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SPECIAL ISSUE ON TELEVISED POLITICAL DEBATES

Analyzing Televised Political Debates in the 2004 Election Cycle
Kathryn M. Olson, Guest Editor 191

Audience Perceptions of Politeness and Advocacy Skills in the 2000 and 2004 Presidential Debates *William O. Dailey, Edward A. Hinck, and Shelly S. Hinck* 196

Two studies, of the 2000 and 2004 presidential debates, were conducted to determine the extent to which audience members relied on constructs of politeness or advocacy skills to evaluate candidates' messages in debates. Results from pre-debate responses as to the importance of these skills and post-debate judgments of the quality of those skills indicated that, above and beyond loyalty to a candidate, both advocacy and politeness played a role in audience members' evaluations of the candidates. While advocacy skills appeared to be more salient, politeness still played a significant role. The findings confirm the need for more descriptive, ethnographic, and scientific studies to determine how politeness and advocacy skills are related in audience assessments of candidates in debates.

Key words: advocacy, politeness, presidential campaign debates

Questioning the Questions: An Examination of the "Unpredictable" 2004 Bush-Kerry Town Hall Debate *John T. Morello* 211

The 2004 Bush-Kerry town hall departed from earlier such debates. The subject matter of questions lacked the highly personal and often parochial quality of those posed in earlier town hall debates, and the debate was not the genteel encounter conventional wisdom anticipated. Questions were more argumentative than had been the case (over half the questions were accusatory), and more of the questions focused on the past (most past-oriented questions were posed initially to Bush, while Kerry was asked more open-ended, future-oriented questions). Citizen questioners sounded more like press panelists, the format did not prevent the candidates from ducking some questions, and, in the end, the anticipated "balance" that an audience of uncommitted voters theoretically was supposed to provide did not materialize. Following each town hall debate, new rules have been imposed on subsequent ones. The 2004 experience suggests aspects that may be scrutinized as the town hall format continues to evolve.

Key words: Presidential debates, town hall, debate questions, Bush-Kerry, debate criticisms

A Functional Analysis of American Vice Presidential Debates*
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This study content analyzed the seven American vice presidential debates held in 1976 and from 1984–2004. Acclaims were more common than attacks, which in turn occurred more frequently than defenses. Vice presidential candidates attacked more and defended less in debates than presidential candidates. In the vice presidential debates, more attacks were made by challengers and losers than their counterparts. These running mates discussed policy more frequently than character, but emphasized policy somewhat less–and leadership ability more–than presidential candidates. Democrats, incumbents, and winners emphasized policy more than their counterparts.

Incumbents acclaimed more, and attacked less, on past deeds than challengers. Finally, these vice presidential candidates used general goals and ideals more to acclaim than attack. Implications for political campaign discourse are discussed.
Key words: vice presidential debates, functions, topics, political party, incumbency, outcome

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