A WEEKLY GENRE: THE RHETORICAL CONTENT AND PERSUASIVE EFFECTS OF THE SATURDAY PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS IN THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

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A WEEKLY GENRE: THE RHETORICAL CONTENT AND PERSUASIVE EFFECTS
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ABSTRACT

President Barack Obama broke a presidential tradition on January 24, 2009. After almost
three decades in an audio format, the president delivered the Saturday presidential address via
radio and for the first time visually on the White House website and YouTube page. The
transition of the weekly radio address to an audiovisual-virtual format presents an important
opportunity to examine the content and effects of this area of presidential communications.

Arguing that the Saturday presidential address constitutes a genre of presidential rhetoric, I
construct a generic rhetorical framework for analyzing content-specific changes to the Saturday
address in the Obama administration. Discovering that the weekly address serves as a secular
sermon, mediated log, and a means to mark capital time, I then address how presidential
audiences are affected by the modality of the address. Using a quantitative analysis that
incorporates factor, reliability, and paired samples t-tests, I construct an experimental design
with an embedded survey to isolate specific attitude changes related to source credibility
including presidential trust, image perceptions, and leadership traits. I find significant attitude
change associated with trust and leadership by the modality of conveyance. This multi-
methodological approach renders the Saturday presidential address as an integral part of
sustaining the presidency, persuading citizens and the press, and inculcating national identity.
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“You are a child of the universe,
no less than the trees and the stars;
you have a right to be here.
And whether or not it is clear to you,
no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.”
-Max Ehrmann, Desiderata
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INTRODUCTION

The American people have come to expect the president to speak to them on a relatively consistent basis. Whether by audio or visual means, presidential communications are mediated to the citizenry in a fashion that has become ritualistic. A presidential administration begins with an Inaugural Address and is punctuated “from time to time” by the annual State of the Union Address. Additional measures are provided for ceremonial or epideictic communication, tragedy addresses, or the president “taking to the stump” to push for his legislative agenda. Presidential rhetoric has become a form of governance and symbolic action, especially since the advent of electronic and visual communications (Hart, 1987). Rod Hart explains, “When a modern president speaks, about anything, it will be regarded as important and, increasingly, as constitutively appropriate to the office” (30). The Saturday presidential address becomes one such genre of rhetoric that holds a great deal of institutional and rhetorical purpose.

The weekly presidential address in the era of the virtual presidency presents an important set of issues dealing with citizen access, presidential transparency, message management, and public expectations about the utilization of new media for government purposes (Owen and Davis, 2008). In addition, presidential communications via emerging media formats have important implications for democratic participation and civic engagement. This research attempts to address these issues associated with the changing channel for the Saturday presidential address by systematically examining 1) the content of the weekly address with a focus on developing a framework for the genre and whether it is evolving due to the media transition and; 2) the persuasive effects of the transition between a radio format and an online video medium. The content and effects are examined within the context of the history of presidential communications via audio and audiovisual formats.
By studying the Saturday presidential address genre, I will attempt to answer several research questions. The main question that will undergird this entire research is: How are message contents and media effects altered in the transition of the weekly presidential address from a radio to internet video format? Of course, this question has implications and grounding for Marshall McLuhan’s work on how the medium impacts the message. However, this question may also illuminate the advantages or disadvantages of exposing the president in a visual format on Saturday mornings. One of the criticisms of President Obama’s administration has been a belief that he is “overexposed” or talking too much to the American people (Connelly, 2009). This research will address these concerns and the related idea of ubiquitous appeals. As some scholars of the rhetorical presidency have noted, “Words come to have an ephemeral quality to them, and the more the president speaks the less value can be put on any one speech he delivers” (Ceaser et al., 1981).

The Saturday presidential address has dramatically increased the amount of presidential communications, presenting an opportunity to examine the effect of less studied genres of executive discourse on presidential power. Of the 602 total media appearances during his first year in office, President Bill Clinton’s weekly radio addresses accounted for approximately eight percent of these appearances versus nine percent for President George W. Bush in his first year (Kumar, 2007). This increased presidential presence has been rarely studied and a significant gap exists in the current research on presidential genres of rhetoric. In their analysis of these genres, Karyl Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson establish a framework for genres of presidential address, with the exception of the Saturday radio address (1990/2008). The Saturday radio address, as it was called since President Reagan’s initiation of the tradition in 1982, is one guaranteed moment each week when the president addresses the nation. The ritualistic nature of
the address, now called “Your Weekly Address” in the Obama administration, makes the genre unique in comparison to other presidential communications.

Entering the second decade of the 21st century presents emerging challenges for the rhetorical presidency, including how to address a mass audience among increasingly fragmented media sources. The rise of narrowcasting and targeted media programming, whether through traditional or newer media formats, has caused audience sizes to diminish for presidential addresses (Wattenberg, 2004; Baum and Kernell, 1999). As the captive audience vanishes in favor of newer “pull” media (Barker, 2002), the presidential listening audience has become highly skewed by age as young adults follow presidential actions less and less. Because Obama’s presidential campaign made a concerted effort to incorporate younger citizens into the political process (Owen, 2008/9), the implications for younger people following the president’s addresses via new media formats cannot be ignored.

Just as the presidential audience fragments, the need for a president to “go public” by appealing directly to the American populous is greater than ever (Kernell, 2007). The audience for the Saturday address has always been difficult to ascertain because of the ever-changing number of radio stations that carry the message. However, Samuel Kernell argues that going public through regular addresses, such as the Saturday presidential address, may have more of an impact on the weekend news cycle as opposed to direct citizen attention. Television media report on the president’s remarks to supplement the previous week’s stories. In this way, the president can set the weekend media agenda (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Often though, media coverage of the addresses is inconsistent. Newspaper coverage of the addresses has diminished over time along with the number of words directly attributed to the president (Horvit, Schiffer & Wright, 2008). While the implications for media use of the newly formatted presidential address will be
touched on, the locus of this research focuses on the audience effects and how the new format may reinvigorate citizen interest by using YouTube or the White House website to observe the address.

**Research Overview**

I utilize a multi-methodological approach to examining the Saturday presidential address that includes a review of the content and effects of the weekly speech. Examining the content of the addresses, I explain whether the transition from radio to internet is altering the messages and style of the addresses. Scholars have noted that the rise of radio and television in America changed the role of traditional political oratory from an adaptive, fiery style to a more conversational, intimate format (Jamieson, 1988; Hart, 1999). As Jamieson explains, “Where rhetoric once painted murals, television now transports the actual landscape to the nation’s living rooms” (57). I study the Saturday speeches of Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama to develop a comprehensive framework for understanding the address as a genre of presidential rhetoric. Using Campbell and Jamieson’s approach to generic presidential rhetorical analysis, I discover how the weekly address acts as a genre with specific sustaining functions for the presidency and national identity. I address mechanical issues, message construction, and audience adaptation within the medium to discover whether there are media-specific changes in the progression of the address over 17 years, particularly in the first year of the Obama administration.

As a complement to an examination of content, I will then embark on understanding the media effects associated with the address’ transition. How are attitudes toward President Obama and his domestic policies modified during the Saturday address? Are there larger persuasive attitude changes among those exposed to a radio (audio-channeled) format or an internet video
I employ an experimental design embedded in a survey for this part of the study that exposes undergraduate students to one of two conditions – an audio format or an internet visual medium – in order to observe potential attitude changes. While there is a large body of research detailing differing persuasive effects by medium (Sparks, Areni, & Cox, 1998; Chaiken and Eagly, 1976; Chaiken and Eagly, 1983; Andreoli and Worchel, 1978), this research will specifically address effects related to an online medium versus a traditional radio format. Taking into account issues such as source credibility and attractiveness (Hovland and Weiss, 1951) and the role of visual rhetoric or the presidential image as a means of persuasion that accompanies message appeals (Duncum, 2004; Huddy and Gunnthorsdottir, 2000; Nimmo, 1976; Graber, 1996; Mayer, 2004), this experiment will address these factors as an ultimate means to an end for the Obama administration to persuade his audience.

In the process of studying content and effects, I rely on several key ideas associated with rhetoric and media. I use rhetoric as a point of departure to examine the Saturday presidential address because media effects research has traditionally concerned itself with content and channel to study the effects of messages on a particular audience (Eveland, 2003). Following with this rich history, I examine rhetoric as integral to the content of a presidential message. The traditional and modern rhetorical approaches of Aristotle, Warnick, and Medhurst are helpful for this endeavor. Rhetoric, according to Martin Medhurst, is not necessarily only concerned with persuasion, but also how speakers use their intellectual capabilities in the selection of what is said, how it is conveyed, to whom, under what conditions, and with what outcome (1996). This approach integrates the Aristotelian definition of rhetoric to find "the available means of persuasion" including logical, ethical, and emotional appeals (Benson and Prosser, 1988) with more modern audiovisual means outlined by Warnick. Barbara Warnick includes words and
symbol use, including images, verbal, and nonverbal language in the definition of rhetorical means (2007). This integrated approach is critical for understanding how the institutional presidency, as defined by the Constitution, evolved into a dual role serving both executive and rhetorical functions.

Media theory has been influenced largely by the work of Marshall McLuhan, who outlined how the medium or channel of message conveyance ultimately impacts the message. He argues that the right hemisphere of the brain, used for processing visual and audio appeals in a non-logical order, is stimulated by electric communications (McLuhan and McLuhan, 1988). Because of this, McLuhan argues “Technologies themselves, regardless of content, produce a hemispheric bias in the users” (71). Thus, the medium becomes a domain of experience that ultimately influences the message. In the case of electronic technologies, their stimulation of certain portions of the brain shapes the reception of particular messages. I use the McLuhanian notion of “the medium is the message” for looking at how different presidential address formats may ultimately impact the reception of an executive’s message (McLuhan, 1959). To do this successfully, I examine the present media form of the Saturday presidential address (internet-based) with historical forms of how the radio address was used by past presidents.

**Presidential Approaches to the Saturday Address**

President-elect Barack Obama first recorded the Democratic response to the weekly radio address a week after his election victory via a radio and online video format. Dubbing the impending administration “The YouTube Presidency,” Jose Antonio Vargas wrote, “But online political observers say President-elect Obama's innovative, online-fueled campaign will likely evolve into a new level of online communication between the public and the White House – the Internet era version of President Franklin Roosevelt's famous ‘fireside chats’” (2008). National
Public Radio’s “All Things Considered” interviewed Susan Stamberg following the transition, who noted, “People hear that voice, and they know if it's telling the truth, if it's speaking with conviction, if it means what it says. Television, you know, you put on makeup…Kind of curl up the side of a mouth, just smile photogenically. It's all so distracting…” (NPR, 2008). The decision, while widely anticipated following Obama’s successful internet outreach during the presidential campaign, came as a surprise to some media personnel. However, the evolution to a new format follows a history of presidential advancements and changes in official communications.

Throughout its history, the presidential radio address has served various purposes for the president and the audiences effected. The advent of radio for political purposes in the 1920s dramatically altered the relationship of the president in respect to Congress. While Woodrow Wilson was the first president to speak on radio, the Republican administrations of the 1920s used radio to exert the power of the presidency while speaking to the nation’s challenges (Becker, 1961). President Franklin Roosevelt’s fireside chats during the Great Depression coincided with a growth in radio receivers among the public and the economic uncertainty of the depression years. Between March 1933 and June 1944, Roosevelt gave a total of 27 fireside chats at intermittent intervals, a small total compared to today’s modern presidential address and far fewer than many believe he gave (American Presidency Project). Roosevelt’s use of radio was dovetailed by increased use of radio for propaganda purposes by the axis powers during World War II. This led to a heightened focus by political communication scholars to study the audience effects of radio (Miller, 1941).

Kernell argues that the ‘fireside chat’ was an early development in the president’s tendency to go public, attributing Roosevelt’s efforts more to his desire to remind Congress of
his mandate for the New Deal (2007). Regardless of Roosevelt’s purposes, his approach
accelerated the trend by which presidents speak to the public with increasing frequency. The
growth of the rhetorical presidency thus was tied to the belief that speaking is governing, a
dramatic shift from the traditional role of the president to communicate within branches of
government (Ceaser et al., 1981). Jamieson similarly argues that the fireside chat style of
presidential address invites a new purpose for presidential communications “one person in the
private space of his living room chatting with millions of other individuals in theirs” (1988, 55).

The presidencies following Roosevelt adapted this style to television and in the process
allowed for a more conversational or discussion style of address to gain ascendency (Becker,
1961; Jamieson, 1988; Hart, 1999). It was not until President Ronald Reagan’s administration
that the Saturday radio address, as it is known today, was developed. A year into his presidency,
Reagan began with a series of five-minute radio messages in April 1982 to elevate his public
profile and subvert the news media’s tendency to edit his statements into sound bites (Martin,
1984; Kiewe and Houck, 1991; Sigelman and Whissell, 2002a). While the Mutual Broadcasting
Service estimated that as many as 1.5 million people could have been reached by the addresses,
few stations carried the broadcasts and citizens seldom provided responses to the radio stations
(Martin, 1984). However, the network news often reported on the speeches and The New York
Times often times ran full texts of the addresses. Robert Rowland and John Jones, in an analysis
of Reagan’s radio addresses, found that Reagan avoided divisive social issues in favor of more
moderate stances on domestic issues such as education and drug treatment (2002). As they note,
“It is possible that Reagan used the radio addresses to shape both public and historical
perceptions of his administration’s ideology.”
President George H.W. Bush did not carry on the Saturday presidential address with the same regularity as Reagan until 1992, when he was up for reelection. When President Clinton assumed office, he restarted the Saturday ritual after a successful campaign of using new media including talk radio to elevate his candidacy (Sigelman and Whissell, 2002a; Davis and Owen, 1998; Dobrez, 1996). His first Saturday address in February 1993 was broadcast by several major radio networks; however, media executives signaled that future coverage would be contingent on newsworthiness (Viles, 1993). Mirroring Reagan’s approach, Clinton used a standard radio script to avoid gaffes and spoke in a conversational tone to the public (Sigelman and Whissell, 2002a). The tradition was carried on in George W. Bush’s administration.

Underscoring the progression of the Saturday address over four presidencies is the progression of cable television, the creation of 24-hour news, and the rise of digital communication via the internet (Baum and Kernell, 1999; Wattenberg, 2004). These new formats have scattered audiences and left increasing options for viewers. Within an increasingly difficult and fragmented media environment for the modern virtual presidency and a shrinking desire for citizens to listen to the president, the new format for the Saturday presidential address presents an important opportunity to analyze a consistent way in which the president attempts to connect with the populous. Similarly to other presidential communications, the Saturday address has always struggled for relevancy. This research will look at whether the transition could make the genre more relevant and effective or whether it is becoming a relic of past presidential outreach like the whistle stop tour.

Research Plan

I begin in chapter two to lay out the theoretical groundwork for understanding the content of the weekly presidential address. Using Lasswell’s model of communication as a guide, I
examine the messengers, channels, and audiences of presidential rhetoric. I look specifically at
the development of the rhetorical presidency and how it has adapted to the constraints imposed
by changing media technologies. The Saturday presidential address serves as a metric for me to
study the audiences exposed to the weekend messages. In the process, I review the literature
associated with the rhetorical presidency, image creation and management, the influence of
media agenda-setting as a goal of the Saturday address, and the evolving nature of the
presidential audience.

In chapter three, I address the “says what” of Lasswell’s model by examining the content
of the Saturday speech. I develop a generic rhetorical framework for understanding the Saturday
presidential address. Using the approach of Campbell and Jamieson, I examine 30 Saturday
addresses given by Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama during the first
year of their presidencies. I find that the speeches contain a strong temporal dynamic that
structures three main roles for the weekly address: a secular sermon, a mediated log, and a means
for marking capital time. The genre framework serves as a metric for analyzing the content-
specific changes of Obama’s weekly addresses, including structural modifications and layout
changes associated with the virtual space.

Chapter four moves to address the media effects side of this research, as I review the
theoretical framework associated with persuasion, multimodality, and source credibility. I
examine how attitudes and behavior are affected by the channel of message conveyance,
reviewing the historical research associated with audio and audiovisual-based appeals.
Specifically, I address the scholarly literature on the 1960 presidential debates between Richard
Nixon and John F. Kennedy as a case study for modality and source characteristics.
I detail in chapter five my quantitative methodological approach to studying the effects of the Saturday presidential address. Constructing a survey addressing approval of Obama and his domestic policies, I utilize an experimental pre and post test survey design to analyze how undergraduate students respond to the weekly address. After completing the baseline pre-survey, I divide the sample into two groups and expose each group to a radio or online video format. To control for varying message effects, I randomly select one Saturday presidential address from Obama’s first year in office to be used in both treatment conditions. I present the results of my findings, with a particular emphasis on three main source characteristics and how they are affected by modality: presidential trust, image perceptions, and leadership traits.

Finally, I conclude in chapter six with a review of the major findings associated with content and media effects and where future scholars can research further. I examine the implications of the effects results within the genre framework, calling into question how future media coverage and citizen effects may impact the rituals effectiveness. I elucidate the need for a greater focus on the weekly address as a genre and how ritualistic presidential communications, while not attracting large audiences, can ultimately assist with national identity and sustaining the institutional presidency.
CHAPTER 2

The virtual rhetorical presidency, as related to the Saturday presidential address, is a product of the evolution of presidential rhetoric and White House communications in the modern era. In order to address how the role of rhetoric and language is integral to a president's communication with the citizenry, this chapter will examine the development of the rhetorical presidency with an emphasis on those elements that led to the rise of the Saturday presidential address under President Ronald Reagan and its continuance in four additional administrations. I accomplish this by overlaying the strategies and developments of presidential rhetoric with Harold Lasswell's famous Model of Communication. Using the model, "Who says What in which Channel to Whom with what Effect," I will structure this chapter around three of these key ideas while leaving the "says What" and "Effect" to be examined in later chapters. This approach allows me to examine the various elements and rhetorical constraints placed on the speaker, the message, the medium, and the audience when examining the Saturday address as a genre. Following this chapter, I develop a generic rhetorical framework for the Saturday presidential address in chapter three.

The president has become the singular, rhetorical head of government and in the process has taken on a ubiquitous public persona that permeates political and social life. When the president speaks, people listen the conventional wisdom dictates. I embark on addressing this claim in the next several sections of this chapter with a particular focus on the ritualistic nature of the Saturday presidential address. The potential answers are not as clear cut as is believed. The rhetorical presidency is complicated and answering whether content and effects have changed with the new medium for the Saturday presidential address is similarly difficult. We begin first
with an executive focus and how a once constitutionally-limited institution used rhetoric as a catalyst for presidential emergence and empowerment.

**Who: The Presidency and the Role of Rhetoric**

As the singular head of the executive branch and symbolic leader of American government, the president has wide latitude to rhetorically operate and advocate for public policy within the constraints of the U.S. Constitution. Article II, Section III articulates the role of the president to give updates to Congress of the "State of the Union" and "recommend to their consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient." The growth of the rhetorical presidency and the chief executive as "chief inventor and broker" of political symbols that create reality (Ivie, 1996, 164) seems a natural outgrowth of the "such measures" clause. However, the role of the president as speaker-in-chief is a recent development occurring within the last century, when the changing role of government and a growing nation demanded a more vocal executive branch.

Medhurst has defined the rhetorical presidency in strategic terms by noting that use of popular speech developed as a means for bypassing Congress and directly reaching a mass audience (1996). However, the rhetorical techniques of a president are instilled during the campaign process, when a candidate must demonstrate their leadership ability through speaking and debating (Ceaser et al., 1981). The president's ability to speak and expound in addresses, including inaugurals, State of the Unions, veto messages, and farewell addresses, has been well-studied (Campbell and Jamieson, 1990/2008). These events not only serve as formal exercises of the president's power, but also as public relations campaigns for presidential agenda-setting. I explore the idea in chapter three that more ritualistic addresses, including the Saturday presidential address, may have a major sustaining impact for the presidential institution and
national identity. This modern sustaining function of presidential rhetoric, to which many scholars study, was rarely needed in an early era when executive functions were more limited.

*The Emergence of the Rhetorical Presidency*

Presidents in the 19th century were confined in their dialogue to inter-government communications, a rhetorical role that matched the limited role of the executive branch in respect to Congress (Tulis, 1996; Ceaser et al., 1981). However, as the United States engaged more in foreign affairs at the beginning of the 20th century, the presidency began to take on a new role. Many scholars trace the beginnings of the modern rhetorical presidency to Woodrow Wilson, who embarked on a nationwide campaign to sell the League of Nations against U.S. Senate opposition in 1919 (Schudson, 1998). Wilson's rhetorical strategy was new compared to the front porch stylings and governmental communications of the 19th century. However, Wilson campaigned on an issue within the purview of the president’s commander-in-chief role. Upon arriving in Pueblo, Colorado, Wilson told his audience "there is nothing so reassuring to men who are trying to express the public sentiment as getting into real personal contact with their fellow citizens” (Wilson, 1919). He also broke a century's old precedent by addressing the Congress on the State of the Union in person (Campbell and Jamieson, 1990/2008).

