A Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s Speech at the 2012 Republican National Convention

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the speech given by Clint Eastwood on August 30, 2012 at the 2012 Republican National Convention. Using the neo-Aristotelian method to conduct a rhetorical analysis, the persuasiveness of Eastwood’s speech was analyzed and discussed. The uniqueness of this deliberative speech was the use of a visual prop, an empty chair, to convince the audience of President Obama’s inadequacies as a leader. While the speech contained persuasive components, it was the visual communication of the empty chair that turned the Eastwood’s speech into a national discussion. This study had to then turn to research on visual communication in post-modern cultures conducted by Jonah Rice (2004). Many news media venues discredited the unorthodox political speech by Eastwood, but just as many news analysts found it to be effective in reaching the Independent voter (Flock, 2012). This study concludes speech was effective and was enhanced by the visual of the empty chair.

Keywords: rhetoric analysis, Clint Eastwood, visual communication, visual rhetoric
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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Since before the time of Christ, the power of persuasion, through the use of well-chosen words and an intentional speaking structure, has been used to reshape listeners’ perspectives. One can look to speeches by President Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Adolf Hitler to illustrate the transforming power of the spoken word. Political leaders are not the only ones using rhetoric to persuade audiences. Within the last century there has been an increase of celebrity involvement in political policy in an attempt to affect public opinion.

During the 2012 Republican National Convention in Tampa, Florida, Clint Eastwood appeared onstage to make a speech to support Presidential candidate Mitt Romney (Abdullah, 2012; Avlon, 2012; Huffman, 2012; Roberts, 2012; Wolf & Friedman, 2012). Eastwood is well-known as an actor, director and producer of films from Hollywood, California and supporter of the Republican Party (Clint Eastwood, 2012; Clint Eastwood born, 2013). Known for his “tough guy” persona and creative directing, Eastwood used an empty chair as a prop during his speech. Specifically, he would address the audience, then lean over and address the chair, pretending to question President Barak Obama about his policies. The Republican audience cheered, applauded and laughed in response to Eastwood’s criticism of President Obama via a unique visual of an empty chair (GOPconvention2012, 2012).

Days later, Eastwood noted that the chair idea had come to him an hour before he was to go on stage. As people were asking the 82 year old if he wanted a chair on stage to sit on, it sparked the creative idea to use the chair to as a visual prop. He felt it would help in communicating his points to the audience. Eastwood saw his role in the Convention as an
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s average American giving a talk (Wolf & Friedman, 2012). Eastwood’s empty chair speech created a mixture of criticism and praise from the news media and political analysts.

The Problem

Contributor for CNN News, John Avlon (2012) criticized Eastwood’s antics by saying, “In the Politics of the Empty Chair, the only facts acknowledged are the ones that conform to political self-interest” (par. 10). Politicians in both political parties state their agendas as facts which may vary from the truth (Avlon, 2012). Political analysts and rhetorical scholars are concerned about the chasm between narrative and truth and how it affects public opinion (Avlon, 2012; West, 2007). A problem arises when a speaker, whether a politician, celebrity, or average person, uses persuasive language that is devoid of truth, thereby misleading the audience into making misinformed decisions (Avlon, 2012; Griffin, 2009; O’Shaughnessy, 2007). Political agendas verses truth isn’t the only issue of concern.

Another problem arises with the increase of celebrity endorsement for products as well as public policy (West, 2007). Generally, celebrities rely more on their popularity and attractiveness, rather than intellect and rhetoric, to persuade audiences (Erdogan, 1999; West, 2007). A celebrity, who may have the best intentions albeit uninformed, could sway an audience down a wrong path. Scholars differ on the positive and negative positions surrounding celebrity involvement in the political or social arenas, but research has proven that celebrities have substantial power and influence over public opinion (Biswas, Biswas, & Das, 2006; Erdogan, 1999; Kellner, 2010; West, 2007).

The Importance

This speech was very controversial in the news media. There was much speculation as to the meaning and effectiveness of the unconventional political speech given by Clint Eastwood.
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The use of the visual prop was an unprecedented occurrence on the political stage and demands a closer look to uncover its intention and persuasiveness.

**Definitions of Terms Used**

**Appeal** – an attempt by the rhetor to persuade by addressing the *logos* (logic), *pathos* (emotion), and *ethos* (ethic) of an audience.

**Creativity** – a unique idea or act that engages the audience.

**Delivery** – the art of using one’s voice and body effectively when speaking.

**Enthymeme** – an unstated premise or incomplete syllogism.

**Ethos** – a Greek term that describes the rhetor’s persuasive appeal to the audience based on his or her own ethics and credibility.

**Invention** – the art of generating effective material for a particular rhetoric situation.

**Logos** - a Greek term that describes the rhetor’s persuasive appeal to the reasoning of the audience.

**Memory** – mostly in oral cultures, rhetors were to commit their speeches to memory.

**Organization** – the art of ordering the material in the text so that it is most appropriate for the needs of the audience and the purpose the text is designated to accomplish.

**Pathos** – a Greek term that describes the rhetor’s persuasive appeal to the emotions of the audience.

**Rhetor** – the individual involved in the production of a text, usually a speaker or writer.

**Rhetoric act** – the verbal and visual components used by a rhetor to persuade an audience.

**Style** – the art of producing sentences and words that will make an appropriately favorable impression on listeners.
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**Visual rhetoric** – the use of art, props, video, or other pictures to communicate the rhetor’s ideas to an audience (Covino & Jolliffe, 1995; Foss, 2009; Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991).

