated are physical structures (courthouse, temple, store), forms of diversion (television, football, cd-rom), terms of accountancy (mortgage, wages, finances), and modes of transportation (airplane, ship, bicycle). In addition, the dictionary includes body parts (stomach, eyes, lips), articles of clothing (slacks, pants, shirt), household animals (cat, insects, horse) and foodstuffs (wine, grain, sugar), and general elements of nature (oil, silk, sand).

COOPERATION: Terms designating behavioral interactions among people that often result in a group product. Included are designations of formal work relations (unions, schoolmates, caucus) and informal associations (chum, partner, cronies) to more intimate interactions (sisterhood, friendship, comrade). Also included are neutral interactions (consolidate, mediate, alignment), job-related tasks (network, detente, exchange), personal involvement (teamwork, sharing, contribute), and self-denial (public-spirited, care-taking, self-sacrifice).

DENIAL: A dictionary consisting of standard negative contractions (aren't, shouldn't, don't), negative functions words (nor, not, nay), and terms designating null sets (nothing, nobody, none).

DIVERSITY: Words describing individuals or groups of individuals differing from the norm. Such distinctiveness may be comparatively neutral (inconsistent, contrasting, non-conformist) but it can also be positive (exceptional, unique, individualistic) and negative (illegitimate, rabble-rouser, extremist). Functionally, heterogeneity may be an asset (far-flung, dispersed, diffuse) or a liability (factionalism, deviancy, quirky) as can its characterizations: rare vs. queer, variety vs. jumble, distinctive vs. disobedient.

EMBELLISHMENT: A selective ratio of adjectives to verbs. Embellishment is calculated according to the following formula: $[\text{Praise} + \text{Blame} + 1] \div [\text{Present Concern} + \text{Past Concern} + 1]$

EXCLUSION: A dictionary describing the sources and effects of social isolation. Such seclusion can be phrased passively (displaced, sequestered) as well as positively (self-contained, self-sufficient) and negatively (outlaws, repudiated). Moreover, it can result from voluntary forces (secede, privacy) and involuntary forces (ostracize, forsake, discriminate) and from both personality factors (small-mindedness, loneliness) and political factors (right-wingers, nihilism). Exclusion is often a dialectical concept: hermit vs. derelict, refugee vs. pariah, discard vs. spurn).

FAMILIARITY: Consists of a selected number of words that are the most common words in the English language. Included are common prepositions (across, over, through), demonstrative pronouns (this, that) and interrogative pronouns (who, what), and a variety of particles, conjunctions and connectives (a, for, so).

HARDSHIP: This dictionary contains natural disasters (earthquake, starvation, tornado, pollution), hostile actions (killers, bankruptcy, enemies, vices) and censurable human behavior (infidelity, despots, betrayal). It also includes unsavory political outcomes (injustice, slavery, exploitation, rebellion) as well as normal human fears (grief, unemployment, died, apprehension) and in capacities (error, cop-outs, weakness).

HUMAN INTEREST: Includes standard personal pronouns (he, his, ourselves, them), family members and relations (cousin, wife, grandchild, uncle), and generic terms (friend, baby, human, persons) because concentrating on people and their activities gives rhetoric a life-like quality.

INSISTENCE: A measure of the repetition of key terms that may indicate a preference for presented a limited or ordered view. All words occurring three or more times that function as nouns or noun-derived adjectives are identified and the following calculation performed: $[\text{Number of Eligible Words} \times \text{Sum of their Occurrences}] \div 10$.

INSPIRATION: Abstract virtues deserving of universal respect. Most of the terms in this dictionary are nouns isolating desirable moral qualities (faith, honesty, self-sacrifice, virtue) as well as attractive personal qualities (courage, dedication, wisdom, mercy). Social and political ideals are also included: patriotism, success, education, and justice.