The Wilsonian view of presidential oratory to sway or reflect the views of citizens was carried on by his successors. This new role saw the chief executive as a molder of public opinion through rhetoric, which then pressures Congress, and an instiller of policy visions by priming public wishes and sentiments. In many ways, this presidential view of power as a derivative of public sentiment reflected progressivism and political reforms that brought more citizens into the political process (Schudson, 1998). Schudson finds during this time that there was a simultaneous evolution from a Congress-centered to a president-centered government, where
"the president became the symbolic focal point of national attention" (1998, 207). As the presidents of the 1920s and 1930s continued to employ new rhetorical strategies, the press derided these tactics as manipulation and propaganda.

With the rise of this new approach to presidential leadership, a tension developed between what Medhurst terms the "two constitutions" - the role of the president articulated in Article II and the popular role expressed by the rhetorical presidency (1996). The new tendency of the president to "go public" created conflict with the legislative branch. Kernell defines this trend as presidential promotion of the self and his policies in Washington, D.C. by appealing directly to the American public (2007). He points to President Franklin Roosevelt's "fireside chats" and his 1937 "court-packing plan" as instances where Roosevelt sought to leverage public support for his New Deal policies with Congress and simultaneously exert executive power.

There are other instances of "going public" that instilled a sense of normalcy in the speaker-in-chief exhorting directly to citizens. When President Dwight Eisenhower addressed the public regarding his order to send federal troops into Little Rock, Arkansas to desegregate Central Little Rock High School, he closed with a personal call to the citizens of Arkansas. "And so, with deep confidence, I call upon the citizens of the State of Arkansas to assist in bringing to an immediate end all interference with the law and its processes" (Eisenhower, 1957). As President John F. Kennedy articulated the outlines of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and called upon the Senate for wise consultation, he similarly called upon citizens to "take part in that debate, for this treaty is for all of us. It is particularly for our children and our grandchildren, and they have no lobby here in Washington. This debate will involve military, scientific, and political experts, but it must be not left to them alone" (Kennedy, 1963). After President Richard Nixon announced an extensive bombing campaign in Cambodia during the Vietnam War, he concluded
by reflecting upon the common acceptance for presidents to seek popular support through rhetoric. "It is customary to conclude a speech from the White House by asking support for the President of the United States. Tonight, I depart from that precedent" (Nixon, 1970). These are a couple examples of how presidential rhetoric evolved and the ease with which later presidencies solicited popular support for their policies.

*Challenges of the Rhetorical Presidency*

The increasingly public role of the president in the last century has presented its own set of challenges for the executive branch. One of these is the impact of presidential credibility on the executive's ability to persuade citizens and to wield power over congressional action. Aristotle saw speaker credibility, or ethos, as "the decider" of argument effectiveness when all the means of persuasion were balanced. Thurow notes, "Since a president often speaks to others about matters and policies that are debatable and uncertain, the perception of a president's character is a crucial element of his ability to persuade and thus to get others to do what he wishes them to do" (1996, 16). Monitoring public opinion, by any means at a president's disposal, became commonplace. For instance, Franklin Roosevelt's staff tallied mail, reviewed newspaper editorial stances, and commissioned polls in the later years of his presidency (Kernell, 2007). Similarly, President Bill Clinton’s political team was famous for monitoring public opinion associated with his healthcare and economic recovery plans (Jacobs and Shapiro, 2000).

A president's effectiveness thus became tied to public credibility and ultimately impacted presidential rhetoric. President's attempted to "move their numbers" through rhetorical means, revealing a paradox of the rhetorical presidency. Scholars have noted that the increased frequency of presidential remarks may ultimately weaken presidential power and credibility as words and speeches are viewed to have "an ephemeral quality" and "opportunity costs for future
appeals" (Ceaser et al., 1981; Kernell, 2007). Presidential source credibility, as an element of persuasion, will be addressed in a later chapter on effects analysis.

As media have evolved and fragmented in the last three decades, presidential effectiveness has been challenged - forcing presidents to constantly adapt in order to assemble citizen coalitions. The growth of the Saturday presidential address is one element in the evolution of presidential rhetoric and a chief executive's drive to reach citizens. When President Ronald Reagan sought to harness his legislative agenda amid congressional and media wrangling, he initiated a series of Saturday radio addresses to set the agenda for media outlets and Democratic operatives in a tightly scripted format (Martin 1984; Rowland and Jones, 2002). Because opportunities for presidential speaking have become more plentiful, these regularly scheduled addresses are an integral part of the president's strategy to go public (Kernell, 2007). But the president has not always appeared or been heard in the same format. The evolution of the channel by which presidential rhetoric has been conveyed is integral to the development of the rhetorical presidency and presidential power in the modern virtual era.

The Channel: Evolving Presidential Means of Mediated Rhetoric

Perhaps the biggest change to presidential rhetoric over the past century has been the medium by which it is channeled to citizens. As new forms of communication technology altered the ways presidents could reach the American people, presidents adapted their rhetoric to suit new media. In the last century, presidential rhetoric has shifted from what Walter Ong terms primary orality to secondary orality. Primary orality concerned itself with first person, unmediated communication (Ong, 1980). When the president spoke directly to the people, memory was a dominant means for conveying shared history and values. After expounding on the role that memory, history, and values played in the construction of enthymemes for ancient
Greek oratory, Jamieson notes, "Where orality is central so too will be the art of memory. Although he did not treat it in detail, Aristotle considered memory to be one of the canons of rhetoric, along with the invention of arguments, arrangement, style, and delivery" (1988, 21).

As mass media forms altered the rhetorical presidency, secondary orality became the dominant means of communication. This means of communication relies on orality and several mediated means including writing, audio, and visual appeals in a highly structured format (Ong, 1978). While no longer representing physical face-to-face communication, a "virtual presence" is constructed that provides an intimate format mirroring ancient oral communication (Gronbeck, 1996; Jamieson, 1988; Hart, 1999). In this space, the presidency became more media-conscious and image dependent (Ong, 1978; Nimmo, 1976; Mayer, 2004).

It has been well-documented that past changes in media have altered the messages and rhetorical styles of certain presidents; this study's examination of the Saturday presidential address' new online channel is a continuation of this tradition. In order to address whether Barack Obama's messages on Saturday mornings have indeed been altered by the new internet medium, a context must be established to flesh out the evolving ground of presidential rhetoric amongst innovative media figures including radio, television, and digital online technologies.

*The Electronic Presidency*

The advent of radio and its first use by President Woodrow Wilson is seen by many as the first instances of how the presidency was altered by media technology. Wilson's approach to oratory coincided with the implementation of presidential radio during his administration, launching the rhetorical presidency toward a more citizen-centered focus. At the same time, radio's use by Wilson and his successors dramatically altered presidential power and the structure of White House communications (Kumar, 2007). Samuel Becker explains, "Broadcasting has
pushed the President further up the pole of political power, relative to the Congress” (1961). The president, as the rhetorical titular head of government, contrasted sharply with Congress’ emphasis on attracting local, district attention and the competition of some members for national media coverage (Cook, 1988). The advantage that members of Congress formerly enjoyed when speaking with small groups of constituents was suddenly transferred to the president, who could reach a mass audience using the technologies.

New communication technologies’ ability to disseminate information at faster speeds presented concerns for scholars of propaganda. Some saw power imbalances created by access to the technologies and used German dictator Adolf Hitler as an example of how radio could dramatically expand the power and influence of a leader (Miller, 1941). The new mass media dramatically altered the rhetorical presidency by creating an opportunity for new presidential channels to "go public," further altering the power dynamic relative to the legislative branch (Ceaser et al., 1981; Kernell, 2007).

A new electronic presidency emerged that altered the speed and content of messages. Bruce Gronbeck notes that the electronic presidency is characterized by multimediated rhetoric, an acceleration of rhetorical processes, an overriding emphasis on presidential ethos, and a diffusion of what qualifies as presidential rhetoric (1996). While succinct, I add and argue later that as the electronic presidency has merged with virtual channels, an additional characteristic has developed of presidential communications: a ubiquitous presence of presidential words and images in political and nonpolitical life. The ritualistic nature of the Saturday presidential address or tele-townhall meetings are just two instances of this, as are social events where the president speaks and receives media coverage, such as President Obama’s much-covered commentary at a Georgetown-Duke basketball game (Thompson, 2010). This could, in some
cases, lead to presidential overexposure - something in stark contrast to the low-key presidency a century ago.

Radio and television act as mass "push media," where information is pushed out to an audience with little selection of what is received, especially before cable television. These mass media stimulate consumption and are packaged into generic patterns to elicit mass audience attention (Warnick, 2007). President Franklin Roosevelt's much heralded fireside chats reached few Americans because of the small percentage of households that owned radios. To reach more Americans, his speeches were edited into movie newsreels for film intermissions (Kernell, 2007). Early radio speeches were an hour-long, with a shorter 30 minute radio speech emerging by the 1940s. As radio entertainment was used to draw a larger audience, speech time shrank further (Jamieson, 1988). Shorter speaking opportunities changed the nature of presidential rhetoric while push media also changed the way words were conveyed. Medhurst explains, "Modern media possess unique characteristics of their own - there is a rhetoric of television in addition to the rhetoric on television. Aphorist though he was, Marshall McLuhan was largely correct: the medium is the message. It is not all of the message, but it is certainly part of the message" (1996, XIX-XX).

One of the first areas to be molded or massaged by new electronic media were presidential speaking patterns. Gone was a fiery rhetoric in favor of a more intimate conversational style, an approach Jamieson says was traditionally called the "effeminate style" where a speaker projected their private self, used self-disclosure, and engaged the audience (1988). This new intimate communication had some consequences for the presidency. While simultaneously enhancing the executive branch's power relative to Congress, electronic media weakened a president's popular power, Gronbeck argues. He describes how new, intimate media
including radio and television shortened the symbolic distance that traditionally existed between a leader and the populous (1996). Despite any diminuendo in electronic speech conveyance and tone, Rod Hart argues that the presidential office imbues every speech act with power, whether it is unacknowledged, disguised, or denied (1987).

Accentuating the Visual Presidency

The rise of television dramatically altered presidential rhetoric by focusing attention on the presidential image. President Dwight Eisenhower applied Roosevelt's fireside chat techniques to television and further developed the conversational style (Becker, 1961). Administrations began to adopt the infrastructure necessary for electronic communications, including televising presidential press conferences while employing staff dedicated to advertising and public relations strategies (Kumar, 2007).

In identifying the goals of any electronic communication campaign, Dan Nimmo notes that cognitive, affective, and conative elements are implicated when constructing arguments, shaping perceptions, and conveying action (1976). These means construct the presidential image, and thus his credibility. Leadership becomes a “metaphysical” act where symbolic action, including visual speechmaking, is mediated as executive activism (Hart, 1987, 54). Jamieson explains, "Recognizing the power of the visual image, politicians become preoccupied with providing the lens with irresistible pictures. Pseudo-events abound. In the world of television, public leaders and reporters are only seen and heard selectively. When the visual and verbal dance in step, the power of each is magnified" (1988, 60). Many scholars began to take note of the inherent power in the audiovisual elements developing in presidential rhetoric. Gronbeck notes that political rhetoric has become visually, verbally, and audio-centered (1996). When tied with the increasing trend of presidents during the television age to go public, Kernell argues that
presidents began to increasingly rely on travel for sympathetic audiences and "presidential images" (2007, 127; Hart, 1987). Ronald Reagan’s trip to the Brandenburg Gate to exhort Mikhail Gorbachev to “tear down this wall” or George W. Bush’s landing on an aircraft carrier to announce the end of combat operations in Iraq are examples of these made-for-TV addresses.

Calling the emphasis on presidential image the "North Pole of politics," Gronbeck argues that spectacle has come with presidential stage crafting (1996). Presidential public image, as a primary source of credibility, has thus become about mediating a certain reality of the president's character, image management by a team of staffers, repeated characterization of opponents, and negotiating media assessments of an administration (Mayer, 2004). In the process, Mayer argues that the public has come to expect the image over words. It should come as no surprise then that presidential rhetoric has increasingly adapted to more visual-centric media.

As a genre of presidential rhetoric, the State of the Union address is one such speech that has been molded by the televised medium. Originally relegated to written communications between the president and Congress, in the modern media era, the State of the Union has become a televised spectacle. President Eisenhower was given the opportunity to present a televised State of the Union in 1954, but turned it down for fear of the address reflecting badly on Congress (Campbell and Jamieson, 1990/2008). Ronald Reagan used the address as an opportunity to highlight grand narratives and invite guests into the U.S. House gallery to showcase embodied images of specific values (Jamieson, 1988). However, as the media environment has evolved and taken once captive audiences with it, presidential rhetoric has once again begun to transition in order to meet the demands of segmented publics amidst fragmented media.

The advent of cable television made narrowcasting ascendant, making presidential actions easier to ignore amid other more entertaining programming. Martin Wattenberg notes
that presidential speeches were once shared national experiences (2004). With more options available, the presidential audience is now highly skewed toward older citizens, an issue I further address later in this chapter. While each president has increased the number of public pronouncements and speeches over their immediate predecessor, an increasing number of cable and digital options have scattered the presidential audience. Presidents, adapting to this trend, are cautious with prime time addresses, for fear of being turned down by the television networks (Baum and Kernell, 1999). Responding to fan concern, President Obama faced the cable effect when his State of the Union address was moved so as not to preempt the season premiere of the hit ABC program “Lost” (Condon, 2010). Fans used virtual means to spread their concern, an increasingly popular presidential practice for message conveyance.

The Rhetorical Presidency.gov

In the internet age, the rhetorical presidency has further evolved with the emergence of digital media. The White House has adapted to digital communications, including constantly updating a website, using video to capture "behind-the-scenes" business, responding to citizens via online media, and placing communications on file sharing websites including iTunes (Owen and Davis, 2008; Kumar, 2007; Benson, 1996). Thomas Benson notes that, "A significant theme in the White House development of Internet access is the importance of direct contact between the people and the presidency" (1996, 51). George W. Bush placed his Saturday radio addresses on the White House iTunes page for download. President Barack Obama's administration has similarly moved in this direction by transitioning the Saturday presidential address to an online video format. He has also held several virtual townhall meetings and engaged with the public via social networking platforms during his first year in office.
The Saturday address' presence on both the White House YouTube page and on the White House website, in addition to a host of radio stations that still carry an audio format, constitutes what Henry Jenkins refers to as media convergence. It is a concept and a strategy - go where your audience is. In a fragmented media environment, information must flow across multiple media channels and platforms to reach citizens (Jenkins, 2006). The move to a new channel in order to complement an old one represents a strategic move to seek out new audiences for an address that had few original listeners. While the change was a surprise to some, the transition of the Saturday address mirrors a rich presidential history of using the latest technologies to reach citizens in innovative ways. Kernell explains, "A president's decision to go public by enlisting a new technology or by employing an old one in a novel fashion brings forces of change into conflict with those of stability" (2007, 134). Whether stoking propaganda concerns over presidential use of radio or decency standards when the president answers a marijuana question via a virtual townhall (Tapper, 2009), new presidential use of technologies often elicits some controversy when seizing emerging messaging opportunities.

Barbara Warnick, who focuses her research on digital rhetoric, notes that there are intrinsic advantages to web-based public discourse over traditional mass media channels including affordability, access, opportunities for greater interactivity and horizontal communication, multiple multimedia platforms, and virtual forums for mobilization and discussion (2007). Cable and network television subjects presidential speeches to scrutiny in favor of popular programming while online news sources engage in partisan filtering (Baum and Groeling, 2008). "Going online" may be a viable future alternative to subverting mainstream media and better controlling the presidential message.
In many ways, it is easy to trace new forms of presidential discourse to the digital medium that channels it. Twitter, with its 140 character limit, has become a common method of political discourse from senators to the White House press secretary. Facebook has enhancements that allow for hyperlinking and coproduction, important measures that spread and perpetuate presidential images and videos. YouTube is not only a conduit for the Saturday presidential address and other videos, but also a digital catalogue for future reference or research. Whereas newspapers at one time printed the entirety or whole sections of presidential addresses (Jamieson 1988; Horvit, Schiffer & Wright, 2008), digital means and websites can now archive them. These important advances in virtual presidential discourse will be discussed at length in the next chapter. While the shifting figures of media have altered the ways presidents communicate with citizens, the rhetorical presidency has continued to adapt with and around new communication technologies. In the process, the audience has similarly shifted with these changes.

To Whom: Citizens, News Media, and the Presidency

There are complex and differing receivers of each message the president delivers. For the purposes of the "to whom" part of Lasswell's communication model, I focus specifically on the Saturday presidential address for two specific reasons. First, each presidential speech genre has a specific set of audiences. The inaugural address, for example, not only addresses dignitaries and the American public, but also directly signals within the text foreign audiences including allies and adversaries (Campbell and Jamieson, 1990/2008). Secondly, the Saturday presidential address as a more recent genre has not been studied to the extent of other major areas of presidential communication. For this reason alone, it is important to piece together the scholarly literature on this genre's audiences.
The Saturday presidential address has three main audiences: the American public, Congress, and the news media. While other genres are directed many times at international audiences and dignitaries, from its inception the Saturday presidential address was designed to set a media agenda, reach a segment of the weekend listening public, and act as a bullhorn in Congress' backyard. The idea of how a president goes public has already been addressed in depth and represents a targeting of the president's message specifically at Congress or the American public to influence Congress. Since we have crossed this terrain, I choose to focus on the news media and the American public as the major "for whom" targets of the presidential address.

The Presidential News Media Audience

What constitutes the media for the Saturday presidential address? Who listens on the weekend? Upon President Reagan's creation of the Saturday radio address, two specific audiences were targeted: weekend news broadcasts and auto-borne audiences on Saturday afternoons (Martin, 1984; Rowland and Jones, 2002; Kernell, 2007). Howard Martin explains that while few radio stations carried the address and even fewer people listened, "They [the radio addresses] have been reported by NBC, CBS and The New York Times fairly regularly, often quite fully, and, in a few instances, in full texts in The New York Times." Several years later during the Clinton administration, Peter Viles similarly reported "The Saturday speech, as practiced by Reagan and, to a lesser extent, President Bush, has been used more as an opportunity to set the agenda for weekend news coverage than to reach a live audience via radio" (1993).

There are no secret motives to the Saturday presidential address, it was and still is a strategic piece of discourse aimed at shaping the weekend news. In an additional twist, the most important audience may not be directly listening, but the one that will later hear the message cut
and shortened for news (Ceaser et al., 1981). Media play a dominant role in taking the president's weekend address and setting the agenda, including the Sunday news shows. The mass media have been, and still in many ways are, setting the agenda for what counts as news and relevant issues. Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, for example, find in foundational research on agenda-setting that a very strong relationship exists between issues emphasized by the media and the salience of those issues with the public (1972). If the president can influence the media to adopt an issue as relevant, then citizens who do not listen to the message directly may still receive a portion of it.

While the president's ability to influence the media should not be underestimated, many times, it is the president and Congress reacting to events covered by the media (Edwards and Wood, 1999). In fact, George Edwards and Dan Wood find that in a small number of cases related to domestic policy, the president can set the agenda for Congress and the media, but in most circumstances, it is the media that are the proactive agenda setters. The White House has adopted the infrastructure necessary to attempt to set the agenda, including building relationships with friendly reporters on radio and television who can be sent administration talking points and receive high profile interviews (Kumar, 2007). George W. Bush's administration, for example, cultivated relationships with talk radio producers, who received policy memos and suggested questions for programming.

It is understandable why a president would seek to influence the media, particularly on a weekend. The media are one of the dominant shapers of a president’s image and decide what presidential initiatives receive coverage. For example, Michael Schudson has found that news media coverage of the State of the Union address has evolved from a focus on the ritual to an interpretive analysis of content and implications (1982). Media not only focus public attention on
a particular issue, but in many ways, they can prime voters to think in a certain way regarding presidential actions, and thus presidential character (Krosnick and Kinder, 1990). In one of the few studies of the Saturday address, researchers discovered that high presidential approval ratings and foreign policy weekly addresses increased the coverage of the address in elite newspapers (Horvit, Schiffer & Wright, 2008). On the converse, this research found that as presidents give more radio addresses, the novelty declines along with news coverage. This is supportive of the idea that the more a president speaks the less power he may wield.

The weekly presidential address still receives weekend news coverage and the new media format makes the corresponding news stories more visual in nature. The picture below shows an article from Saturday, February 20, 2010 on the website for the newspaper and blog Politico. Not only does the story quote President Obama's presidential address in several instances, but also provides an embedded video that can be clicked for each viewer to watch the accompanying speech. There are options for users and media outlets to "share" the story across media platforms.

![Image 1: Politico coverage of the weekly presidential address, 2/20/10](image)

Additionally, it is still very common for weekend cable news to play portions of the president's address as a prelude to coverage of a particular issue. During George W. Bush’s presidency, cable news often played the full radio address Saturday mornings with a still image of the president and the phrase “Weekly Radio Address” on the screen. The video taped message in the
Obama administration now melds with the news clips displayed on weekend news shows. These provide opportunities for the public to receive the message if they did not tune in beforehand.

The Public Audience

Moving from the media to the masses, the second major audience for the Saturday presidential address is the American public. Kernell argues that speeches like the weekly address serve important coalition-building and sustaining functions. He explains, “Governance under individualized pluralism remains largely a process of assembling coalitions both within party teams and across diverse interests and institutions. For this purpose, minor presidential addresses directed toward special constituencies are well suited” (2007, 121). By using the Saturday presidential address as a means for coalition building, presidents are provided increased flexibility for an audience that is constantly in flux.

From its induction in 1982, the audience for the Saturday address has been hard to calculate for the simple reason that a varying number of radio stations carried the address each week depending on the topic, while audience listenership was not tracked (Martin, 1984; Rowland and Jones, 2002). What can be deduced is that the Saturday message has never been a guaranteed audience for a presidential address, presenting specific challenges for the institutionally sustaining power of hearing the president speak on a scheduled basis. However, these are not the only audience problems faced by the chief executive. The audience for presidential speeches, due to segmentation and narrowcasting, is now much older and skewed toward citizens who were acclimated to the shared experiences of presidential communication before cable television and the internet (Wattenberg, 2004; Baum and Kernell, 1999; Katz, 1996). Wattenberg concludes that the lackluster attention paid by younger citizens to presidential
actions may be remedied by the internet, but only if they make the effort to go online and receive information.

The internet age has created challenges and opportunities for the presidential audience. While citizens are not necessarily seeking out presidential communication, presidents seek out an audience. In order to appear “presidential,” a chief executive will travel to seek out particular constituencies or engaging backdrops (Kernell, 2007), travels which are heavily described by presidents in the weekly address as analyzed in the next chapter. Campbell and Jamieson note that presidents not only adapt their rhetoric to the needs of each audience, but similarly transform those who hear them into the targeted listeners (1990/2008). This practice is well at work with the online rhetoric of the Obama administration.

Online audiences, while potentially divergent from the general demographics of the audience-at-large, are convergent information seekers. In other words, readers of online news are also frequent users of traditional media sources, suggesting a multiple platforms approach to retrieving news and information (Tewksbury, 2003). It is sensible then that in an environment where people pursue information across multiple old and new media platforms, the White House would adopt its rhetorical strategy to meet the changing demands of its audience.

The reach of the Saturday presidential address, particularly in the digital era, should not be underestimated simply based on its small following on Saturday morning radio. This transition from a strictly radio channel to an online video format has transformed the address from a push medium to a pull one. Warnick explains,

Web authors cannot assume that readers will remain engaged with what they read, and so authors must expend a good deal of effort just to sustain their users’ interests. A reading environment comprised of hyperlinks, navigation bars, discourse chunks, multimedia clips, moving characters, and other elements must be so designed that these elements have continuity and meaning for the user (2007, 41).
The onus has been on the presidency to adopt its rhetoric to evolving communication technologies and audience. By creating a “Your Weekly Address” page on the White House website and YouTube page with embedded video, hyperlinks to policy documents, speech transcripts, and the ability to “share” the material across multiple social networking platforms, the audience can no longer be counted in Nielsen ratings or radio callers. The potential reach and life of the address with its audience is much harder to tabulate, but potentially more powerful in its scope. For example, after being posted for more than a year on the White House YouTube page, President Obama’s first weekly presidential address received almost 1.2 million unique page views. This does not include White House website page views, or views provided through social networking platforms. While analysis in the next chapter shows a marked decline in online YouTube viewership of the weekly addresses, one cannot rely entirely on these statistics for message reception because of the White House’s emphasis on a multiple platforms approach. In many ways, the audience for the weekly presidential address may be greater than it was previously.

**The Need for a Comprehensive Framework**

This chapter has begun to lay the foundation for critically analyzing the Saturday presidential address within the unique context of the rhetorical presidency. The president, evolving media, and various publics all play a vital role in determining if and how content and effects are changing with the evolution of the Saturday presidential address to an online medium. I have laid out how the presidency, as an institution once sidelined by a dominant legislative branch, emerged in the early 1900s as a rhetorical force in government and its tendency to use its bullhorn to go public with more popular forms of discourse. Changing media have altered the presidency’s relationships with words and images, forever influencing how, where, and when a
president can address the national constituency. Finally, the news media and citizens have played a role in the development of views toward the president’s words on Saturday morning as well as how the executive interacts with the populous.

I begin in the next chapter with a comprehensive framework for generic rhetorical analysis, following the approach of Campbell and Jamieson who have applied similar techniques for analyses of other presidential rhetorical genres. Following this, I will describe the universe of Saturday speeches selected from the presidencies of Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama and then lay out the similarities of the addresses. Finally, I close the chapter by comparing Obama’s visual addresses with the audio appeals of his predecessors and examine the role of message channel as a variable for any content changes.

In order to understand the Saturday presidential address as a presidential rhetorical genre, a comprehensive framework is necessary to answer and compare what exactly is said on Saturday mornings. While Lasswell’s model has aided us thus far in understanding the elements that form and continually alter the rhetorical presidency, the “says what” of our focus is integral to understanding whether President Obama’s reinvigoration of an older speech form has indeed been influenced by the visual internet medium. This will help establish further support or call into question the McLuhanian notion of the medium’s impact on the message.
CHAPTER 3

On Saturday, January 24, 2009, President Barack Obama broke a presidential tradition. Sitting in what appeared to be a White House library adorned with an American flag and a flag with the presidential seal in the background, the president delivered his weekly address via radio and for the first time visually on the White House website and YouTube page. His face conveyed the seriousness of his words, “We begin this year and this Administration in the midst of an unprecedented crisis that calls for unprecedented action.” The Obama administration had run its campaign with a series of firsts in a virtual format and the nascent administration brought that strategy to White House communications. The White House website contained a specialized page for “Your Weekly Address” containing the video and transcript of each weekly address, reflecting a new and reinvigorated focus on the Saturday ritual.

Compared to past Saturday addresses, are President Obama’s speeches different and if so, how? Have there been “massages” of the content because of the internet medium? This chapter addresses these questions by answering the “says what” question of Harold Lasswell’s communication model. While I have previously established a foundation for how presidents use rhetoric in various communication channels to reach targeted audiences, I concern myself here with the content of the Saturday presidential address – historically from the Reagan administration to the present and thematically as a genre of presidential rhetoric.

In order to understand and classify President Obama’s Saturday addresses as similar or dissimilar from his predecessors, we need a comprehensive framework for analysis and comparison. I begin this chapter with a review of what presidents have historically said in their Saturday addresses, with a particular emphasis on the research of several key scholars including Martin, Rowland, Jones, Sigelman, and Whissell. With an historical context established, I then
proceed to explain my approach to analyzing and classifying this genre of presidential rhetoric using the generic rhetorical approach of Campbell and Jamieson. I lay out the themes of the genre, or the constellation of discourses (1978), and review each theme through the words of Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama. I conclude the chapter by using the framework as a way of comparing the content of Obama’s addresses to those of his predecessors, looking for content-specific differences based on the medium. While I use Obama as an actor in the construction of the framework, I elaborate on potential derivations of his content from Clinton and Bush in the process of the generic construction. Despite any differences discovered, Obama’s speeches must also be integrated into a Saturday address framework for it to be comprehensive.

*Past Saturday Mornings: Presidential “Said Whats”?*

Beginning in Ronald Reagan’s administration, the Saturday radio address served a number of strategic purposes and were divided into a series of 10 and then a series of 52 talks. The first five addresses dealt with the economy and the second five described foreign policy issues (Martin, 1984). Of the second set, 40 were devoted to a single issue – a common feature of the Saturday address – and included education, environmental issues, the domestic economy, and ceremonial occasions. The use of the single-topic speech or “briefing,” as Rod Hart refers to it, was also dramatically increased during the Reagan administration, some of which can be attributed to the Saturday address (1987). In their review of President Reagan’s radio addresses, John Jones and Robert Rowland found that these Saturday addresses served five functions including creating public support, reassuring the public, agenda setting, role definition, and self-defense (2000; 2002).
Reagan’s radio addresses in September and October 1982 provided a major defense of his economic policies before his first congressional midterm elections. Amid falling popularity and a worsening economic recession, the president blamed congressional Democrats and argued for his tax cuts as a means of reinvigorating the economy (Kiewe and Houck, 1991). As I argue later, the Saturday address is an important venue for attacking not only the congressional opposition party, but Washington, D.C. politics itself. However, despite the hardball tactics Reagan used at certain moments, his Saturday addresses reveal the rhetoric of a consensus builder who appealed to a broad audience (Rowland and Jones, 2002).

Kernell notes that it is among speeches like the Saturday presidential address where presidential communication has exploded since the Reagan administration (2007). President George H.W. Bush rarely used the radio address, as opposed to his successor Bill Clinton who continued Reagan’s tradition immediately upon assuming office. In comparing the two presidents’ approaches to the radio address, Sigelman and Whissell found that Clinton spoke at greater length than Reagan based on the number of words and both used positive, upbeat language to frame their messages (2002a). They conclude, “The faces they [Reagan and Clinton] presented to the American public in their Saturday morning radio addresses were more alike than unlike. That is, most of the differences we have observed, even those that were more consistent, were ones of very limited degree.”

In terms of whether their style of presidential communication reflected a “common” speaking style, Sigelman and Whissell find that Reagan’s language of the Saturday address was more concrete and plain-spoken than Clinton, but less so when compared to the two Bush presidencies (2002a; 2002b). This supports Jamieson’s notion of electronic communications serving as conduits for intimate, conversational rhetoric. It should be noted that in my review of
Clinton’s speeches, which I will further describe later in this chapter, I not only affirmed Sigelman and Whissell’s findings that Clinton was a “wordy” president on Saturday mornings when compared with George W. Bush and Barack Obama, but used his speeches to talk about multiple subjects. Clinton similarly used the Saturday address as a chance to go public and highlight official presidential events.

The Saturday address has been used historically and currently as a means for a president to go public. In his research on the growth of going public, Andrew Barrett has found that in general for all speeches, going public appeals are succinct and used mainly for the president’s own agenda proposals (2005). Barrett has also found incremental increases in going public related to the creation of the Saturday radio address in the Reagan administration, but explains that presidents are more likely to use direct appeals in front of small audiences traveling around the country as opposed to television or radio media.

Major presidential events have similarly been given airtime in the Saturday address. For example, major newspapers reported entire transcripts or large portions of Saturday speeches related to Ronald Reagan’s surgery for colon cancer, diplomatic efforts leading up to the Gulf War, the military situation in Kosovo, and the domestic surveillance program initiated under George W. Bush (Horvit, Schiffer & Wright, 2008). After September 11, 2001, President Bush used the next several Saturday addresses to update the country on the progress of the war on terrorism. These mark an additional role outlined for the address as a mediated log for the presidency.

While a seemingly varied genre of presidential rhetoric, there exists a comprehensive framework of main thematic roles the address serves for the country and the rhetorical presidency. Rowland and Jones attempted a similar construction of Reagan’s Saturday addresses,
but it is limited in its administrative scope and its heavy emphasis on policy themes. I seek to present a broader conceptualization of the Saturday address that includes strategy, style, and structural implications.

**The Generic Rhetorical Framework**

Rhetorical genres, including those relevant to the rhetorical presidency have sustaining functions, or preservative characteristics (Campbell and Jamieson, 1990/2008; Hart and Daughton, 2005). A critical use of genre, Campbell and Jamieson argue, values an ends and means approach – the critic must focus on the means, including the language and arguments, along with the ends, including the purposes and functions of a particular piece of discourse. Similar substantive, stylistic, and situational dynamics define a genre. They note in their foundational piece on form and genre,

> In the discourses that form a genre, similar substantive and stylistic strategies are used to encompass situations perceived as similar by the responding rhetors. A genre is a group of acts unified by a constellation of forms that recurs in each of its members. These forms, in isolation, appear in other discourses. What is distinctive about the acts in a genre is the recurrence of the forms together in constellation (1978).

The rhetorical situation, as defined by Lloyd Bitzer, is an environmental imperfection marked by urgency (1984/1991). This situational exigence can be modified by a fitting response, or rhetoric. Within similar rhetorical situations, associated strategies are used that are united by a common element or what Campbell and Jamieson refer to as an “internal dynamic” (1978; Harrell and Linkugel, 1972/1980). We can infer from this description that the intertextuality among a group of texts, for example presidential inaugurals, contains similar strategies united by a renewal dynamic. Elements and forms like the spokes on a wheel are united by a common hub.

Because genres exist in relation to certain situational demands, the Saturday presidential address is unique in its ritualistic response to the week’s events packaged for both public and press consumption. Additionally, as a sustaining function for the presidential institution, the
Saturday presidential address genre is an excellent tool for analyzing how an administration can accomplish its policy goals while seeking to enhance executive power (Campbell and Jamieson, 1990/2008). The job of the critic is to identify how the internal dynamic unites seemingly disparate elements to form a genre that meets certain pragmatic and symbolic ends.

To build the generic framework for the Saturday address, I focused on a population of addresses from the first year of Bill Clinton’s, George W. Bush’s, and Barack Obama’s presidencies. Of these approximately 150 speeches, I organized them by week and then conducted a random sample of ten weeks using a table of random digits. I used the collection of 30 speeches as the sample for this analytical framework. I began building a framework with the assumption that the Saturday address constitutes a genre structured by several main characteristics, an approach akin to immanent classification. This classification method uses inherent or “face value” similarities to deduce a connection among rhetorical forms (Harrell and Linkugel, 1972/1980).

The review and analysis of the Saturday presidential addresses revealed strong temporal elements emanating from the texts, particularly as a means of establishing a common dynamic across administrations. As a weekly ritual for a president, these addresses mark important achievements and setbacks, but also represent the short amount of time with which a president has to govern. While every presidential term is four years, with the possibility of four more, an executive’s timeline is intermixed with midterm elections and a reelection campaign. Campaigns and elections reduce the time of the president and Congress to make important (and potentially unpopular) decisions. This temporal element organizes the constellation of texts in this genre around three common roles for the Saturday address: a secular sermon, a mediated log, and a means for marking capital time. Clinton, Bush, and Obama all exhibited these common
characteristics in their speeches, with Obama making some revisions to structure and content that keeps his texts comfortably within the internal constraints of the genre.

*A Secular Sermon*

It is a common occurrence for the president to channel a deity or use religious rhetoric as part of public address. Campbell and Jamieson note that one of the first acts of a president invested with executive power during the inaugural ceremony is to symbolically place the nation and themselves under God (1990/2008). Articulating the outlines of morality and values, president's similarly act as "the 'prophet' of civil religion, using moralistic and religious rhetoric as a political symbol to impact the formation of American political culture" (Shogan, 2006, 12). As a prophet or even a minister-type figure, the presidency is a conduit by which the values and ideals of the American nation are both articulated and carried forth.

The role of the president to articulate communal values and principles is strongly linked to the formation and continuation of national identity. A nation, as an imagined community, must be symbolically and verbally created and recreated to signal citizen belonging to an entity larger than individual experience (Anderson, 2006). As part of this process, the nation is continuously "flagged" by reciting certain values and motifs to paint a picture of specialness (Billig, 1995). Michael Billig explains that national consciousness is inherently secular and invoking a deity as part of national "specialness" is optional to this construction.

A president shapes national identity through a specific rhetorical architecture, including genres of discourse, and certain rituals (Ivie, 1996). Understanding the Saturday presidential address, as both a ritual and genre, thus holds important implications for the recreation of the nation and presidency every Saturday morning. This is also true for presidential use of commonplaces, or rhetorical topoi, which are "stock sources of argumentation preserved in a
culture's history - stories, myths, and modes of reasoning that persuade with special power because they so faithfully capture essential values and experiences" (Hart and Kendall, 1996, 98). Symbolically, the Saturday address sustains the presidency by serving as a weekly secular sermon for an imagined congregation: the people and the press.

Acting as a secular sermon, the Saturday presidential address serves as a vehicle for constructing shared American values as part of a national civil religion. The president, as minister or prophet, becomes the one who exhorts a congregation once a week to understand the values and principles which make the nation special. Eugene White suggests that the Puritan sermon had four main parts: laying open the text, articulating doctrine, providing logical reasons, and finally the application of the argument to teach and win over the listener (1972). In my analysis of the speeches of Clinton, Bush, and Obama, I have found a similar structure to White's iteration of the Puritan sermon embedded within their articulation of secular values and application to specific legislative programs and calendar holidays.

Bill Clinton, in earlier Saturday addresses during his first year, mirrored this structure by beginning his speeches with a quote or biblical reference. During one April address, he began "There's much wisdom in these words from the Scriptures, 'Come, let us reason together.' This week we've seen a good example of what happens when people talk to each other instead of shout at each other" (3 April, 1993). Several weeks later, he opened another address by citing another phrase about democracy. "It's been said that to learn about democracy you can take a break from Plato and take the bus" (24 April, 1993). He used these opening phrases to relate the values of unity and togetherness to his legislative programs, including his economic recovery package and environmental proposals.
George W. Bush, while not consistently using this structure, many times wove important anecdotes into his Saturday addresses about bipartisanship and compromise. In one address, he said "We are learning we can make our points without making enemies. But it's just as important for us to listen as it is to speak" (28 April, 2001). He ended an address in October 2001 by noting, "Helping people in great need is a central part of the Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions, as well as many other faiths. It is also a central part of the American tradition" (6 October, 2001). While channeling the religious value of charity, he connects it with civil religion by calling it part of a national tradition. His speeches, unlike Clinton, end with American doctrinal values that serve to relate his message to an ultimate conclusion. Clinton's, in this regard, seem to weave a consistent narrative using his beginning exhortations.

The Saturday addresses of Barack Obama are more varied in terms of their adherence to White's sermon structure. In several of his addresses, Obama ends like Bush with certain doctrinal wisdom of American civil religion. Relating the values of work and community to floods in the Midwest, Obama says "In facing sudden crises or more stubborn challenges, the truth is we are all in this together, as neighbors and fellow citizens. That's what draws people to volunteer in so many ways, serving our country here and on distant shores" (28 March, 2009). When referencing the values of Easter and Passover, Obama melds religious and secular values by mentioning Martin Luther King at the beginning of his address. "This idea that we're all bound up, as Martin Luther King once said, 'in a single garment of destiny,' is a lesson of all the world's great religions" (11 April, 2009). The lessons and values imparted by Obama, similarly to those of Clinton and Bush, cite unity as an important American value which is juxtaposed implicitly with the gridlock and conflict often articulated in these addresses when the presidents mention Washington, D.C.
Secular American values are particularly on display when the presidents give their holiday addresses. The importance of the holiday, as a reference in the presidential log, is the subject for the next section in this chapter. However, presidents use these occasions to rehearse certain values they construct as part of each holiday. Barack Obama calls the Fourth of July a "distinctly American holiday" (4 July, 2009). Bill Clinton notes that "no holiday tradition is more American than Thanksgiving" (27 November, 1993). George W. Bush says in the first Thanksgiving after the September 11th terrorist attacks, "Offering thanks in the midst of tragedy is an American tradition, perhaps because, in times of testing, our dependence on God is so clear" (24 November, 2001). Wrapped within these holiday references are repeated constructions of the American nation and traditions associated with these holidays, allowing the presidents to articulate certain values as part of each celebration.

The Easter and Passover holidays become important events for President Obama to call for renewal and common ground, especially regarding his push for nuclear nonproliferation internationally (11 April, 2009). Similarly, President Clinton used the Fourth of July holiday to talk of freedom, liberty, and security in relation to weapons of mass destruction. He states, "Americans have earned the right on this Fourth of July weekend to enjoy life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in the new era America did so much to create. This moment of opportunity is the reward for our vigilance and sacrifice during the long years of the cold war" (3 July, 1993). President Bush highlighted the need for laws to "promote responsible fatherhood" against the backdrop of Father's Day and the values he highlights as part of it: "daily care and guidance, nurture and protection, discipline and love" (16 June, 2001). Bush uses the Fourth of July to push for his defense requests by referencing courage, patriotism, and valor by servicemen and women
in the military (30 June, 2001). It becomes a common strategy to use a holiday or celebration to push a domestic or international policy agenda.