LEVELING: A dictionary of words that build a sense of completeness and assurance used by ignoring individual differences. Included are totalizing terms (everybody, anyone, each, fully), adverbs of permanence (always, completely, inevitably, consistently), and resolute adjectives (unconditional, consummate, absolute, open-and-shut).

LIBERATION: Terms describing the maximizing of individual choice (autonomous, open-minded, options) and the rejection of social conventions (unencumbered, radical, released). Liberation is motivated by both personality factors (eccentric, impetuous, flighty) and political forces (suffrage, liberty, freedom, emancipation) and may produce dramatic outcomes (exodus, riotous, deliverance) or subdued effects (loosen, disentangle, outpouring). Liberatory terms also admit to rival characterizations: exemption vs. loophole, elope vs. abscond, uninhibited vs. outlandish.

MOTION: Terms connoting human movement (bustle, job, lurch, leap), physical processes (circulate, momentum,

revolve, twist), journeys (barnstorm, jaunt, wandering, travels), speed (nimble, zip), and modes of transit (ride, fly, glide, swim).

NUMERICAL TERMS: Any sum, date, or product specifying the facts in a given case. The presumption is that these term hyper-specify a claim and detracting from its universality.

PASSIVITY: Words ranging from neutrality to inactivity. Includes terms of compliance (allow, tame), docility (submit, contented), and cessation (arrested, refrain, yielding). This dictionary also contains references to inertness (backward, immobile, inhibit), disinterest (unconcerned, nonchalant, stoic), and tranquility (quietly, sleepy).

PAST CONCERN: The past- tense forms of the verbs contained in the Present Concern dictionary.

PRAISE: Affirmations of some person, group, or abstract entity. Included are adjectives describing important social qualities (dear, delightful, witty), physical qualities (mighty, handsome, beautiful), intellectual qualities (shrewd, bright, reasonable), entrepreneurial qualities (successful, conscientious, renowned), and moral qualities (faithful, good, noble).

PRESENT CONCERN: This dictionary includes a selective list of present-tense verbs and is not topic-specific. This score points to general physical activity (cough, taste, sing, take), social operations (canvass, touch, govern, meet), and task-performance (make, cook, print, paint).

RAPPORT: This dictionary describes attitudinal similarities among groups of people. Included are terms of affinity (congenial, camaraderie, companion), assent (approve, vouched, warrants), deference (tolerant, willing, permission), and id entity (equivalent, resemble, consensus).

SATISFACTION: Terms associated with positive affective states (cheerful, passionate, happiness), with moments of undiminished joy (thanks, smile, welcome) and pleasurable diversion (excited, fun, lucky), or with moments of triumph (celebrating, pride, auspicious).

SELF-REFERENCE: All first-person references. This dictionary track how often the locus of action appears to be the speaker and not in the world at large.

SPATIAL AWARENESS: Terms referring to geographical entities and physical distances. Included are general geographical terms (abroad, elbow-room, local, outdoors) as well as references to specific locations such as nations. Also included are politically defined locations (county, fatherland, municipality, ward), points on the compass (east, southwest), terms of scale (kilometer, map, spacious), and other references to geographic terms (latitude, coastal, border, snowbelt). This dictionary also measure as well as quality (vacant, out-of-the-way, disoriented) and change (pilgrimage, migrated, frontier) in geography.

TEMPORAL AWARENESS: Terms that fix a person, idea, or event within a specific time-interval, thereby signaling a concern for concrete and practical matters. The dictionary designates literal time (century, instant, mid-morning) as well as metaphorical designations (lingering, seniority, nowadays), calendrical terms (autumn, year-round, weekend), elliptical terms (spontaneously, postpone, transitional), and judgmental terms (premature, obsolete, punctual).

TENACITY: These verbs that connote confidence and totality. This dictionary analyzes all uses of the verb “to be” (is, am, will, shall), three definitive verb forms (has, must, do) and their variants, as well as all associated contraction.