As a secular sermon, Clinton, Bush, and Obama use the Saturday address to retell American history using rhetorical commonplaces and motifs to relate present and past struggles while signaling that these can be overcome. In his Fourth of July Address, Obama talks of "That unyielding spirit [that] defines us as Americans. It's what led generations of pioneers to blaze a westward trail" (4 July, 2009). Speaking from California on the progress of economic recovery, Clinton constructs a similar pioneer motif common to American public address. "That expansive, forward-looking spirit is what brought people out here to California in the first place, across wagon trails and over highways on the open road" (4 December, 1993). Bush used his Thanksgiving address to implicitly reference immigration and the "melting pot" metaphor by saying, "We're thankful for the decency of the American people who have stood for the American tradition of tolerance and religious liberty - a tradition that has welcomed and protected generations of immigrants from every faith and background" (24 November, 2001). He continues in his speech to note the struggles of the Pilgrims and Abraham Lincoln during the Thanksgiving holiday. Like religious stories told in a minister's sermon, these common American themes serve as important devices to symbolically relay values and historical experiences to citizens. The values embodied within these stories can then be transferred to present struggles and successes, creating a connection to the past and applying certain doctrinal values of civil religion to present domestic and international goals.

Serving as a weekly, ritualistic secular sermon is one of the main functions of the Saturday presidential address. The values constructed are temporal, in relation to their connection to specific events that occur on the calendar or in the life of a presidency. A holiday
becomes a call for unity or giving thanks while a flood becomes a lesson in American
determination and work ethic. These specific events become important documentations in a
mediated log, the second main role the Saturday address plays as a genre of presidential rhetoric.

A Mediated Log

The need for a president to go public is linked to the modern growth of the permanent
campaign. Just as members of Congress must begin from the moment of their election to
fundraise and sustain coalitions, the president similarly must cultivate a public image through
media appearances, official travel, and speech giving (Kernell, 2007). Within this environment,
time is a vital element to advancing or hindering the president’s agenda. Kernell explains that
President Reagan’s aides urged him to announce his reelection campaign during the 1983 budget
negotiations, almost a year before the first primaries. A condensed presidential time schedule
presents windows of opportunity to pass an agenda before Congress and the president feel the
pressure of reelection or constitutional retirement.

With temporal elements impacting a chief executive’s agenda, the president as captain of
the ship of state must periodically take stock of accomplishments, challenges, and policy
opportunities. To do this, I argue that the president uses the Saturday address as a mediated log
to highlight presidential actions, official travel, and administrative accomplishments against a
calendrical backdrop. The calendar acts as a point of departure in this instance, serving as a
foundation for presidential signaling of the passage of time. Presidents, in alerting the public and
press to presidential actions, not only sustain the institution of the presidency, but also project the
image of an activist executive branch accomplishing the work of the American people.

Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama all indirectly signal the passage of time during their
first year in office by using structural modifiers and numerical descriptions including “this
week,” “this weekend,” “Yesterday in Portland,” “That’s why, on Tuesday, I granted a major
disaster declaration....” These are just several examples of the indirect temporal signaling
presidents use when noting the events of the previous week. In this sample of speeches,
Presidents Clinton and Bush directly address the first 100 days benchmark. Clinton explains,
“After about 100 days as President we’ve begun to change the direction of America” (24 April,
1993). Similarly, Bush notes, “You have probably seen the newspaper and television stories
anticipating the 100th day of my administration. Ever since Franklin Roosevelt’s time, the 100th
day has been a media marker” (28 April, 2001). While Obama does not directly address his first
100 days, he uses temporal markers to chart his time in office. His address from October 2009
begins, “When I took office 8 months ago” (3 October, 2009). The ritualistic nature of the
weekly address constrains the president to acknowledge the passage of time and to describe
official actions in the previous week. These temporal constraints make the Saturday address
unique from other genres of presidential rhetoric. Responding to this exigence every Saturday
morning is done through temporal signaling and highlighting the role of commander-in-chief.

One way for the president to highlight executive activism is to rhetorically pivot to the
role of commander-in-chief when describing weekly actions. This is especially the case when
referencing the military and national defense. President Bush says in his Fourth of July address,
“One thing will never change, the quality and dedication of the men and women who wear
America’s uniform. They give their best, they are the best, and they deserve the best. There is no
greater honor for a President than to serve as Commander-in-Chief” (30 June, 2001). For Barack
Obama, he constructs his constitutional role when mentioning security issues. “I have no higher
priority as President of the United States than the safety and security of the American people” (2
May, 2009) and in his Veteran’s Day address “Of all the responsibilities of the Presidency, the
one that I weigh most heavily is my duty as Commander-in-Chief to our splendid servicemen
and women” (14 November, 2009). Obama uses the commander-in-chief phrase twice in this
particular address. President Clinton shies away from this particular constitutional construction,
preferring instead to mention the fulfillment of presidential campaign pledges. This could be, in
part, due to attacks on Clinton’s lack of military service.

Where Clinton eschews his official title, he describes official presidential travel to
highlight his level of domestic engagement. President Clinton had attacked his predecessor for
focusing too heavily on foreign affairs to the detriment of the domestic economy, leading Clinton
to use domestic travel during his first term to project engagement with economic concerns
(Kernell, 2007). His Saturday presidential addresses are evidence of this focus. In six of the 10
addresses sampled from his first year, President Clinton mentioned some kind of official travel.
He often linked these travels to economic issues. In an April address, Clinton stated, “Yesterday
in Portland, Oregon, timber workers, business people, environmentalists, and community leaders
sat down together...We discussed how to achieve a healthy economy and a healthy environment”
(3 April, 1993). One of his final addresses of the year was broadcast from California. “Today I’m
in Los Angeles to hold a meeting on the economy and its impact on southern California” (4
December, 1993). Each of these occurrences also uses temporal signaling to highlight an implicit
activism in his duties. Clinton similarly drew attention to natural disasters and gun violence by
describing visits to the Midwest and a New Jersey trauma center.

Presidents Bush and Obama also log official travel every Saturday morning to highlight
executive activism. Bush describes official travel in only two of his 10 speeches sampled, both
dealing with international issues. The first was to the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City
and the second was to New York to address the United Nations. This is quite a significant drop
off in mentioning specific travel as compared to his predecessor and his successor. While official travel is mentioned in four of his 10 addresses sampled, President Obama emphasized his foreign travel - potentially as a way of highlighting his commitment to international diplomacy following the Bush administration. He describes traveling to Prague to work on nuclear nonproliferation, domestic travel to Pittsburgh for the G-20 and New York to chair the United National Security Council, to Fort Hood to meet with shooting victims, and to Asia to talk about trade and diplomatic engagement. Obama melds the role of the Saturday address as a secular sermon with an official travel log when he mentions how he “spoke to young men and women at a town hall in Shanghai and across the Internet about certain values that we in America believe are universal: the freedom of worship and speech; the right to access information and to choose one’s own leaders” (21 November, 2009). Just as Clinton sought to use extensive domestic travel to frame executive economic activism, Obama describes his international travels to emphasize a renewed commitment to international dialogue.

As a mediated log, the presidents all use the Saturday address to boast about legislative accomplishments and describe legislative challenges. The challenges of Washington, D.C. and Congress will be addressed more in the next section of this chapter, yet the president uses the weekly log as an opportunity to remind citizens and the press of their presidential progress in the last week, several weeks, or since their presidency began. Since the presidency is an inherently political job to which each occupant wishes to get reelected, acting as a symbolic scorekeeper once a week helps set the media agenda and shape public perceptions of presidential success.

President Clinton began to articulate his administration’s successes around the media-hyped 100 day mark. “After about 100 days as President we’ve begun to change the direction of America. Our economic program has been adopted in its broad outlines by Congress. That’s
brought an end to trickle-down economics” (24 April, 1993). He proceeded to then lay out the rise in the stock market, low interest rates, and his deficit-reducing budget cuts. Using the backdrop of a “magnificent spring and the promise of renewal that it brings,” Clinton in May reiterated his deficit-cutting measures, the passage of the motor voter bill, and Senate adoption of lobbying reform legislation. He concluded this address, “All told, we’ve come a long, long distance in the last 3 months to restoring our economy and reaffirming the values of the middle class and to opening up our democracy again” (15 May, 1993). In both of these instances, Clinton logs his progress by leaning heavily on temporal signaling, both in terms of days and months, but also calendrical events. Similarly, he wraps the values associated with the secular sermon around his administrative achievements.

Emphasizing the improvement in the domestic economy during his first year, President Clinton begins to rely on external economic indicators in his Saturday addresses toward the end of the year. His radio addresses in October through December cite the same statistic: the creation of over a million private sector jobs, “more jobs in 8 months than all those created in the previous 4 years” (9 October, 1993; 16 October, 1993). This talking point is carried in his other addresses, illustrating the methodical economic message crafted by his administration. Using Thanksgiving as an opportunity to “take stock and to reflect,” Clinton heralds the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the family and medical leave law, reforming college loan laws, the National Service Act, campaign finance revisions, and the crime bill. He sums up his progress by quoting Congressional Quarterly. “This administration, working with both parties, has had more of its major legislation adopted in this first year than any other administration in this last 40 years” (27 November, 1993). Highlighting and logging these
accomplishments, Clinton projects the image of an active executive branch engaged with
domestic concerns.

Dovetailing media stories of the 100 day benchmark, George W. Bush uses his milestone
to highlight changing the tone in Washington, congressional endorsement of “significant tax
relief,” and Senate committee approval of his education reform bill. He closes this address with
temporal signaling, “In nearly 100 days, we have made a good start. But it’s only a start. On a
number of important issues we have laid the foundation for progress. Now we need to turn a
good start and good spirit into good laws” (28 April, 2001). Lacking official, signed legislation
to hang his hat on, Bush uses movement through the legislative progress to characterize success.
Following the September 11th attacks, President Bush describes the economic measures adopted
during his administration to cushion the market including “tax rebate checks [that] continue to
arrive in Americans’ mailboxes” and the Federal Reserve’s work in “cutting interest rates in half
in the last eight months” (22 September, 2001). Bush conveys executive action during this
speech by also describing the approval of “emergency aid to keep our airlines flying.”

Because the terrorist attacks mark a dramatic shift in his administration’s priorities, Bush
uses the remainder of his Saturday presidential addresses during his first year to report on
progress made in the war on terrorism. In his late September and November addresses, George
W. Bush points to “progress being made on many fronts in our war against terrorism” including
international coalition building, launching “a strike against the financial foundation of the global
terror network” by freezing assets, improving airline security, and the mobilization for war (29
September, 2001; 10 November, 2001). Just as Clinton used domestic legislation to frame the
role of an active chief executive, Bush similarly projects the image of activism in the face of
international threats. His mediated log, while doing little to mention domestic accomplishments
in his first eight months, is used heavily in the final months of 2001 to feature his administration’s efforts to combat terrorism.

During the first several months of his presidency, Barack Obama used the Saturday address to highlight his administration’s responses to the economic crisis, floods in the Midwest, and the H1N1 flu virus. In a May address on the flu response, Obama notes, “Over the last week, my administration has taken several precautions to address the challenge posed by the 2009 H1N1 flu virus” and outlines funding requests, new social networking outreach on Facebook and Twitter to alert citizens of progress, and expansions of the community health centers included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2 May, 2009). Amid congressional wrangling over several of Obama’s major legislative proposals including healthcare, cap and trade legislation, and financial system overhauls, President Obama used the Saturday address to highlight proposals when tangible legislation could not be passed. Addressing the financial system, Obama remarked in June, “This week, my administration proposed a set of major reforms to the rules that govern our financial system” (20 June, 2009). Using the Fourth of July to frame his legislative proposals as part of “that unyielding spirit” defining American progress, Obama pushed for new economic proposals, revamped educational standards, comprehensive healthcare reform, and climate change laws (4 July, 2009). Using any form of legislative progress on his items, he further exhorts in his address, “We must build on the historic bill passed by the House of Representatives and make clean energy the profitable kind of energy...” Similar to his predecessors, he couches his legislative proposals among temporal signaling and calendrical events.

Toward the end of his first year, President Obama used the Saturday address to emphasize his push for comprehensive healthcare reform. Major legislation had stalled in
Congress and Obama used Saturday mornings as a chance to go public and push Congress to act, which will be covered more extensively in the next section of this chapter. Without an actual bill to sign, Obama looks to progress within the legislative process to illustrate activism and frame success. “And after long hours of thoughtful deliberation and tough negotiation, the Senate Finance Committee, the final congressional committee involved in shaping health care legislation, has finished the process of crafting their reform proposal” (3 October, 2009). One week later, Obama used the address to construct a healthcare “consensus” that included Republican governors, two former Republican Senate majority leaders, and two secretaries of Health and Human Services under Republican presidents. He uses this support as a call for unity, “These distinguished leaders understand that health insurance reform isn’t a Democratic issue or a Republican issue, but an American issue that demands a solution” (10 October, 2009).

Adapting to the slow pace of the legislative process, Obama logs any healthcare progress each Saturday to frame his active engagement and support for the legislation.

Related to the Saturday presidential address’ role as a mediated log, each president uses the opportunity each Saturday morning to rouse the public into action for certain proposals. By going public on Saturday mornings, presidents can pressure Congress and frame their role as outsiders fighting for the people against Washington, D.C. Each president marks there accomplishments and “presidentialness” in a mediated log. They highlight their difficulties, legislative gridlock, and inaction by marking capital time.

*Marking Capital Time*

As a marker of capital time, the Saturday presidential address serves as a vehicle for attack and popular exhortation. When the legislative gears halt, the president must take aggressive action to pressure lawmakers while distancing himself from the Washington “mess.”
Not only does the Saturday address become a call to action, it is also a protective mechanism for a president running against Congress. Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama all sew a common thread in this regard and their descriptions of Washington politics become strikingly similar.

President Clinton refers to members of Congress, particularly the minority party, as isolated and ignorant of the concerns of Americans. “Yet, still, this past week, a minority of the United States Senate, 43 Senators, played parliamentary games with our people’s lives” (24 April, 1993). In his Fourth of July address, he attacked those who opposed his economic agenda, “Change is hard, though. Many people are still skeptical. Many of the opponents of my plan chant ‘tax-and-spend’” (3 July, 1993). With opposition persisting into December, Clinton laments, “For too long the Government in Washington ignored roadblocks that stood in the way of an economic recovery” (4 December, 1993). Even with healthy Democratic majorities in Congress, Clinton still attacked Washington and congressional Republicans for lack of progress on several of his agenda items.

Similar to Bill Clinton’s congressional situation, President Bush enjoyed sizable Republican majorities in the House and a divided Senate during his first year in office. Yet, gridlock and the Washington culture were bemoaned by Bush. He frames the federal government as a spendthrift, especially when arguing for his tax cuts. He states in a March address, “When money is left in Washington, there is a tremendous temptation for the government to use it. The point is simple: If you send it, they will spend it” (24 March, 2001). Two weeks later, Bush made a similar point by noting, “On taxes, there are powerful institutions in Washington that would prefer to keep the people’s money for themselves” (7 April, 2001). These constructions place Washington and congressional priorities opposite those of Bush and the American people. Despite his barbed attacks on D.C. culture, Bush also uses the Saturday address on occasions to
cite “progress toward changing the tone in Washington” (28 April, 2001) and to thank congressional leaders after the September 11th attacks “for their extraordinary service to our country in a difficult time” (22 September, 2001). However, these derivations from the standard presidential attacks imply that a toxic tone and lackluster service characterize the federal government in a majority of circumstances.

Barack Obama’s change platform ultimately collided with the slow pace of Washington politics, even with substantial Democratic majorities in Congress during his first year. His frustration with special interests, the Republican minority, and the status quo is prominently conveyed in his speeches. Addressing financial oversight legislation, Obama says, “We’ve already begun to see special interests mobilizing against change. And that’s not surprising, that’s Washington” (20 June, 2009). Using the Fourth of July to argue for a new spirit that defined the American Revolution, he explains, “And yet there are those who would have us try what has already failed, who would defend the status quo. These naysayers have short memories. They forget we, as a people, did not get here by standing pat in a time of change” (4 July, 2009). The calendar and the values of the holiday become references for Obama’s illustration of Washington.

As a former senator, Obama brings his familiarity with the legislative process to describe common “stalling” tactics by members of Congress. In an October healthcare address, Obama warns, “But what I will not accept are attempts to stall or drag our feet. I will not accept partisan efforts to block reform at any cost” (3 October, 2009). He calls for an end to the healthcare “status quo” the following week and bemoaning partisan tactics by noting, “Still, there are some in Washington today who seem determined to play the same old partisan politics, working to score political points, even if it means burdening this country with an unsustainable status quo”
Similarly to the attacks by Clinton and Bush, the opposition is vague and referred to instead as “some,” “many,” or “they.” These veiled swipes, while poignant, serve to insulate each president from directly attacking Congress and the opposition. This is understandable because in the same breath with which a president attacks in each Saturday address, he must also use the occasion to go public by exhorting the public and Congress to action. A president cannot, metaphorically, bite the hand that feeds him legislation.

Presidents Clinton and Bush frequently go public in their Saturday addresses, many times directly telling citizens to contact Congress. When pushing for his economic agenda, Clinton concludes one address, “Now, I ask you to call or write your Senators. Ask them to take action on our jobs and economic recovery package” (3 April, 1993). He uses more direct language for the crime bill by urging citizens to “Tell your Representatives on Capitol Hill you want a crime bill” (9 October, 1993). Bush similarly urges citizens to attend town hall meetings over a congressional recess to urge passage of his tax and education proposals. While sardonically stating that “the President proposes, Congress disposes,” he continues,

So I have a suggestion: during the recess, many members of Congress will be holding town hall meetings, where constituents are welcome to come and express their views. You can find a list of these town halls at www.bushtaxrelief.com. If your congressman has a town hall scheduled, I hope you’ll consider attending it. And I hope that if you do go, you’ll stand up and let your representative hear from you on school reform and tax relief. It’s good citizenship, and it will make a big difference (7 April, 2001).

Using new media to go public, Bush couples his radio address with virtual means of organization. Whether asking citizens to call or to go online and find congressional events, both Clinton and Bush use the Saturday address as a vehicle for directly reaching citizens to push Congress to adopt their agendas.

When talking directly to Congress, Clinton and Bush use speech acts and active verbs to call Congress to action. After floods in the Midwest, Clinton directs his attention to federal aid
by stating, “Now I’m asking Congress to approve emergency assistance to help the families, farmers, businesses, and communities who’ve been hurt” (17 July, 1993). Coupling his defense appropriations proposals with the values of the Fourth of July, Bush uses the occasion to “urge the Congress to promptly approve my defense requests” (30 June, 2001). After September 11th, he shows constitutional deference when “asking Congress for new law enforcement authority (29 September, 2001). Related to the role of going public, Bush and Clinton speak directly to Congress in the Saturday presidential address, implicitly signaling their requests and wants to the American people, who may cite these requests when contacting representatives.

There is a significant drop off in the use of the Saturday presidential address to go public during Barack Obama’s first year in office. Of the ten speeches sampled, none contain any direct call for the American people to contact their member of Congress. While Bush and Clinton used direct language to encourage people to voice their opinion, Obama’s language when speaking about congressional work is deferential, perhaps a product of his time in the United States Senate. He similarly makes very few direct requests to Congress, couching his language as an “ask” instead of an order. Speaking of federal precautions against the H1N1 flu, Obama states in one his few appeals, “Out of an abundance of caution, I have also asked Congress for $1.5 billion, if it’s needed, to purchase additional antivirals, emergency equipment, and the development of a vaccine that can prevent this virus” (2 May, 2009).

Understanding the legislative process, he defers to Congress on matters of legislative deliberation and investigation, showing an inherent respect for the process while warning against delay tactics. Regarding his healthcare proposal, Obama notes, “As we move forward in the coming weeks, I understand that Members of Congress from both parties will want to engage in a vigorous debate and contribute their own ideas. And I welcome these contributions. But what I
will not accept are attempts to stall or drag our feet” (3 October, 2009). Melding his Veteran’s Day message with the tragedy of the Fort Hood shooting, he says, “I know there will also be inquiries by Congress, and there should. But all of us should resist the temptation to turn this tragic event into the political theater that sometimes dominates the discussion here in Washington” (14 November, 2009). In both instances, Obama temporally signals the time frame of certain actions, marks capital time by describing the Washington culture, and shows an inherent respect for separation of powers by allowing Congress the room to shape legislation.

While all the presidents in their own way mark capital time as a way of describing Washington culture, distancing themselves from it, and pressuring Congress, we have already found one important difference in Obama’s approach to the Saturday presidential address versus his predecessors. President Obama’s deferential approach to going public in the Saturday address is one such difference. As a relatively young genre of presidential rhetoric, it is evolving and subject to be shaped by each chief executive. The final section of this chapter will address whether there are other structural and content differences that may be attributed to the new audio-visual-virtual medium of the address.