VARIETY: This measure divides the number of different words in a passage by the passage’s total words. A high score reflects an avoidance of overstatement and a preference for precise statements.

Appendix C

Computation of Master Variables

CERTAINTY: Language that reflect resoluteness, inflexibility, completeness, and a tendency to speak from a position of authority or rank.

Formula: [Tenacity + Leveling + Collectives + Insistence.] - [Numerical Terms + Ambivalence + Self Reference + Variety]

OPTIMISM: Language that supports some person, group, concept or event or highlights their positive qualities.

Formula: [*Praise + Satisfaction + Inspiration*] - [*Blame + Hardship + Denial*]

ACTIVITY: Language featuring movement, change, the implementation of ideas.

Formula: [Aggression + Accomplishment + Communication + Motion] - [Cognitive Terms + Passivity + Embellishment]

REALISM: Language describing tangible, immediate, recognizable matters that affect people's everyday lives.

Formula: [Familiarity + Spatial Awareness + Temporal Awareness + Present Concern + Human Interest + Concreteness] - [Past Concern + Complexity]

COMMONALITY SCORE: Language highlighting the agreed-upon values of and rejecting idiosyncratic modes of engagement.

Formula: [*Centrality + Cooperation + Rapport*] - [*Diversity + Exclusion + Liberation*]

Appendix D

Rhetorical Scores for all Reagan Speech Drafts

	<i>Master Variables</i>				
	Activity	Optimism	Certainty	Realism	Commonality
Normative Group-615 Presidential Speeches					
	47.25	49.97	47.68	48.42	49.91
	52.53	53.03	52.59	53.47	52.37
	5.28	3.06	4.91	5.05	2.46
Speech at the Berlin Wall June 12, 1987					
5/21/87	49.15	50.31	42.78	49.76	48.32
5/27/87	51.23	51.57	46.06	51.09	48.10
5/27/1987 w/NSC revisions	48.55	55.71	52.76	45.49	49.84
5/29/87	49.84	51.09	46.07	52.00	49.33
6/1/87	50.57	51.66	47.05	51.67	49.96
6/1/1987 w/NSC revisions	49.62	51.19	49.09	52.13	51.84
6/1/87	48.95	50.86	46.32	49.47	46.28
6/8/87	49.69	52.57	46.17	53.30	49.84
Reading	48.75	52.56	44.79	52.00	49.05
As Delivered	49.76	52.92	44.76	50.97	50.08
<i>draft range</i>	2.68	5.4	9.98	7.81	5.56
<i>as % of normal variation</i>	51%	176%	203%	155%	226%
<i>NSC shift in 5/27 draft</i>	-2.68	4.14	6.70	-5.60	1.74
<i>as % of normal variation</i>	-51%	135%	136%	-111%	71%
<i>NSC shift in 6/1 draft</i>	-0.95	-0.47	2.04	0.46	1.88
<i>as % of normal variation</i>	-18%	-15%	42%	9%	76%
Evil Empire March 8, 1983					
3/3/83 7:00 PM	50.38	47.10	45.09	49.20	47.91
3/3/83 7:00 PM	49.32	48.55	47.65	49.82	48.78
3/3/1983 7:00 PM Duberstein	50.39	47.10	45.09	49.19	47.91
3/5/83 12:00 PM	50.18	48.55	48.38	48.66	48.58
3/5/1983 with Reagan	38.91	45.18	43.96	48.54	49.16
3/5/1983 with Reagan	39.82	45.58	44.52	49.13	49.02
3/7/83 12:00 PM	42.75	47.76	43.62	49.64	49.06
3/7/1983 Revised	44.31	47.59	43.85	48.49	49.04
3/8/83 2:00 PM	40.6	46.08	44.92	49.33	49.11
Reading Copy	41.56	47.39	44.60	49.07	49.05
As Delivered	49.83	49.05	47.36	48.91	49.35
<i>draft range</i>	11.48	3.87	4.76	1.33	1.44
<i>as % of normal variation</i>	217%	126%	97%	26%	59%

		<i>Master Variables</i>				
		Activity	Optimism	Certainty	Realism	Commonality
Normative Group-615 Presidential Speeches						
		47.25	49.97	47.68	48.42	49.91
		52.53	53.03	52.59	53.47	52.37
		5.28	3.06	4.91	5.05	2.46
Farewell Address January 11, 1989						
1/2/89		50.93	48.16	46.72	49.45	48.65
1/5/89		49.32	50.48	48.39	49.17	48.04
1/5/89 17:00		45.87	55.79	44.72	50.51	47
1/6/89		47.61	47.63	46.78	47.94	46.56
1/9/89		47.51	50.56	47.05	50.97	47.55
1/10/89		46.68	51.47	46.73	50.29	47.27
1/10/89		46.78	51.52	46.64	50.33	47.27
Reading Copy		46.68	51.47	46.68	50.26	47.26
As Delivered		47.15	51.18	47.3	50.23	47.23
<i>draft range</i>		<i>5.06</i>	<i>8.16</i>	<i>3.67</i>	<i>3.03</i>	<i>2.09</i>
<i>as % of normal variation</i>		<i>96%</i>	<i>267%</i>	<i>75%</i>	<i>60%</i>	<i>85%</i>
The Boys of Pointe duHoc June 6, 1984						
5/21/84		49.55	50.76	48.36	53.56	51.16
5/24/84		49.67	49.69	48.36	53.48	51.11
McFarlane		46.52	51.07	47.33	51.28	52.73
Noonan		45.99	49.83	44.98	51.71	51.87
5/25/84		47.81	51.21	47.48	52.36	53.17
5/30/84		45.85	49.76	44.93	51.74	51.22
As delivered		49.32	49.99	48.34	53.62	51.55
Reading		49.02	49.76	48.18	52.92	50.81
<i>draft range</i>		<i>3.82</i>	<i>1.52</i>	<i>3.43</i>	<i>2.34</i>	<i>2.36</i>
<i>as % of normal variation</i>		<i>72%</i>	<i>50%</i>	<i>70%</i>	<i>46%</i>	<i>96%</i>
1982 State of the Union January 26, 1982						
Draft 1		49.59	48.16	45.53	38.67	49.75
12/29/81		50.35	53.51	47.38	52.62	48.58
1/22/82		48.43	48.86	49.68	51.42	50.38
Reading		47.51	50.96	48.37	52.37	49.93
As Delivered		47.77	51.87	47.98	52.24	49.97
Fried Draft		50.66	50.8	50.62	52.62	46.67
Gingrich		48.88	52.86	50.29	51.14	52.52
<i>White House draft range</i>		<i>2.84</i>	<i>5.35</i>	<i>4.15</i>	<i>13.95</i>	<i>1.8</i>
<i>as % of normal variation</i>		<i>54%</i>	<i>175%</i>	<i>85%</i>	<i>276%</i>	<i>73%</i>
<i>Range all drafts</i>		<i>3.15</i>	<i>5.35</i>	<i>5.09</i>	<i>13.95</i>	<i>5.85</i>
<i>as % of normal variation</i>		<i>60%</i>	<i>175%</i>	<i>104%</i>	<i>276%</i>	<i>238%</i>

Endnotes

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Endnotes

⁶² Speech drafts from the Truman and first Bush administration have been gathered but not analyzed yet. Since the Clinton Library has just opened, speech drafts were not available to researchers.

⁶³ “Lighting the National Christmas Tree: The Case for Studying ‘Rose Garden Rubbish’” presented at the *Southwest Political Science Association* (San Antonio, Texas, April 2003).

⁶⁴ Unfortunately, the absence of a formal staffing system was paralleled by the absence of a standard filing system making the retention of inaugural drafts much more uncertain than other speech draft.

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