**Massaging the Message?: What Obama Has Changed**

It is difficult to attribute any direct change in the content of the Saturday address under President Obama to the media with which it is conveyed. However, I look at specific details associated with the structure of the address, the content of its layout online, and the video messages themselves to make inferences about what the new medium may be changing. In the process, I discover that while some things have been molded slightly by the Obama administration, major changes have not yet taken place to the content in the first year.

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The structural beginning and ending of the address is the first point of departure. Clearly signaling the beginning and end of the address on radio may have been necessary because the medium lacked a visual component. The nonverbal signals one gives in a visual format can signal the beginning and end of a speech without explicit verbal representation. President Clinton and Bush clearly signal within the structure of each address a beginning and end. Clinton begins each address with “Good morning” and ends with “Thank you for listening,” “Thank you,” or some iteration of “God bless America.” Bush begins and ends every speech with “Good morning” and “Thank you for listening.” In his Saturday addresses, Obama does not begin with a formal good morning, and in eight of the ten addresses sampled immediately begins the introduction and content of his message. Only two instances suggest the structural semblance of a salutation. His Fourth of July greeting begins “Hello and happy Fourth of July, everybody” (4 July, 2009) while an international address he gives from Seoul, South Korea begins simply “Hi” (21 November, 2009). Eight of Obama’s addresses have some form of a valediction in the form of a “Thank you,” or “Thanks.” With the new visual format, Obama has officially ended the “Thank you for listening” closing.

Looking further at structure, I next examined the word counts of the addresses, both the entire population of first year addresses and the sample used for this analysis. President Obama’s speeches averaged 849 words for his first year and 878 words for the sample selected (see chart 1). George W. Bush’s speeches averaged 516 words for his first year versus 532 for the sample while Bill Clinton’s averaged 1145 words for his first year and 1224 for the sample. The chart shows that Obama’s speeches fall in the middle of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Clinton</th>
<th>Bush</th>
<th>Obama</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1369</td>
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<td>505</td>
<td>705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>1227</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>807</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chart 1: Saturday Address word counts by week*
Presidents Bush and Clinton, in terms of length. President Clinton’s reputation as “the great talker” is shown in the wordiness of his speeches while Bush’s penchant for speech brevity is also on display (Sigelman and Whissell, 2002a; 2002b). Performing an independent samples t-test on the population of first year addresses, I found significant differences (at the .000 level) between the length of Obama’s speeches compared to those given by Clinton and Bush. These findings suggest that though the length of Obama’s speeches strike a middle ground in terms of length compared to his predecessors, there are significant statistical differences.

Examining content and layout, I found several divergences from past use of the address. As I previously iterated, President Obama shies away from going public in his Saturday remarks, whether they include direct citizen appeals or to members of Congress. The layout of the address, on the White House website and YouTube, suggests a renewed emphasis on the content of the remarks by the Obama administration.
The White House website prominently displays “Your Weekly Address” for several days on the front page of the website and is included with several other top stories in a scrolling message box. Additionally, previous addresses can be accessed by using the “Briefing Room” button at the top of page and clicking “Your Saturday Address.” The page displayed includes the latest video of the president giving the address, access to the transcript, and opportunities to download the video in mp4 and mp3 formats. A share button is displayed for users to embed the video on a blog, Facebook, or Twitter page. This can increase the dissemination of the message across social networking platforms. The White House also provides, in some cases, supplemental information for the addresses including reports, talking points, and biographies of presidential appointments. Past addresses are archived with video and transcripts for ease of reference.

The White House YouTube page includes many similar features to the White House website, allowing for the same level of user interactivity regardless of the platform. Additionally, the YouTube page keeps track of unique page views and allows visitors to comment. A similar video page is set up on Vimeo. Analyzing the number of YouTube page views for each Saturday address (chart 2), I found that while the Saturday presidential address receives thousands of page hits every week, the number is quite small and declining. It should be noted that some of these videos have been posted to YouTube for a longer period of time than the much later ones in November and December, but we can still see that after peaking in the 14th week (the H1N1 flu address), the number of page views has fallen sharply. Because of the current nature of the topics the president discusses every Saturday, it is reasonable to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Saturday Address YouTube Views</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>67,490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>72,257</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>139,016</td>
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<td>21</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>58,617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>37,651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>32,759</td>
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<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>41,478</td>
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<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>5,191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>6,601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>49,782.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 2: Saturday Address YouTube views as of 3/7/10
expect that a large portion of the page views will occur in the two weeks following the address. This can be found based on the dates of the comments posted below the videos, which even for his last Saturday address sampled on November 21, 2009, were three months ago. This could be a potential effect of the ubiquity of Obama’s presidential communications during his first year. Despite this drop off, the Obama administration seems to be making a concerted effort to engage the public through the Saturday presidential address in several accessible online platforms.

With the president available on many different online platforms, I next examined how the visual nature of each week’s address may contribute to message content. Using stage crafting strategies, the president gives his addresses each week in different areas of the White House when he addresses citizens from the United States. He is always flanked by an American flag and a flag with the presidential seal. In the image included, Obama gives his address in a library with a WhiteHouse.gov logo in the upper right corner of the screen. Closed captioning appears at the bottom center, for the hearing impaired or for those who are seeking a transcript for quotes.

The presidential image is created, sustaining the institution of the presidency and Obama’s authority. Whether this enhances or detracts from presidential persuasiveness is the subject of the next two chapters, but the new format attempts to meld the audio characteristic of historic
Saturday presidential addresses with new digital means afforded by virtual technology. In the process, Obama becomes virtual and ubiquitous - able to be transferred across platforms to social networking sites or into the article of a news media story.

**Evaluating the Saturday Presidential Address Genre**

Building on the research of Campbell and Jamieson, I formulated in this chapter a framework for understanding the Saturday presidential address as a genre of presidential rhetoric. Focusing first on what was previously said during the Saturday address, I reviewed the sphere of literature focusing on the content and media impacts of the address. This research served as a foundation for forming the genre, where I used Campbell and Jamieson’s previous iterations on the topic as a jumping off point to analyze 30 speeches from the first year of President Clinton, Bush, and Obama’s presidencies.

The genre is unique from others in presidential rhetoric for its heavy reliance on temporal indicators embedded within the rhetoric, a product of its ritualistic response to the previous week every Saturday morning. This underlying temporal dynamic creates a genre that serves three main roles: a secular sermon, a mediated log, and a means for marking capital time. These roles serve important functions in sustaining the institution of the presidency, shaping and recreating national identity, highlighting the president’s successes, and a vehicle by which the president can go public. While integrating President Obama’s speeches into the framework analysis, I paid particular attention to any derivations that could be explained based on the new medium of conveyance.

I uncovered several key differences in the content and structure of Obama’s addresses when compared with his predecessors, including fewer instances of going public, lack of structure when introducing and ending each speech, and significant word count/length
differences. While seemingly small findings, it should be noted that the sample only included addresses from his first year in office. More noticeable massages of the message content may occur in the later years of his administration. The genre is evolving and we may be noticing the first instances of its evolution to match the new virtual format. When comparing the number of words in Obama’s addresses to those of Clinton and Bush, again, I found Obama charting a middle course in terms of message length.

The new virtual format allowed me to examine the online layout and visuals of the address, something that could not have been done previously. Barack Obama’s administration has gone to great efforts to make “Your Weekly Address” as interactive and user friendly as possible, including increasing the opportunities for sharing across multiple social networking platforms and allowing visitors to comment on the YouTube page. Despite these increased opportunities for message dispersion, the number of YouTube page hits has declined, potentially indicative of the ubiquity of President Obama’s communications during his first year. Not to be forgotten, the administration still projects a presidential image and the authority of the office with the visual backdrop of every Obama address.

The new medium affords both opportunities and challenges for President Obama’s use of the Saturday address. There are increased avenues and platforms for message dispersion and involving younger citizens in a virtual format that they have grown accustomed to using. Additionally, media convergence between older and newer media formats has the potential to reach cross-sections of citizens who have followed niche media due to increased fragmentation. Yet, despite all of these positive developments, there are warning signs that the increased ubiquity of Obama’s presidential communications may diminish his power to persuade. When the president is everywhere and speaking constantly about topics from foreign affairs to
Georgetown basketball, his persuasive power could become diminished. I noted in the previous chapter how scholars for the past 30 years have worried that the increased frequency of presidential speaking could diminish the power of his words. This ubiquity takes the novelty off each speech and utterance. When this happens, citizens tune out, which could explain the sharp drop off in YouTube page views for the Saturday presidential address.

I turn from analyzing content to examining persuasive power and attitude effects in the next two chapters as I attempt to unlock whether President Obama’s transition to a virtual format is affecting attitude change toward him and his policies. The next chapter focuses on the scholarly literature associated with persuasive communications, with a strong emphasis on multimodality and source credibility effects. I build upon this in chapter 5 with a survey experimental design to test for attitude change associated with the Saturday presidential address’ medium. I uncover in these chapters more of the medium-specific changes in attitudes that were difficult to deduce analyzing content. The Saturday address genre is evolving and I now move to examine whether attitudes are evolving with it.
CHAPTER 4

The reinvigorated focus on the Saturday presidential address by the Obama White House presents an important opportunity to see if it is effective. What do I mean by effectiveness? I begin answering this question in this chapter by transitioning to a persuasive effects framework for understanding attitude change, multimodality, and source image. Our emphasis thus far has been on analyzing the Saturday address through a rhetorical lens, relying on the specific content of appeals unique to the genre. I move in these next two chapters to the “with what effect” of Harold Lasswell’s model of communication. If people are persuaded by the Saturday presidential address in the Obama era, how is it occurring? Can any attitude or belief change toward Obama be attributed to the mode of the address? Specifically, are the audiovisual-virtual appeals of internet communications more potent than audio appeals?

Quantitatively parsing specific effects is a complicated process that must be undertaken carefully. The theoretical groundwork of this chapter begins this task by first addressing the social science concept of persuasion as articulated by communication and political science scholars. While this definition of persuasion differs from the rhetorical definitions of previous chapters, I show how it is fundamentally related to the ideas of “change” and “resistance.” I couch this definition within the context of mass media as cultural and communicative forms that encompass multiple areas of sensory stimuli. These sensory stimuli, according to scholars, can encourage different parts of an audience to accept or reject a message, particularly a communicator’s preexisting supporters. This mobilization effect is important for understanding the effectiveness of the Saturday presidential address.

We will concern ourselves next with understanding persuasion within the context of multimodality and how the merger of sensory stimuli create a unique experience for particular
audiences, particularly in relation to the virtual mediation of the Saturday presidential address. I finally address the relevant literature associated with how source image and credibility serve as important intervening variables in understanding audiovisual multimodality. Source image concerns itself with a speaker’s perceived trust, credibility, and attractiveness among other factors. As I review the literature in each of these areas, I draw connections to the Saturday presidential address as a genre and the 1960 presidential debates as an historical case study for modality and source credibility.

Understanding media effects of the Saturday presidential address begins with reviewing the concept of persuasion and attitude change. A complex number of variables ultimately determine whether a person is driven to shift or resist a change in an attitude or belief.

**Mass Media Persuasion**

Persuasion is fundamentally about change or resistance. It is an outside force acting upon another person, whether by personal or mediated means to effect a person’s attitudes or beliefs. This effect is the locus of this part of my research. In David Barker’s definition of persuasion, he denotes the idea of “inducement” by stating, “any inducement of the beliefs, attitudes, or choices of an individual or collective body by another. Beliefs are what an individual considers to represent objective information, or ‘truth’” (2002, 4). These inducements are the content-specific parts of the message, or the rhetorical frameworks previously constructed in earlier chapters. Their subsequent effects can be quantitatively measured using message modality as a context variable and speaker credibility as a source variable (2002). Persuasion by media forms occurs within a cultural and communicative system created by the interaction of citizens with media structures.
Media are important structures for cultural conveyance and part of an ideological system that impacts large segments of the population (Chesebro, 1984). Chesebro notes, “The central function of television is to provide a general orientation or awareness, albeit with especially vivid and concrete messages” (120). The orientation of visual media are different than that of audio or written media, an idea I further apply to internet communications. Much like the internet’s nonlinearity, television and visual media are analogic in that they link diverse factors and stimuli within one frame, creating a high information medium. Written media, are digital in form because of their linearity, creating a low information medium. This provides for a divergent persuasive processing experience.

The human brain processes visual imagery and audiovisual messages more quickly and succinctly than strict audio or written forms (Graber, 1987; Graber, 1996). Doris Graber argues, “Audiences [find] it easier to extract meaning from televised news stories than from radio and print forms largely because visuals present the essential story facts and context more clearly without overwhelming details that may be tedious and often difficult to grasp” (90). Several studies have shown the value of audiovisual appeals in aiding persuasion. Chang and Thorson argue that the synergy of a television-internet appeal leads to higher levels of motivation and greater central processing of arguments (2004). Other scholars have found that visual modalities can allow for more peripheral or heuristic processing because of the confluence of stimuli (Pfau, 1990; Chaiken and Eagly, 1983).

What I mean by processing is how information is transmitted neurologically, a vital process for persuasion. There are two routes of persuasion: central processing, where audiences consider arguments and expend mental effort to form an opinion, and peripheral processing. Peripheral processing, or heuristic processing, requires little cognitive effort and is based on
cognitive shortcuts and cues to form an opinion (Barker, 2002). David Barker argues for heresthetic uses of persuasion or “strategic redefinition” by political officials through the processes of framing and priming (11). Kuklinski and Hurley similarly argue that politicians can select issues (frame) and manipulate their salience (prime), thus altering cognitive processing and influencing both individual-level and collective-level judgments (1996). These processing models are not mutually exclusive and vary greatly depending upon context, including message modality and external stimuli.

Because different cognitive processing occurs across media, inherent characteristics of audiovisual media place a larger emphasis on the message source’s image. Graber has criticized past research of television news that has focused solely on the audio-verbal relationship while ignoring the audiovisual impact associated with message comprehension (1987). She argues, “Concentrating solely on verbal aspects leads to serious distortions. Claims made in the past about the content of television news on the basis of purely verbal analysis are dubious” (77). Huddy and Gunnthorsdottir have found that visuals have inherently emotional elements, allowing citizens to understand political complexity. They note in their research that emotive visual appeals arouse those most committed to a cause (Huddy and Gunnthorsdottir, 2000). The visual appeals of the Saturday address may thus mobilize the president’s supporters to pressure Congress or to support certain policies. Understanding this characteristic in tandem with the influence of “pull” media to attract like-minded individuals to a particular message source may hold important clues for understanding the effectiveness of the Saturday presidential address in its virtual medium.

The transition of the Saturday presidential address represents more than a simple venue change from an audio to an audiovisual-virtual format. It is the evolution from a “push” mass
media form (radio) to a hybrid push-pull media form (internet). When a person uses “pull” media, they select the messages they receive and in many cases, self-select messages that coincide with their personal beliefs to reduce cognitive dissonance (Barker, 2002). Persuasion becomes a reinforcement mechanism, or a way to rally like-minded individuals to crystallize their opinions and beliefs. The conventional mass media reach fewer audience members today, while newer niche media have attracted larger populations seeking out specialized and targeted messages (Bennett and Manheim, 2006). Lance Bennett argues that media targeting and specialization have rendered obsolete the need for opinion leaders to convey messages and persuade audiences, an idea central to Katz and Lazarsfeld’s two-step flow of influence. He and Manheim argue instead for a one-step flow of media influence, explaining “Society, communication technologies, and individual communication habits have changed fundamentally in ways that affect how individuals receive and process information” (2006, 214). The Saturday presidential address, as a genre of discourse associated with push and pull media, is now a message to be accessed whenever citizens see fit.

Understanding how persuasion occurs by modality is the first step in isolating specific message effects. In the next two sections, I review further how multimodality and source imaging affect attitude change. I treat modality as a main effect and source imaging and credibility as intervening effects, characteristics that I carry over into my experimental analysis in chapter five.

*Multimodality in the Persuasive Process*

Barker acknowledges that personal attitudes and behavior may be a consequence of one’s personal involvement with a particular medium (2002). Lack of personal involvement with a medium will bring about gradual shifts in perceptions and attitudes, while high personal
involvement creates dramatic and sudden shifts in attitudes (Krugman, 1965). How do researchers determine the level of involvement? Jamieson argues for the personal experiences and attachment one has to a medium, such that, more intimate styles of communication that characterize electronic media may involve audiences’ more in message reception (1988). Andreoli and Worchel argue the more “live” a medium is, the higher involvement exhibited by an audience (1978). Similarly, Pfau has noted that “Like interpersonal communication, and unlike radio and print media, television literally places the speaker in the receiver’s home, placing a premium on the soft sell as opposed to the hard sell” (1990). It is these experiential, live factors that point to the importance of multimodality in explaining how visual media, including television and internet communications, operate on a unique persuasive level.

Multimodality is the interaction of communication modes, including language, images, and sound to produce a different persuasive experience than that of radio and print communications (Duncum, 2004). While traditional radio and print mass media forms contain multimodal elements, the synergy created among the simultaneous use of multiple stimuli is unique to audiovisual media. Meaning is conveyed through constructing various audiovisual elements. For example, Diana Mutz finds that perceptions of opposition legitimacy on television programming depend upon whether an “in your face” effect is created, including an uncivil tone coupled with camera close-ups to create spatial intimacy (2007). She argues that when camera close-ups present uncivil discourse “that same intimacy convinces people that the opposition is even less legitimate than they would have thought without viewing.” Because visual stimuli create dramatic effects, the combination of pictures and words can make messages more memorable than verbal messages (Graber, 1996).

When compared with visual forms of media, traditional media channels (radio, print,
public address) influence an audience by their heavy emphasis on content-related appeals (Pfau, 1990). In other words, audiovisual communications create a dichotomous influence related to message content and source characteristics. This dichotomy is important to multimodality, particularly with television and the internet. In their analysis of message inoculation, Pfau et al. have found that print is superior to video media in terms of triggering active thought processing in an audience, whereas video inoculation uses an immediate, unique route of resistance that relies heavily on source factors (2000). Print media place an emphasis on content, video on the message source. This lends further credence to the treatment of source imaging in this study as an intervening effect in the audiovisual-virtual format of the Saturday address.

Researchers attribute the active thought or central processing of audio and print media to the ability to self-pace and review material, allowing for greater message comprehension (Sparks, Areni, & Cox, 1998). Examining the power of language style in relation to how information is conveyed and comprehended, Sparks et al. discovers that the mode of communication is a moderator in the relationship between language style and persuasion. They point to how visual media may not effectively convey a message using poor language quality and nonverbal signals. Further calling into question the need to examine how source image intervenes with modality, they argue “Research has shown that communication modality affects the degree to which an audience comprehends the content of a persuasive message and the salience of the speaker delivering it” (Sparks, Areni, & Cox, 1998).

Much of this research arose because of seminal studies by Chaiken and Eagly on message comprehensibility and source likability as a result of modality. Their research on source likability will be covered in the next section of this chapter. They were the first researchers to find that communicators adjust the difficulty of messages to adapt to a particular media, lending credence
to McLuhan’s idea of the medium massaging the message (Chaiken and Eagly, 1976). Their research uncovers that participants reported less distractions when exposed to the audio and print modality conditions, while video exposure increased the number of distractions. The findings concluded that video distractions (including multiple messaging stimuli) may hinder comprehension and retention of persuasive appeals.

The involving element of visual media, particularly as related to television studies, can be applied in several ways to internet communications to begin understanding the potential effects of the Saturday presidential address. Both are personal, highly involving channels that integrate audiovisual stimuli. Much like Chesebro’s cultural construction of television as analogic, the internet has similarly been studied as a nonlinear channel that integrates disparate elements (Tewksbury, 2003; Warnick, 2007). Graber says regarding television’s political appeal, “Television also allows various political groups and leaders to gain direct access to average Americans in ways that come close to personal contact” (1996; see also Hart, 1999). Internet communications have been used in a similar fashion, constructing the appearance of intimacy with one’s political leaders while increasingly targeting specific messages (Bennett and Manheim, 2006). The internet image acts similarly to the cable television image in that both are “pull” media to be chosen in certain contexts. However, the distractions which Chaiken and Eagly found in their study of visual modality may have increased based on the formats with which an internet video is conveyed. Opportunities for comment posting on YouTube or reading a friend’s status update on Facebook may distract audiences further from content. These are stimuli that researchers did not face when studying video modalities. One constant that remains, however, across television and internet modes is source image as an intervening effect in the persuasiveness of a message.
Persuasion and Source ‘Image’

It is difficult to divorce source characteristics and image from the influence of audiovisual modes of communication. The research suggests strong intervening effects because perceived message sender traits influence the persuasive process. Andreoli and Worchel note, “It would appear that the more involving the medium, the more prominent are the characteristics of the communicators utilizing the medium” (1978). This section looks specifically at some of these characteristics that interact with audiovisual channels to induce attitude change. While researchers seek to parse various speaker traits, I group them using factor and reliability measures in chapter five under source ‘image.’ These traits include, but are not limited to: source credibility including trust and confidence, source goodwill and altruism, source expertise and mental capacity, and source physical attractiveness. The caveat embedded within these traits is that they are all “perceived” by the audience of a particular speaker (Berlo, Lemert, & Mertz, 1969), what Aristotle called inartistic ethos. These exist solely within the minds of the viewing audience and are projected onto a communicator.

Early studies of source credibility were largely influenced by the Cold War and the aftermath of World War II, when researchers were attempting to determine how a leader and communicator could persuade large swaths of the citizenry. Some studies examined levels of speaker “authoritativeness” and developed scales to examine the susceptibility of citizens to authoritarian actions (Adorno et al., 1993; McCroskey, 1966). In foundational studies on communicator credibility, Hovland and Weiss discovered that people change their opinion in favor of a perceived high credibility source more often than a low credibility source (1952). Arguing that the two main characteristics of source credibility were expertness and trustworthiness, they found that over time, subjects had a tendency to disassociate the source
from the message. This disassociation caused delayed acceptance of messages from untrustworthy sources and message rejection from trustworthy sources.

As audiovisual media came to dominance during the Cold War, source credibility and image became an important research marker for social scientists to examine the persuasive effects of television. Pfau argues, “Source credibility was the first and most powerful factor responsible for receiver attitudes in television and interpersonal communication, whereas content overshadowed source credibility in accounting for receiver attitudes in print and public address communication” (1990). The visual medium enhanced the role of the speaker, allowing for more heuristic persuasive processing of messages (Sparks, Areni, & Cox, 1998; Kuklinski & Hurley, 1996; Lubell, 1977). Modifying Hovland and Weiss’ approach, later researchers argued that there were three main characteristics of source credibility: safety, qualification, and dynamism (Berlo, Lemert, & Mertz, 1969). Speaker safety concerned the relationship between the message sender and receiver and the perceived goodwill and trust present in an interaction. Qualification was a measure of perceived expertise while dynamism concerned itself with the manner and delivery of a message.

Source likability and physical attractiveness are also speaker characteristics studies have found are mediated by audiovisual channels. Arguing that visual cues associated with a source may cause greater message distractions (Chaiken and Eagly, 1976), researchers uncovered that more “likable” communicators persuaded audiences better in a video and radio format, as compared to a strictly written format (Chaiken and Eagly, 1983). These distractions may ultimately stimulate the heuristic processing experience. Accepting a message with broadcast media becomes just as much about accepting the communicator since the social presence creates a relationship that mirrors face-to-face interactions (Horton and Wohl, 1956). This parasocial
interaction occurs because, as Graber argues, one infers important personality and character traits from nonverbal symbols (1996).

Audience perceptions of a speaker’s physical attractiveness can also affect the degree to which someone is persuaded. Undertaking a field study to uncover specific variables associated with source image, Chaiken found that, “physical attractiveness can significantly enhance communicator persuasiveness” (1979). She argues that prior lab studies failed to mimic one’s real life response to encountering an attractive source. Chaiken further concluded that attractive people are more persuasive because they possess the skills that allow them to be effective communicators. A communicator’s perceived attractiveness can be easily mediated by audiovisual channels allowing for heuristic processing of the image as opposed to the message. This research is significant for the Saturday presidential address, where for the first time a president is relying on visual communications to convey his weekly address to citizens. I test these ideas in chapter five and the perceived physical attractiveness of President Obama to determine if and how it is affected by modality.

Andreoli and Worchel note “The type of medium will interact with the source to determine the influence a message will have on an audience” (1978). The perceived credibility, likability, altruism, and attractiveness must be isolated in understanding how varying channels affect attitude change. Audience members find more trustworthy, likable, and attractive communicators more persuasive, traits that can be mediated in audiovisual channels. I take these source traits into account in the next chapter.

**Persuasion by Modality: The Kennedy-Nixon Debates**

Message modality and source characteristics have been historically important to presidential politics. Research from the 1960 presidential debates between Vice President
Richard Nixon and Senator John F. Kennedy presents an excellent case study for how persuasive effects from the first televised national debates influenced citizen attitudes toward the candidates. Researchers discovered the first significant examples of how differing effects occur across disparate media.

Scholars found that those who watched the debates on television believed Kennedy won while radio listeners favored Nixon (Kraus, 1996; Druckman, 2003). This can partially be explained by Kennedy’s thick northeastern accent and Nixon’s appearance due to a cold and lack of make-up. Audiovisual stimuli heightened Kennedy’s image with the audience, allowing Lubell to conclude “The TV debates place a high value on a candidate’s skill as an actor and, if continued, would make American politics more theatrical in nature” (1977, 155). These effects were further heightened for those who watched on television and those who were non-exposed. Gauging how citizens constructed the image of the ideal president, researchers found that Kennedy and Nixon’s images became more alike after the first debate among non-exposed citizens. Of those who watched the televised debate, there were significant changes in favor of Kennedy (Tannenbaum, Greenberg, & Silverman, 1977).

The televised format placed a higher premium on audience analysis of character over issues (Katz and Feldman, 1977). Lubell finds that the character traits of the candidates became symbolic of “important issues,” stating “The voters tended to make the candidates and their conflicting characteristics symbolic of what the voters thought were the main issues” (1977, 159). Presidential image had an agenda-setting property for the issues voters focused on during the campaign. When examining the percentage of those exposed to the debate, only three to eight percent of each audience listened by radio (Carter, 1977). Perhaps this can be attributed to the
The relative novelty of the televised debates or the processing differences associated with how people sought to receive their political messages.

The progression of four debates during the 1960 presidential campaign allowed for the audiences to focus on character and as Carter notes, increasingly stereotype the candidates as time progressed (1977). Additionally, Kennedy was increasingly viewed as “experienced” and “industrious” following the debates. This perceived dynamism contrasts sharply with Nixon’s image, which was perceived as less “experienced” and “trustworthy.” Perhaps Nixon’s dearth of make-up and sweaty brow could explain some of the image problems he encountered. Similarly, audience focus on character and image deflected Richard Nixon’s expertise on foreign affairs issues, as shown in the content of his answers. It was the critical first debate that consolidated Kennedy’s image among Democrats while persuading Independents in favor of the Massachusetts senator, an image that set a trend for the debates that followed (Tannenbaum, Greenberg, & Silverman, 1977).

**Examining Persuasion by Modality in the Saturday Presidential Address**

The Saturday presidential address’ new format holds the potential to persuade audiences in differing ways than its previous audio format. With the image of the president now delivered to citizens on television, in the newspaper, and on computer screens, Barack Obama’s ubiquitous presence (including on Saturday mornings) in various modalities must be examined. His persuasive ability in an intimate, one-to-one format (Pfau, 1990) may serve him and his policies well. American citizens have traditionally viewed the president favorably, as a person, while scoring him lower on job approval. President Obama’s personal favorability ratings have been consistently higher than his job approval during his first year. This personal favorability may heighten Obama’s persuasive ability during the Saturday presidential address. McAvoy explains,
“Increasingly people rely on visual media (television and the Internet) for political information, and this type of news reporting facilitates character evaluations more readily than print media...Citizens are asked to think about the president in personal as well as policy terms” (2008).

Evaluations of the president, both professionally and personally, will ultimately impact the attitudes toward his policies. This chapter has illustrated how more low involvement media formats, including print and radio, facilitate a more central route of cognitive processing while high involvement, visual media allow for a more peripheral or heuristic route of persuasion. Multimodal channels, specifically audio-visual-virtual ones that link multiple sensory stimuli, create a unique and intimate experience that increases the salience of speaker characteristics. Where content is central to more low involvement media, character and image are to high involvement modes.

President Obama’s transition of the Saturday presidential address to a high involvement, multimodal channel creates an important opportunity for comparison with the older, radio-based format of the address. I describe in the next chapter how the theoretical framework we have just covered informs my hypotheses, the construction of my survey, my methods, and finally the results. My hypotheses specifically begin to address the question guiding this entire work: How are effects, including attitudes and beliefs toward Obama and his policies, evolving with the new medium for the Saturday presidential address? The survey melds the theories and findings of scholars who have examined modality and source image by specifically addressing issues of Obama’s attractiveness, trustworthiness, and altruism as conveyed by media. Isolating the modality variable, I examine how presidential trust, image perceptions, and leadership traits are mediated in the audio and audiovisual-virtual formats. These perceived source characteristics
serve as important intervening effects to be examined by modality. My results show that attitudes and beliefs related to presidential trust and leadership are affected by modality, changes that have important implications for the Saturday address as a genre of presidential rhetoric.
CHAPTER 5

The main purpose of presidential rhetoric is persuasion. How does a commander-in-chief move a public to action, to pressure its leaders, or to support his policies? In the first year of his presidency, Barack Obama engaged in an aggressive public relations campaign designed to sustain momentum for his policies following a decisive election victory. One portion of this campaign involved transitioning the weekly presidential address from a radio to an online video format. This chapter examines the persuasive effects of Obama’s actions and whether the new online format is helping his efforts to reach citizens or has no discernable effect.

Political persuasion is about change or resistance. The art of politics is how to keep supporters loyal while simultaneously convincing fence sitters and opponents to change their opinion. As an avenue for presidential rhetoric, the Saturday address has the ability to persuade the citizens who watch and the press who cover it. To this end, I analyze in this chapter how the weekly presidential address affects one’s views of political trust, presidential perceptions or images, and leadership characteristics. These three areas represent important notions of perceived presidential character as mediated in audiovisual formats.

I begin in this chapter with my hypotheses related to political trust, presidential perception, and leadership. These hypotheses inform my methodological focus for analyzing the address’ effects, including the construction of the survey, the selected sample of participants, the treatment procedures, and how I went about examining my data. I then present the results of my analysis followed by the implications for presidential rhetoric with a particular focus on how the generic framework developed in chapter three informs the results of the study.
Hypotheses

With the overwhelming majority of research suggesting that source credibility is a powerful mediator for modality, I focus on three separate measures of source credibility and image as articulated by Hovland and Weiss (1952) and Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz (1969). These include perceived trust, image, and leadership skills. I use credibility measures to focus on how presidential image and his subsequent approval are affected by different modalities.

Perceived Trustworthiness

Foundational studies on source credibility have focused on perceived communicator trustworthiness and how this ultimately influences persuasion. Hovland and Weiss identified speaker trust as one of two main credibility characteristics (1952) while Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz saw trustworthiness as embedded within the idea of perceived speaker “safety” (1969). In this study, I focus on institutional trust related to President Obama, his policies, Congress, and the federal government as a whole. Based on research of how audiovisual modalities emphasize perceived source characteristics, I hypothesize related to trust that after viewing a speech by President Obama:

H1: Those exposed to the audiovisual modality (internet) will have higher levels of trust in President Obama and his policies compared with those exposed to the audio modality (radio).

H2: Those exposed to the audiovisual modality (internet) will have lower levels of trust in Congress and the federal government compared with those exposed to the audio modality (radio).

Since the Saturday presidential address is used as both a mediated log of presidential accomplishments and as a vehicle for attack and popular exhortation, those exposed to the audiovisual version of the Saturday address will have higher levels of trust in Obama and his policies and lower levels of trust in Congress and the federal government. If this occurs, it suggests that Obama is particularly successful in inoculating himself from congressional inaction
and unpopularity. The audiovisual modality versus the strictly audio mode will be associated with these greater changes (Pfau, 1990).

Presidential Image Perceptions

Source credibility is similarly tied to the physical attractiveness of a communicator (Chaiken, 1979) and the nonverbal cues inferred from the appearance and voice of a message source (Graber, 1996; Andreoli and Worchel, 1978). These characteristics are, of course, emphasized in an audiovisual modality. I group presidential appearance, voice, communication skills, and attractiveness in the concepts of communicator image and perceptions. Presidents have sought to cultivate images for television since the Eisenhower administration, placing a greater emphasis on physical characteristics and perceptions as factors of presidential persuasive power. Based on research suggesting the perceived power of presidential images (Gronbeck, 1996; Jamieson, 1988; Hart, 1987; Nimmo, 1976) and how image is conveyed by modality in the persuasive process (Graber, 1996; Pfau, 1990; Graber, 1987; Chaiken, 1979; Carter, 1977), I hypothesize that:

H₁: Those exposed to the audiovisual modality (internet) will perceive that Obama looks presidential and is physically attractive at higher levels compared to those exposed to the audio modality (radio).

H₂: Those exposed to the audio modality (radio) will perceive that Obama sounds presidential and communicates effectively at higher levels compared to those exposed to the audiovisual modality (internet).

Some of the research suggests that audiovisual modalities increase opportunities for message distraction, potentially leading to reduced message comprehensibility (Chaiken and Eagly, 1976). I was sensitive to this potential concern and hypothesize that the audio modality will be more conducive to the audience believing Obama sounds presidential and communicates effectively. Conversely, the audiovisual modality will better mediate presidential “looks” and
“attractiveness.” The first alternative hypothesis is unique to the online medium for the Saturday presidential address, making the result important to the genre.

Presidential Leadership

The previous chapters have established how presidential leadership is linked to image and rhetorical acts. Scholars note that the increasing frequency of presidential addresses has made the populous equate speaking with leadership (Kernell, 2007; Hart, 1987). Perceived leadership abilities are linked to both executive qualifications and dynamism, essential aspects of source credibility outlined by Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz (1969). The perceived executive abilities and leadership of a president are necessary for establishing legitimacy, especially in relation to his frequent calls for legislative action and public support. Based on this research, I hypothesize related to presidential leadership:

H1: Those exposed to the audiovisual modality (internet) will believe at higher levels that Obama is a strong and decisive leader, can manage the government effectively, and inspires confidence compared to those exposed to the audio modality (radio).

H2: Those exposed to the audio modality (radio) will believe at higher levels that Obama listens to the concerns of Americans and shares their values compared to those exposed to the audiovisual modality (internet).

The audiovisual mediation of the presidential setting in the Saturday address (official flags, executive-style office background) will project leadership, executive management, and confidence according to my hypothesis. However, these effects create a power differential and may simultaneously effect the belief that Obama listens, is responsive to concerns, and shares certain values. Because of this possibility, I hypothesize the audio modality will project these ideals more effectively.

I test each of these hypotheses independently. I then create additive measures for these aspects of source credibility and analyze the attitude change between the pre and post surveys.
based on modality. My methodology section addresses how I constructed the survey, treatment, and analysis of the results.

**Methodology**

I used a survey design with an embedded experimental treatment to test my research hypotheses. The survey involved a pre/post test design with a modality intervention in order to observe attitude change or resistance. I cover in this methods section how I constructed my survey, targeted my sample, employed the treatment, and finally analyzed my results.

**Experiment & Survey Design**

Isolating the effects of presidential persuasion within a 24 hour news environment is quite difficult. I chose a before-after experimental design to control for unexpected political events that would conflate the results. This ultimately occurred when the U.S. Congress passed healthcare reform legislation in March 2010 while I was conducting the survey. While some researchers find the before-after design “simple,” I sufficiently controlled the stimulus to “avoid the inferential problems that beset the simple before-and-after design” (Sigelman and Rosenblatt, 1996, 183). I did this by using one presidential message across modalities and a classroom environment to replicate experimental conditions for all participants.

The pre-survey contained a series of 60 questions designed to analyze general media use, attitudes toward President Obama, and his administration’s policies related to healthcare and the economy. I used a seven-point Likert scale to gauge agreement and disagreement with statements about President Obama and his proposed healthcare policies. Questions gauging approval or disapproval of Obama, congressional Democrats, and congressional Republicans were measured using a five-point Likert scale. I used the American National Election Study, Gallup Polling, and CNN/Opinion Research Polling as guides for the approval, presidential attitudes, and
thermometer rating measures. The post-survey contained a similar series of 60 questions with the addition of nine questions examining participant responses to the audio or audiovisual treatment. This series of agree-disagree statements addressed speech credibility, understandability, authoritiveness, enjoyment, and media preference for the Saturday presidential address. I asked participants to voluntarily give their email address on each survey for matching purposes between pre and post tests and included a gift card incentive for compliance.

I used a Saturday presidential address from Barack Obama’s first year in office as the treatment for the experiment. After organizing the 52 speeches from his first year by week, I randomly selected a week using a table of random digits. The address, “Health Reform Urgent for the Economy” (Week 36, October 3, 2009) was selected for the treatment. The speech is five minutes and 23 seconds and is catalogued on both the White House website and YouTube page. Randomization allowed for the selection of a speech that was representative of the issues covered during Obama’s first year and slightly above the mean average length (918 words versus a mean of 849). The speech addresses Obama’s economic recovery proposals in relation to his advocacy for comprehensive healthcare reform.

Procedures

After completing my pre-survey, I distributed paper copies to five volunteers in my master’s program. I used the five volunteers as a reliability and validity check for my questions. The feedback I received from them was helpful in altering question formatting and wording. I also gauged their reaction to particular questions, using their thoughts as a guide for the interpretability of the questions. Their answers were not used as part of this study.

In order to obtain the participants necessary to track pre and post survey attitudinal change, I contacted instructors in undergraduate classes at two Mid-Atlantic universities whom I
had a prior relationship. The classes chosen were representative of the student body, including a general gender balance and a slight skew towards Democratic partisanship. I sent emails to each instructor containing instructions and a link to the pre-survey located at SurveyMonkey. These emails were forwarded to students. Students had between three and seven days to complete the survey, with one follow-up reminder email sent during the process. The survey was completed entirely outside of normal class time and took approximately 10 minutes. I monitored the results online throughout the process, paying particular attention to any difficulties that could develop with the questions. Ninety undergraduate students completed the pre-survey.

I closed each pre-survey one to three days prior to each treatment to allow some time to elapse in between responses. Each class was randomly selected for the modality treatment. The instructors and students were notified in advance of the treatment day. In each class, I introduced the research on “Media and President Address” and explained the purpose was to examine the Saturday presidential address. I then introduced the video or radio version of the address by noting that the Saturday presidential address was given by President Barack Obama in October 2009. Following this brief summary, I started the video or audio treatment for the participants. For the video treatment, I played an enlarged version of the video from YouTube. I simply shut off the compute projector for the audio treatment. I took particular care to ensure that the video was clear and viewable while the audio was at an adequate, clear volume. Immediately following the address’ conclusion, I distributed the post-survey. I explained that I would address questions as needed and additional contact information, including informed consent materials were on the survey cover page. The entire treatment, including the address, took approximately 20 minutes.

Ninety students participated in the study and 74 students’ responses were matched between pre and post surveys, including 35 in the radio condition and 39 for the internet. I ran an
analysis of variance on the pre-survey responses to predetermine whether the treatment groups were relatively homogenous in terms of initial beliefs and attitudes. I identified four variables where the sample beliefs were initially heterogeneous and I eliminated these from consideration later in the study. A large majority of the variables had very low significance values (above the 0.60 level), which validated my randomization procedures.

**Results**

I partition the results into several sections: General Media Use Results, Factor Analysis and Reliability Results, and T-Test Results for Pre and Post Attitude Change.

**General Media Use**

The results suggest that the youngest voting demographic in the United States continues to use virtual, online media at much higher levels than traditional modes. Seventy percent of those sampled said the internet was their primary source of news, compared with only 13.3% who said print newspapers and 1.1% who said the radio. Comparing radio use for political news stories and speeches to internet use (table 1), 95.5% of the sample said they use the internet to receive political information versus only 36.7% who said they use radio.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Do you listen to news stories or speeches about gov’t/politics on radio?</th>
<th>Do you use the internet to receive news or political information?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>33 (36.7%)</td>
<td>86 (95.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>57 (63.3%)</td>
<td>4 (4.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students reported that their predominant format for receiving internet news and political information was a newspaper website (62.2%) followed by a news aggregator (13.3%). Following the experimental treatment, the students surveyed said they would prefer to receive
the Saturday presidential address in a televised format (48.9%) or an internet format (33.3%) versus a radio mode (4.4%). Aggregating these totals by modality, students prefer an audiovisual modality to an audio modality 82.2% to 4.4%. I discuss the implications for this in the discussion section of this chapter.

**Factor Analysis and Reliability Tests**

To obtain constructs associated with trust, perceptions, and leadership traits, I ran a factor analysis with a varimax rotation. I had multiple indicators that were associated with these concepts and sought to form additive indexes for analysis. The factor analysis provided empirical guidance for my hypotheses. For example, I wanted to confirm that an underlying dynamic united items such as presidential looks, sounds, confidence, communication skills, and competence with the presidential perceptions concept. The subsequent loadings confirmed my initial rationale for grouping the items with each concept.

The factor analysis consisted of a principal component analysis with a varimax rotation method. I found three initial components with eigenvalues of 7.224, 1.875, and 1.078. The selected variables loaded together around the three broad categories of trust, perceptions, and leadership traits (see table 2). The trust variables, while loading together, spread across components one and three with the variables associated with trusting Obama clustering in component one and the trust variables associated with Congress and the government in general loading in component three. There were several variables that spread across components (government management, effective communication, competency), but these were not severe enough to warrant exclusion from the groupings for a reliability analysis. Overall, variables that loaded together were correlated at .60 or above with most of the variables associated with leadership and trust correlating above .75 with each component.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Component 1</th>
<th>Component 2</th>
<th>Component 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Perceptions</td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama listens to the economic</td>
<td>0.859</td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td>0.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concerns of Americans.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama is a strong and</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.237</td>
<td>0.207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decisive leader.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama shares my values.</td>
<td>0.831</td>
<td>0.283</td>
<td>0.209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I trust Obama more than</td>
<td>0.824</td>
<td>0.200</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress to do what is right</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on healthcare reform.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I trust Obama when it</td>
<td>0.809</td>
<td>0.186</td>
<td>0.352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comes to healthcare policy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama can manage the gov’t</td>
<td>0.768</td>
<td>0.343</td>
<td>0.246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effectively.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama inspires confidence.</td>
<td>0.669</td>
<td>0.287</td>
<td>0.207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama sounds presidential.</td>
<td>0.236</td>
<td>0.878</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama looks presidential.</td>
<td>0.074</td>
<td>0.873</td>
<td>0.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama communicates</td>
<td>0.311</td>
<td>0.658</td>
<td>-0.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effectively.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama is competent and</td>
<td>0.520</td>
<td>0.636</td>
<td>0.215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>capable.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama is physically</td>
<td>0.231</td>
<td>0.599</td>
<td>0.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attractive.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I trust Congress when it</td>
<td>0.135</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comes to healthcare policy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I trust the federal government</td>
<td>0.376</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>0.798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when it comes to healthcare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>policy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using the factor analysis as a guide, I then ran a reliability test on each of the three components that I defined around trust, perceptions, and leadership measures. The trust measures (I trust Obama, I trust Congress, I trust the federal government, I trust Obama more than Congress) were reliable with a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.784. Because the factor analysis spread these variables across components one and three, I similarly separated the variables and ran a separate reliability analysis. The Obama trust variables (I trust Obama, I trust Obama more than Congress) were reliable with a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.826 while the legislative trust variables (I trust Congress, I trust the federal government) were similarly reliable with a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.769. For the paired samples t-test, I divided these trust measures for additive indexes according to the factor analysis.
The perception measures (sounds presidential, looks presidential, physically attractive, competence, effective communication) were highly reliable with a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.834. This was quite robust even with the effective communication and competency variables spread across multiple components in the factor analysis. Examining the leadership component, I found very strong reliability among the variables (strong leader, listens, shares values, effective management, confidence). The Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.929, which corresponds to the strong loadings recorded in the factor analysis matrix. These findings supported my general grouping of these variables among the component measures.

*Pre and Post Attitude Change*

I ran paired samples t-tests on the trust, perception, and leadership concepts by modality in order to determine pre and post test attitude change among the audio and audiovisual groups. The trust variables revealed several interesting findings (table 3). While personal trust in President Obama’s healthcare policy rose in the audiovisual condition as opposed to the audio condition, the change was not statistically significant. When trust in Obama is compared to trust in Congress, participants’ levels of trust in Obama rose in both modality conditions. The audio condition saw a statistically significant rise in Obama’s trust at the .10 level while the audiovisual condition recorded a statistically significant rise in Obama’s trust compared to Congress at the .05 level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Pre &amp; Post Trust Changes (Paired Samples T-Test)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I trust Obama when it comes to healthcare policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I trust Congress when it comes to healthcare policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I then created additive trust scales based on the factor analysis results by constructing an Obama trust measure and a legislative trust measure. Comparing these additive trust measures among modalities (table 4), I found that there was a very significant rise in the Obama trust measure in the audiovisual condition at the .01 level while there was not significant change in the audio condition. While levels of legislative and government trust fell in both conditions, these were not statistically significant. These findings point to the audiovisual condition as a strong mediator of trust in Obama’s healthcare policy, particularly when participants have the opportunity to compare trust in Obama versus that of Congress.

Table 4: Pre & Post Aggregated Trust Changes (Paired Samples T-Test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Radio/Audio</th>
<th>Internet/Audiovisual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legislative/Government Trust (I trust Congress + I trust the federal gov’t)</td>
<td>Pre: 7.03 Post: 6.73</td>
<td>Pre: 7.13 Post: 6.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01  
Cronbach’s Alpha (Obama Trust) = .826  
Cronbach’s Alpha (Leg/Gov’t Trust) = .769

Analyzing the variables associated with perceptions of President Obama (table 5), I found that there were few significant attitudinal changes in both the audio and audiovisual conditions. The belief that “Obama looks presidential” registered the only significant change at the .10 level
in the audio condition. There was a significant drop in this belief after participants listened to the audio mode of Obama’s speech, while there was no change in the audiovisual modality. Measures associated with attractiveness, effectiveness, and competency showed small changes in both modalities. Beliefs that “Obama sounds presidential” rose in the audio condition and slightly fell in the audiovisual condition.

Table 5: Pre & Post Perception Changes (Paired Samples T-Test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Radio/Audio</th>
<th>Internet/Audiovisual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obama looks presidential.</td>
<td>Pre: 5.97</td>
<td>Pre: 6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post: 5.72*</td>
<td>Post: 6.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama sounds presidential.</td>
<td>Pre: 6.03</td>
<td>Pre: 6.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post: 6.24</td>
<td>Post: 6.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama is physically attractive.</td>
<td>Pre: 5.25</td>
<td>Pre: 5.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post: 5.32</td>
<td>Post: 5.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama communicates effectively.</td>
<td>Pre: 5.91</td>
<td>Pre: 6.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post: 6.00</td>
<td>Post: 6.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama is competent and capable.</td>
<td>Pre: 5.76</td>
<td>Pre: 5.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post: 5.97</td>
<td>Post: 5.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01  Cronbach’s Alpha = .834

Note: Attitudes are measured on a seven-point Likert Scale from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree with each statement.

When these variables were merged into additive perception scales and compared across media (table 6), I found no significant changes in either modality between the pre and post surveys. These results are consistent with the findings for the individual perception measures.

Table 6: Pre & Post Aggregated Perception Changes (Paired Samples T-Test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Radio/Audio</th>
<th>Internet/Audiovisual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obama Perceptions</td>
<td>Pre: 29.30</td>
<td>Pre: 29.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post: 29.33</td>
<td>Post: 28.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01  Cronbach’s Alpha = .834

I found several interesting occurrences when examining participant attitudes toward President Obama’s leadership traits (table 7). Both audio and audiovisual modalities affected views that “Obama is a strong and decisive leader.” There was, however, a significant increase
in this belief in the audio modality while the audiovisual mode saw an increase that approached statistical significance at the .10 level. When asked about whether Obama listens to Americans, there was a statistically insignificant rise in the audio condition while there was a statistically significant drop in this belief in the audiovisual modality at the .05 level. The remainder of the leadership variables recorded insignificant changes, including the belief that “Obama inspires confidence.”

Table 7: Pre & Post Leadership Changes (Paired Samples T-Test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Radio/Audio</th>
<th>Internet/Audiovisual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Obama is a strong and decisive leader.</strong></td>
<td>Pre: 5.24</td>
<td>Pre: 5.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post: 5.53*</td>
<td>Post: 5.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Obama listens to the economic concerns of Americans.</strong></td>
<td>Pre: 4.84</td>
<td>Pre: 5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post: 5.10</td>
<td>Post: 4.59**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Obama shares my values.</strong></td>
<td>Pre: 4.67</td>
<td>Pre: 4.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post: 4.85</td>
<td>Post: 4.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Obama can manage the gov’t effectively.</strong></td>
<td>Pre: 4.85</td>
<td>Pre: 4.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post: 4.64</td>
<td>Post: 4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Obama inspires confidence.</strong></td>
<td>Pre: 5.72</td>
<td>Pre: 5.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post: 5.88</td>
<td>Post: 5.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01  Cronbach’s Alpha = .929

Note: Attitudes are measured on a seven-point Likert Scale from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree with each statement.

After I combined the leadership variables in an additive index (table 8), I found small changes in both modalities. While there was a slight rise in the audio mode, there was no change in the audiovisual treatment. Both of these changes, though, were not statistically significant. In sum, while the additive leadership measures saw no significant changes by modality, individual-level variables associated with “strong leadership” and “Obama listens” were statistically significant measures in the audio and audiovisual modalities respectively.
Table 8: Pre & Post Aggregated Leadership Changes (Paired Samples T-Test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Radio/Audio</th>
<th>Internet/Audiovisual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obama Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre: 25.48</td>
<td>Pre: 25.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post: 25.90</td>
<td>Post: 25.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01  Cronbach’s Alpha = .929

Discussion and Implications

Reviewing the results from the pre and post surveys, I discovered significant attitude change by modality associated with trust measures of Obama as well as leadership measures. In particular, I found that trust in Obama and his healthcare policy was best expressed in direct opposition to trust in Congress. When participants were given the opportunity for comparison, both the audio and audiovisual modalities recorded significant changes. The audio modality saw significant changes at the .10 level while the audiovisual treatment led to significant changes at the .05 level. After creating additive trust measures for trust in Obama and trust in legislative institutions, I discovered significant attitude change in the audiovisual modality associated with Obama’s trust at the .01 level.

The trust measure findings contrast sharply with the lack of significant findings associated with perceptions of Obama. When reviewing the leadership measures of Obama, I found significant findings in the audio modality associated with “strong and decisive leader” alongside a significant drop in the belief that the president “listens to concerns” in the audiovisual modality. This drop was quite significant at the .05 level.

The findings of this study suggest that the new audiovisual-virtual mode of the Saturday presidential address has begun to alter attitudes toward President Obama and his policies, but many common measures associated with presidential perceptions and leadership have yet to be affected. With younger citizens using the internet medium at increasingly higher proportions compared to traditional media, President Obama’s efficient use of these new technologies to
reach his audiences will be critical to advancing his policy agenda. I review in this section how attitudes associated with trust, presidential perceptions, and leadership qualities were affected by modality.

*Trust*

One of the key measures of source credibility identified continuously in the media effects research, trust in President Obama and his healthcare policies was strongly affected by the speech intervention. Presidential trust is simultaneously linked to legitimacy and the president’s power to push an agenda and engage citizens. Experiment participants had higher levels of trust in Obama when directly compared to Congress in both the audio and audiovisual modalities. However, the audiovisual treatment saw a significantly larger increase in trust which supported my first hypothesis. In turn, my second hypothesis associated with legislative and governmental trust was not supported. There were no significant differences by modality between trust in Congress and trust in the federal government.

These findings implicate two of the three roles of the Saturday presidential address as outlined in chapter three. As a mediated log for official presidential travel and accomplishments, the president uses the Saturday address to build trust and credibility with the American people. Simultaneously, as a marker of capital time, the address is also a vehicle for congressional attack and popular exhortation. The president thus uses Saturday mornings to build his own credibility and tear down Congress’. The trust findings are mixed in terms of Obama’s success in accomplishing this among his younger demographic. While there were significant changes in the audiovisual modality of trust in Obama’s healthcare policy when compared directly to Congress, the speech was not successful in significantly diminishing participants’ trust in Congress. President Obama is successful at bolstering his own trust in comparison to Congress, but not
necessarily successful in attacking Congress’ credibility. The findings suggest the audiovisual mode of the Saturday presidential address is aiding Obama in this effort to build and sustain trust (in him and his policies) with the American people.

The mode of the Saturday presidential address had a strong impact on audience trust of Obama, which supports past research suggesting that issues of source credibility intervene with modality. The audiovisual portrayal of Obama on Saturday mornings, including placing him in a “presidential setting,” has strategically built greater levels of trust in him and his policies. While the radio version of the Saturday address similarly built higher levels of trust, the internet version was much more pronounced. The strategic choice to “go visual” and “go online” with the Saturday presidential address seems to be beneficial for the Obama administration.

Presidential Perceptions

This was the area of the study where I expected more attitude changes than occurred. A large body of research focused on source characteristics, including attractiveness, as a determinant for how a message was mediated in a particular modality. However, my findings did not affirm this research. The Saturday presidential address is doing surprisingly little to effect perceptions of President Obama as an executive who looks and sounds presidential, is physically attractive, is competent, and communicates effectively. Both of my hypotheses were not supported. The audiovisual modality did not affect views that Obama looks presidential and is physically attractive anymore than the audio modality. While the audio modality showed a significant drop in “looks presidential,” this is the only medium-specific result that was found in the perceptions measures. But while the variable “looks presidential” was affected, the variables “sounds presidential” and “communicates effectively” experienced no change by modality in the pre and post surveys.
The robust effects to coincide with the strong research on presidential image did not materialize; however, this does not denigrate the importance of presidential image as a whole. As we saw with the trust measures, perceptions can affect some attitudes and not others. The audiovisual format allowed President Obama to build trust with his audience at greater levels than the audio modality. However, the perception variables that may have contributed to this had minimal effects by modality. This could be the potential result of a ceiling effect in perceptions and the deficiencies in how a survey probes these experiential traits. Using a survey to understand how a leader “looks presidential” or is “physically attractive” may not be the appropriate instrument to measure such variables. Chaiken’s source attractiveness study physically manipulated the communicator variable to deduce the effects of appearance on persuasion (1979). This study did not go about accomplishing this. I held everything constant, except for modality across the two treatments.

It is important to make note that despite the lack of significance associated with “sounds presidential” and “competence,” there were small increases in these measures associated with the audio modality. This warrants further investigation, particularly because the audiovisual (internet) modality saw almost no change in these variables. In this case, future research will examine how the radio format may have mediated perception effects in a much more effective fashion than the internet mode.

Much as early studies of audiovisual technologies found minimal effects of television on citizens, it took future research to discover that the instruments and measures were hiding significant attitude changes. As more research is conducted on internet technologies, researchers must be cognizant of the measures by which they seek to find persuasive changes. We know that image is central to the modern presidency because presidents focus on it, spend hours cultivating
it for the public, and hire teams of experts to brand an administration. The effects of perception management may be difficult to parse from other variables, but this research has begun to find perception effects on presidential trust in the audiovisual modality.

Leadership

The perceived leadership abilities of the president, much like trustworthiness, are linked to executive legitimacy. The president spends time on Saturday mornings crafting the image of activist leadership, whether it is rehearing communal values in a secular sermon or logging official executive actions and accomplishments in his mediated log. Two of the three roles of the Saturday presidential address implicate leadership. The third, attacking Congress and Washington culture, attempts to insulate the president’s leadership and governing authority from other political factors when he marks capital time. The results of the survey suggest that President Obama has been successful in shaping attitudes about his leadership abilities, but may simultaneously be hindering his efforts with the public by using the audiovisual modality.

My first hypothesis was not supported based on the results. There were not significant increases in the beliefs that Obama is a strong and decisive leader, can manage the government effectively, or inspires confidence in the audiovisual modality. In fact, the opposite occurred. While there was an increase in beliefs about Obama’s leadership abilities in the audiovisual modality, there was a significant increase discovered in the audio modality. The radio address showcased Obama’s leadership skills for the participants, which could be related to the perceived authoritativeness and decisiveness of his voice.

In the audio modality, my second hypothesis also was not supported. While there were higher levels of support for the belief that Obama listens to American concerns and shares “their” values compared to the audiovisual modality, these were not significant. However, an
interesting phenomenon occurred. I found a significant drop in support for the belief that “Obama listens to the economic concerns of Americans” in the audiovisual modality. The audio modality saw a statistically insignificant rise in the belief that Obama listens, but the sudden drop in the belief that he listens based on the audiovisual modality is quite troubling for the Obama administration.

As President Obama seeks new communication modalities to reach citizens, including YouTube for the Saturday presidential address and live video streams for tele-townhalls and forums, his administration is placing a higher premium on image to communicate his messages. However, the ubiquity of his presence in various aspects of political and social life may be coming at a cost to the belief that he is responsive to citizen concerns. Much as Diana Mutz discovered that an “in your face” effect created by camera angles and oppositional messages effects view of legitimacy (2007), a perceived “in your face” effect created by the Saturday presidential address may convey that Obama talks but does not listen. When coupled with Obama’s ubiquitous presidential appeals, these effects may be magnified. This is problematic for an administration that has crafted numerous public relations campaigns to sell the economic stimulus package, financial regulations, and healthcare legislation. It similarly implicates the concern expressed by many scholars that the more the president speaks, the less power he may wield.

While the results seem to contradict the positive increases in trust for Obama and his policies in the audiovisual modality, trust and responsiveness are two different perceived presidential traits. Citizens may trust Obama to effectively execute the duties of his office, but they could simultaneously believe he does not listen to their concerns. These results could be linked to Obama’s perceived intellectualism, a trait documented during his presidential campaign.
and continued into his presidency (Zelizer, 2008; Judis, 2010). Because of his capabilities and intellectual prowess, citizens may trust him as president, but his “mechanical” intellectualism as John Judis refers to it (2010), may implicitly send a signal that he does not listen. However, democratic politics suggests that this imbalance cannot last for long. As the perception persists that Obama is unresponsive to public opinion, trust in him and his policies would fall because they would fail to have the legitimacy of public support. The new modality for the Saturday presidential address is helping President Obama build executive trust, but it may also be causing him some perceived responsiveness problems.

**Effects Explained**

I began this chapter with the goal of explaining the “with what effect” of Lasswell’s communication model. After explaining my hypotheses, I justified my methodological design including how the pre/post experimental design would provide the results I was looking for. The results of my study demonstrated that while some attitudes and beliefs are changing with the Saturday presidential address’ new modality, others have yet to be altered.

The results of the study, when coupled with the rhetorical framework for the Saturday presidential address in chapter three, hold important implications for institutionally sustaining rhetoric and the rhetorical presidency itself. Presidencies are sustained by the trust, confidence, and public support of citizens. However, in return, presidents must appear responsive to the concerns of their constituents. My results present a possible audiovisual paradox for the rhetorical presidency and in particular Barack Obama: the more the president speaks and relies on image to convey a message, the more trust he can build in himself and his policies. This increased trust, however, comes at the expense of perceived distance and unresponsiveness from the constituency. Scholars have noted that the visual intimacy of audiovisual communication
makes the speaker appear face-to-face with their audience. My results suggest that while the mediated distance creates an intimacy, the audiovisual of the internet may reestablish the bright line that once existed between the ruler and ruled.

My original question when beginning this research was “How are content and effects changing with the transition of the Saturday presidential address from a radio to an internet format?” After discovering several content specific changes within the generic framework I developed in chapter, I have found significant attitudinal changes by modality in this chapter. With my main research question now answered, I begin my final chapter by stating an overview of my most significant findings and opportunities for future research. While my results have answered many of my questions, they have simultaneously brought forth new questions about perceived presidential responsiveness and trust in the era of the ubiquitous presidency. As President Obama’s image and voice continues to permeate various aspects of political and social life, the long-term effects on institutional trust, confidence, and legitimacy may be altered. My results present an excellent starting point for beginning this analysis.
CONCLUSION

The use of the internet by the presidency promises to be a fixture in the future comparable to when presidents began delivering speeches via television over 50 years ago. The institution is still in the adjustment phases of how best to use new tools and technologies to reach citizens, mobilize constituents, and call for action. Where Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush began the process of integrating White House functions in a virtual format (Owen and Davis, 2008), Barack Obama has accelerated the process. Obama has created a virtual presidency to be mediated in various formats to fragmented audiences. Much like John F. Kennedy, Obama utilized a new medium of communication in both his election and administration to revolutionize the presidency. Claire Cain Miller notes, “One of the many ways that the election of Barack Obama as president has echoed that of John F. Kennedy is his use of a new medium that will forever change politics. For Mr. Kennedy, it was television. For Mr. Obama, it is the Internet” (2008).

Obama’s administration set out with the goal of using the internet to promote transparency and a governmental “face” for citizens (Vargas, 2008). To this end, one of the changes was the addition of the virtual fireside chat, an update to a sporadic presidential practice begun in the Roosevelt administration. I review in this final chapter the theoretical underpinnings and major findings related to the Saturday presidential address. I will conclude with areas of future research and how the rhetorical presidency must be a focus of political communication scholars.

Content and Effects of the Saturday Presidential Address

I began this work with one question: How are content and effects changing with the transition of the Saturday presidential address from a radio to internet format? I sought to address
this question with a multi-methodological approach that incorporated aspects of rhetorical theory and experimental design to further understand a genre of presidential rhetoric often overlooked by scholars. The institutional presidency has dramatically changed by the use of rhetoric and “going public,” practices that have been accelerated by advances in communication technologies. Presidential rhetoric has elevated the role of the chief executive in respect to Congress while simultaneously sparking scholarly concerns about how frequent use of speeches may diminish the president’s capacity to persuade.

I developed a rhetorical framework for approaching the Saturday presidential address as a genre of executive communication. Using the model adopted by Campbell and Jamieson, I discovered in an analysis of 30 speeches from the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations that the Saturday address serves three main roles. The address is a secular sermon by which the president can recite and inculcate communal values, a mediated log for the president to showcase accomplishments and official presidential actions, and a marker of capital time to attack Congress, political culture in the nation’s capital, and go public directly to citizens. I used this framework to show how the new audiovisual-virtual format of the Saturday presidential address may be altering content. I found that Obama’s speeches diverge structurally from his predecessors while striking a balance between the brevity of George W. Bush’s speeches and wordiness of Bill Clinton’s. There is a reticence in the speeches for Obama to “go public” or urge citizens to contact Congress, a departure from past practices of Clinton and Bush on Saturday mornings. This could be the result of Obama’s prior service as a U.S. Senator. The layout of the speeches on the White House and YouTube websites allows for easy coproduction and transference across multiple online platforms.
Tracking the persuasive effects of these rhetorical constructions, I reviewed how the audiovisual process creates a unique experience for the viewer. This setting emphasizes source characteristics and credibility as mediators of a persuasive message. Because the modern presidency relies on the presidential image of activist leadership to maintain legitimacy, the conveyance of these traits by modality is vital to understanding the effectiveness of presidential communications. I incorporated modality in understanding how attitudes towards presidential trust, perceptions, and leadership traits are being altered by the transitioned Saturday address. Performing a direct comparison between a radio and an internet format, I utilized a pre-post survey design to analyze persuasive attitudinal change. Among 90 undergraduate participants in the sample, I discovered significant changes in trust and leadership beliefs of President Obama by modality. Participants exposed to the audio modality were more likely to believe that Obama is a strong and decisive leader while those exposed to the audiovisual modality had higher levels of trust in Obama when compared directly to Congress. The internet condition also produced a negative result for the administration - a belief that Obama is less likely to listen to American concerns. This could be related to the ubiquity of images and speaking opportunities during his first year in office.

One year into his presidency, this research has discovered some changes associated with content and effects of the Saturday presidential address. I did not expect to discover drastic changes, but more the unnoticed movements and transitions that are occurring with little fanfare. As the Obama presidency matures and his administration uses emerging communication technologies to reach citizens, the content and effects of his messages may become more pronounced. What has changed thus far to a genre that is almost three decades old is quite significant. The content and structure of his addresses is evolving as are the trust and leadership
effects that are mediated in an audiovisual modality. The internet holds great promise for the governing process, but will also present concurrent challenges that the Obama administration and future presidencies must address.

**Presidential Ubiquity**

The electronic rhetorical presidency is characterized by multimediated rhetoric, an acceleration of the rhetoric process, a strong emphasis on presidential ethos, and a diffusion of what qualifies as presidential rhetoric (Gronbeck, 1996). Related to the idea of rhetorical diffusion, the virtual rhetorical presidency and the internet have caused another key characteristic of the rhetorical presidency to emerge: a ubiquity of words and images in political and nonpolitical life. While diffusion implies a greater amount of rhetorical acts than presidential administrations once accomplished, the ubiquitous rhetorical presidency takes these abundant rhetorical acts and mediates them into many different settings and areas of life. Thus, presidential words and images become an everyday phenomenon to be mediated on the news, in the living room, at the computer, or during one's favorite basketball game.

I do not seek to apply a value judgment to the idea of the ubiquitous presidency. It will have implications for the institutional presidency, both good and ill. However, we must ask ourselves what the possible effects are of a dramatic presence of presidential appeals. This ubiquity can be traced in many ways to the personal communication technologies developed during the Bush administration and how his team adapted to these trends. George W. Bush’s Saturday presidential address was transitioned to an iTunes format to be downloaded onto personal mp3 devices, including iPods. In the Obama administration, these features were kept and expanded to include the video version of the address. The message, while disseminated on Saturdays, can be consumed any day of the week and months from its original airing. This
transportability of the address provides an accessibility and transparency to the presidency. Seemingly removing the veil from executive operations could increase trust in the chief executive, as we discovered in this research. However, there are secondary effects to this availability, transportability, and ubiquity.

Scholars of presidential rhetoric have warned of an executive’s diminished power to persuade due to the increased frequency of rhetorical appeals. Ubiquity may accelerate this trend, or in other cases lead to presidential overexposure. News accounts of the Obama administration have continuously mentioned this idea, but it warrants examination and what it means for the president’s ability to wield power within government and amongst citizens. The idea that the president may rhetorically spread himself thin in many formats is linked to my idea of ubiquity. While trust may be enhanced temporarily, it may come at the cost of citizen beliefs that the president is responsive to their concerns. I found this among members of the survey sample.

Large generations in the United States, particularly baby boomers and older citizens, grew up in a time when the president was a seemingly distant figure. As they aged, communication technologies brought the president closer to them and at much greater frequencies. Our contemporary experiences of the ubiquitous presidency have been projected onto the past. Many citizens and scholars mistakenly point to Franklin Roosevelt’s fireside chats as an almost weekly event during the depression and World War II. However, during his 12 year presidency, he gave a total of 27 fireside chats - an average of two a year. George W. Bush’s and Barack Obama’s presidencies had 52 Saturday presidential addresses during their first years in office, easily doubling Roosevelt’s total for his entire presidency. This is then coupled in the modern era with presidential appearances on magazine covers, late night talk shows, and sporting events among other venues.
The Saturday presidential address is just one piece of this puzzle, a symptom of an institutional infusion of the nation’s chief executive into political and nonpolitical life. As Andie Coller has noted, “From CNN to Men’s Journal, Obama has decided to make himself the Everywhere President. Obama has taken this intense public interest to a new level — encouraging a highly personalized, uncommonly intimate presidential image” (2009). This makes deducing the effects of any one presidential pronouncement difficult. But what this does point to is aggregated effects of presidential rhetoric. Where one speech before might have had significant audience effects, persuasion now could be the cumulative effect of numerous rhetorical acts, both political and nonpolitical. The beliefs uncovered in this research that Obama is unresponsive to citizens could be the result of watching one Saturday presidential address in addition to other coverage of the president.

**Future Research**

I set out in this research to uncover how rhetorical content and persuasive effects are being altered by the transition of the Saturday presidential address from a radio to internet format. While I have found several answers to my question, I would have enjoyed more time to thoroughly address subsidiary questions that developed during the research process. My sample size for the survey, while satisfactory for answering my questions and hypotheses, was smaller than my original target. I would have enjoyed a larger sample to analyze, something I will work on in the future as I continue this research. I would have similarly preferred a larger amount of time to elapse between the pre and post surveys. In some cases, participants had between one day and a week between pre and post tests. This short amount of time could have hidden effects from the audio and audiovisual treatments. For future research, I will remedy this by allowing a minimum of one week and preferably two weeks or more in between surveys. Additionally,
because of time constraints, I could not analyze more than 30 speeches to integrate into chapter three’s framework. I would like to double or triple this sample size for future research. While I achieved definitive results from the sample to form a framework, there is always more to be analyzed.

Unimpeded by time constraints in future research, I will incorporate into my research design an additional step to track attitude change in the long-term. The interplay of the “sleeper effect” may have hidden potential media effects. When coupled with the short amount of time between surveys, significant effects may have been masked. Lengthening the elapsed time between surveys while incorporating a follow-up survey with participants approximately one month after treatment may capture any hidden effects.

Future presidential administrations will use the internet to connect with the public in ways unimaginable to the present observer. Scholars must focus on how the institutional presidency is sustained through virtual rhetorical acts and the subsidiary effects on citizens in the process. In this research, I have identified several points of departure for researchers to address perplexing issues associated with the virtual presidency. As media continue to fragment and hybrid forms emerge between older and newer media, the president must adapt to reach his audiences. This will require scholars to study emerging and untraditional venues for how a president not only disseminates but mediates messages.

I expect that future presidential administrations will find innovative ways to address the public, increasing the frequency of formal and informal appeals. This will raise further questions regarding the ubiquitous presidency and how this may or may not contribute to presidential overexposure. Since a younger generation of citizens has become accustomed to the normalcy of frequent presidential appeals, this issue may fade from consideration in the future. However,
present and short term research must address how presidential power is enhanced or diminished by not only the frequency, but the ubiquity of appeals. This should include how the institution is affected, within the White House, and how citizens are influenced. I would conjecture that while the experience of seeing the president at a Washington Nationals baseball game differs than watching the State of the Union, both rhetorical acts create a cumulative effect for presidential power. While measuring the cumulative effects of presidential rhetoric were outside the scope of this research, future scholars must measure the aggregated effects of ubiquitous presidential appeals.

The second issue that warrants further review is the idea of presidential trust I uncovered in my research. The results of my study suggest a potential paradox created by new communication technologies. As trust increases in a president and his policies, the belief that he is responsive and listens declines. While these findings are limited to the younger, college educated demographic sampled, future research will address the generalizability of these findings to the population at large. Presidential approval and power are directly linked to one another. Without the will of the public behind him, the president lacks the power to wield in Congress. Trust and responsiveness are similarly linked - while both could temporarily move in opposite directions, this cannot be sustained. Presidential trust would eventually decline as citizen views of responsiveness fall. The admiration one has for the president, and the institution itself, may sustain greater levels of trust while simultaneously creating an implicit acceptance of the power differential between a ruler and the ruled. This could explain the paradox. However, the mediated intimacy of audiovisual-virtual technology, by definition, would make even this perceived distance hard to sustain in the long term. Future research should address this potential paradox and how the roles of citizen admiration and veneration for one’s leaders may create it.
Concluding Remarks

The institutional presidency has undergone dramatic changes in the past century. From an institution once overshadowed by the legislative work of congressional leaders, the president harnessed the power of rhetoric and emerging communication technologies to become a dominant force in American politics. Each president has put a personal stamp on the office and how it communicates to citizens. The next century promises to be a time of opportunity and challenge for the presidency as emerging technologies pit forces of change against enduring executive traditions. What will the Saturday presidential address look like in 30 years or more? Will it adapt to more of a presidential call-in hour on Saturday mornings akin to a 1950s-style “Eisenhower Answers America”? Or will it retreat back to older forms under the concern of presidential overexposure? While my guess remains with the former, the next 100 years will revolutionize how the chief executive engages and interacts with citizens. In the process, perceptions will be shaped in new and unexpected ways, the presidential image will maintain supremacy, and democratic institutions will continue to evolve as a result.
APPENDIX A – SAMPLE SURVEY

Media Use and Political Speeches (Internet Post)

Informed Consent: During today’s class, you will be asked to answer some survey questions regarding a short video address played in class. I estimate that completing the entire exercise will take no more than 20 minutes. As one of approximately 250 participants for this research, your answers to the following questions will be used as part of a research project that aims to better understand media use for political speeches. There are no foreseeable risks associated with watching the address or answering these questions. No personal information identifying you will be released to anyone other than those working on this research project. All such personal identifying information will be destroyed once all the data have been collected. Any published results or data will only contain aggregated responses and will be completely confidential. Participation in this survey is voluntary and you may stop participating at any time. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your course grade. If you decide not to answer any of the questions, simply leave them blank. Your participation is greatly appreciated and constitutes consent to use your responses for research purposes. Once all of the data for this project have been collected, I will be happy to share the results with you. Additionally, your email address will be placed into a drawing for a $25 gift card to be awarded sometime in the next month. If you have any questions about this research, please contact Joshua Scacco. Thank you for your participation!

If you would like a copy of this informed consent statement for your records, please let me (Josh) know and I will get you a copy for your personal records.

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Georgetown University Institutional Review Board (#2009-639)
202-687-1506
irboard@georgetown.edu

Email Address: ________________________________
### Section A. General Media Use

*Directions: Please circle or indicate your answer.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. What is your primary source of news?</th>
<th>Print Newspapers</th>
<th>Radio</th>
<th>Television</th>
<th>Internet</th>
<th>Something else</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Do you listen to news stories, speeches, or discussions on the radio about politics and government?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>3. <strong>If yes to question 2</strong>, how often do you listen to news stories, speeches, or discussions about politics and government on the radio?</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>A couple times a week</th>
<th>A couple times a month</th>
<th>A couple times a year</th>
<th>I don’t listen to radio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Do you use the internet to read news or political information?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. <strong>If yes to question 4</strong>, if you had to pick one format, which one do you predominantly use to receive internet news or political information?</th>
<th>Newspaper website</th>
<th>Network or cable TV news website</th>
<th>News Aggregator</th>
<th>Blogs</th>
<th>Some other internet source</th>
<th>I don’t use the internet.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. From which media format would you prefer to receive news or political information?</th>
<th>Radio</th>
<th>Television</th>
<th>Internet</th>
<th>Something else</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Section B. What You Just Watched

**Directions:** Please circle the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement about the presidential address you just watched.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. President Obama’s speech was engaging.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. President Obama’s speech held my attention the entire time.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. President Obama’s speech was easily understandable.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. President Obama’s speech seemed credible.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. President Obama’s speech was authoritative.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I felt as if President Obama was talking directly to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I enjoyed President Obama’s speech.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The visual format of the speech helped convey Obama’s message.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

## Section B. What You Just Watched

**Directions:** Please circle or indicate your answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Radio</th>
<th>Television</th>
<th>Internet</th>
<th>It doesn’t matter</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Which media format would you prefer to receive the Saturday presidential address?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Section C. General Government Attitudes

*Directions: Please circle or indicate your answer.*

<p>| | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Generally speaking, which best describes your views of President Obama’s presidential job performance?</td>
<td>Strongly Disapprove</td>
<td>Disapprove</td>
<td>Neither Approve nor Disapprove</td>
<td>Approve</td>
<td>Strongly Approve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Generally speaking, which best describes your views of congressional Democrats’ job performance?</td>
<td>Strongly Disapprove</td>
<td>Disapprove</td>
<td>Neither Approve nor Disapprove</td>
<td>Approve</td>
<td>Strongly Approve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Generally speaking, which best describes your views of congressional Republicans’ job performance?</td>
<td>Strongly Disapprove</td>
<td>Disapprove</td>
<td>Neither Approve nor Disapprove</td>
<td>Approve</td>
<td>Strongly Approve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I'd like you to rate President Barack Obama by using something called the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward Obama. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward Obama and that you don't care too much for him. You would rate Obama at the 50 degree mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward him.</td>
<td>Your Feeling Rating:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Section D. Attitudes toward President Obama

**Directions:** Please circle the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement about President Obama:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Cares about the concerns of someone like me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is a strong and decisive leader.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Inspires confidence.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Can manage the government effectively.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Is overexposed in the media.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Can bring needed change.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Is honest and trustworthy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Shares my values.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Is a typical politician.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Is an elitist.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Is competent and capable.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Looks presidential.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Sounds presidential.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Is physically attractive.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Is detached and aloof.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Communicates effectively.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Talks directly to a person like me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Section E. Attitudes toward Government Policies

**Directions:** Please circle the extent to which you approve or disapprove of President Obama’s handling of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disapprove</th>
<th>Disapprove</th>
<th>Neither Approve nor Disapprove</th>
<th>Approve</th>
<th>Strongly Approve</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Economy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Health Care Policy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Taxes.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Foreign Policy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Unemployment.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The federal budget deficit.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>President Obama cares about the economic concerns of me and my family.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>President Obama listens to the economic concerns of Americans before making decisions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Congress should carefully debate all views and ideas on healthcare reform.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Congress should move faster in getting a healthcare bill to President Obama.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>President Obama’s healthcare plan will bring Canadian-style healthcare to America.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I am concerned whether or not I will have healthcare coverage in the next 3 years.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I am worried opponents and critics will prevent meaningful healthcare reform from passing.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I trust President Obama when it comes to healthcare policy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I trust Congress when it comes to healthcare policy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I trust the federal government when it comes to healthcare policy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I trust President Obama more than Congress to do what is right on healthcare reform.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I support President Obama’s healthcare reform proposal.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>President Obama has articulated a clear plan to deal with the effect of healthcare costs on the economy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>President Obama’s healthcare plan will be bad for the economy and small businesses.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I can easily understand President Obama’s healthcare plan.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Section G. Background Information

**Directions:** Please circle the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement about President Obama:

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>What is your age?</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>What is your sex?</td>
<td>Male 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Are you a U.S. citizen?</td>
<td>Yes 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>What is your race/ethnicity?</td>
<td>Asian/Pac. Islander 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>What is your year in school?</td>
<td>Freshman 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Generally speaking, which of the following best describes your partisanship?</td>
<td>Strong Republican 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Generally speaking, which of the following best describes your political ideology?</td>
<td>Very Conservative 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Did you vote in the 2008 presidential election?</td>
<td>Yes 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>If you voted in the 2008 presidential election, for whom did you vote?</td>
<td>Barack Obama 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>If you voted in the 2008 presidential election, for whom did you vote for the U.S. House?</td>
<td>The Democratic Candidate 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
President Barack Obama
October 3, 2009

When I took office eight months ago, our nation was in the midst of an economic crisis unlike any we’d seen in generations. While I was confident that our economy would recover, we know that employment is often the last thing to come back after a recession. Our task is to do everything we possibly can to accelerate that process.

And we’ve certainly made progress on this front since the period last winter when we were losing an average of 700,000 jobs each month. But yesterday’s report on September job losses was a sobering reminder that progress comes in fits and starts, and that we will need to grind out this recovery step by step.

That’s why I’m working closely with my economic team to explore additional options to promote job creation. And I won’t let up until those who seek jobs can find them; until businesses that seek capital and credit can thrive; and until all responsible homeowners can stay in their homes.

It won’t be easy. It will require us to lay a new foundation for our economy – one that gives our workers the skills and education they need to compete; that invests in renewable energy and the jobs of the future; and that makes health care affordable for families and businesses – particularly small businesses, many of which have been overwhelmed by rising health care costs.

This is something I hear about from entrepreneurs I meet – people who’ve got a good idea, and the expertise and determination to build it into a thriving business. But many can’t take that leap because they can’t afford to lose the health insurance they have at their current job.

I hear about it from small business owners who want to grow their companies and hire more people, but they can’t, because they can barely afford to insure the employees they have. One small business owner wrote to me that health care costs are – and I quote – "stifling my business growth." He said that the money he wanted to use for research and development, and to expand his operations, has instead been "thrown into the pocket of healthcare insurance carriers."

These small businesses are the mom and pop stores and restaurants, beauty shops and construction companies that support families and sustain communities. They’re the small startups with big ideas, hoping to be the next Google, or Apple, or HP. Altogether, they create roughly half of all new jobs.

And right now, they are paying up to 18 percent more for the very same insurance plans as larger businesses because they have higher administrative costs and less bargaining power. Many have been forced to cut benefits or drop coverage. Some have shed jobs or shut their doors entirely.

1 Transcript released by the White House Office of the Press Secretary on October 3, 2009.
And recent studies show that if we fail to act now, employers will pay six percent more to insure their employees next year – and more than twice as much over the next decade.

Rising health care costs are undermining our businesses, exploding our deficits, and costing our nation more jobs with each passing month.

So we know that reforming our health insurance system will be a critical step in rebuilding our economy so that our entrepreneurs can pursue the American Dream again, and our small businesses can grow and expand and create new jobs again.

That is precisely what the reform legislation before Congress right now will do. Under these proposals, small businesses will be able to purchase health insurance through an insurance exchange, a marketplace where they can compare the price, quality and services of a wide variety of plans, many of which will provide better coverage at lower costs than the plans they have now.

Small businesses won’t be required to cover their employees, but many that do will receive a tax credit to help them pay for it. If a small business chooses not to provide coverage, its employees will receive tax credits to help them purchase health insurance on their own through the insurance exchange.

And no matter how you get your insurance, insurance companies will no longer be allowed to deny your coverage because of a pre-existing condition. They won’t be able to drop your coverage if you get too sick, or lose your job, or change jobs. And we’ll limit the amount your insurance company can force you to pay out of your own pocket.

By now, the urgency of these reforms is abundantly clear. And after long hours of thoughtful deliberation and tough negotiation, the Senate Finance Committee – the final congressional committee involved in shaping health care legislation – has finished the process of crafting their reform proposal.

As we move forward in the coming weeks, I understand that members of Congress from both parties will want to engage in a vigorous debate and contribute their own ideas. And I welcome those contributions. I welcome any sincere attempts to improve legislation before it reaches my desk. But what I will not accept are attempts to stall, or drag our feet. I will not accept partisan efforts to block reform at any cost.

Instead, I expect us to move forward with a spirit of civility, a seriousness of purpose, and a willingness to compromise that characterizes our democratic process at its very best. If we do that, I am confident that we will pass reform this year, and help ensure that our entrepreneurs, our businesses, and our economy can thrive in the years ahead. Thank you.
DATA REFERENCES


REFERENCES


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