**Organization of the Remaining Chapters**

Chapter 1 introduced the topic and importance of the study as well as the definitions of the terms used in this study. The literature review follows in Chapter 2, highlighting the relevant theoretical research available to the study. Chapter 3 identifies the scope of the study and previews the methodology of the rhetorical analysis. The results, discussion and implications of the analysis occur in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the limitations of the study, and makes recommendations for further study.
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CHAPTER 2 THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Philosophical and Ethical Assumptions

Aristotle, an academic instructor who studied with Plato, was the founder of the rhetorical paradigm. He believed that pursuing truth was central to any speech and condemned speakers who misused rhetoric to mislead an audience (Aristotle, trans. 2011; Griffin, 2009; O’Shaughnessy, 2007). Nicholas O’Shaughnessy’s (2007) research cites four misuses of rhetoric, “the abuse of metaphor, the rhetoric of data, bureaucratic propaganda, the rise of fabrication and . . . the ascent of symbolic government” (pp.113-114). This study relates to Avlon’s (2012) assertion, made in the introduction of this thesis, of political opinions made to look like facts. With the rampant abuse of rhetoric in American governments and organizations, the audience, or general public needs to actively look for truth to avoid believing the falsehoods (O’Rourke, 2004). Assessing the speaker’s credibility may help the audience detect truthfulness.

The study of rhetoric focuses on the verbal aspects of communication and also speaker credibility. Aristotle felt that audience perceptions of character, knowledge and goodwill were important influential aspects of rhetoric (Aristotle, trans. 2011; Griffin, 2009). Similarly, leadership research has concluded that character, or integrity, is the most important factor contributing to effective leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Yukl, 2010). Honesty and consistent behavior of the leader is necessary to build trust with followers. This fact is important in the philosophical and ethical issues of rhetoric because as a person stands before an audience, he or she is leading the audience in thought, and potentially, actions. Depending on the type of rhetoric, especially deliberative and forensic, the measure of persuasiveness is found in audience actions (Aristotle, trans. 2011). If listeners perceive they are being manipulated or suspect hidden agendas, they will reject the speaker’s words, and thereby not be convinced to follow. The
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s audience desires a speaker who is truthful in communication and motives if they are to be persuaded.

It is the speaker’s motive or intention that George Dell (1966) finds as crucial to philosophical judgments. He suggests using three steps to uncover a speaker’s philosophical assumptions: identify stated or implied philosophical premise; compare the speaker’s beliefs to their previously recorded statements of belief; and test their truth against philosophical criteria (Dell, 1966). Speeches should be evaluated in both historical context and philosophical content (Dell, 1966). While an audience requires truth, they will cringe at brutal honesty (Artistotle, trans. 2011; Griffin, 2009).

In what is referred to as Aristotle’s Golden mean, taking the middle road on truth is encouraged in rhetorical discourse (Artistotle, trans. 2011). In this standard, both harsh truth-telling and blatant lying by a speaker is seen as unethical and unproductive. An audience isn’t receptive to verbal attacks or pandering. Instead an orator is responsible in being truthful, without deceit and insensitivity (Artistotle, trans. 2011).

**Theoretical Basis**

Oral communication, or rhetoric, was the educational focus of ancient Greek and Roman cultures before the birth of Christ (Griffin, 2009; O’Shaughnessy, 2007). This form of communication was seen as an artistic means of persuading listeners through the use of beautiful and well-chosen words (Artistotle, trans. 2011). Aristotle taught that the evidence of a persuasive speech is found in the three characteristics of “logos (logic), ethos, (ethics), and pathos (emotional)” (Griffin, 2009, p. 280). While this is the common criterion used in rhetorical analysis, continued study of rhetorical theory has added new dimensions.
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Over the centuries, scholars have evaluated Aristotle’s work and the five canons of rhetoric in which to form and evaluate public discourse. Invention (search for argument), arrangement (parts of speech), style (use of metaphor), memory (storage of ideas), and delivery (naturalness), are the five traditional principles that define the art of rhetoric (Griffin, 2009). Gradually, this classical method of evaluation evolved into Neo-Aristotelian criticism (Enos, 2006). Speaker, speech, audience and occasion became the framework in which public discourse was evaluated (Enos, 2006). In 1965, Professor Edwin Black challenged this framework of rhetoric criticism, suggesting that it wasn’t sufficient in analyzing current rhetoric. Rather, the measure of rhetoric should extend beyond the immediate context and its immediate influence (Hendrix, 1968). Lloyd Bitzer (1968) responded to Black’s challenge and wrote about rhetorical situation which discussed the dynamic of physical situation on the speaker and rhetoric. Bitzer’s work was extended by Professor Kate Keifer (2012) and offers additional criterion to Neo-Aristotelian criticism. Keifer (2012) suggests using the acronym REALM which stands for reader (audience), essay (argument design), author (credibility), limitations (imposed by audience), and motivation (author’s urgency). It would seem that Neo-Aristotelian criticism and REALM have similar elements, such as speech and essay, but REALM adds aspects of speaker intentions and audience situations. While reviewing the literature in the field of rhetoric, it became apparent, that like Bitzer and Keifer, other scholars have produced their own additions to rhetorical theory. Scholars such as A. Craig Baird, Waldo W. Braden, Stuart Hall, Eric Havelock, Richard Claverhouse Jebb, Marie Hochmuth Nichols, Walter Ong, Chaim Perelman, Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, Lester Thonssen, and Herbert Wichelns, have significantly contributed to rhetoric theory which has given the paradigm diversity and depth for rhetoric discourse (Enos, 2006; Makus, 1990). Since the aim of this research is to find effective strategies creative people
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s leadership use with a given audience, a few of the significant rhetorical components, such as creativity, emotion, imagery and non-verbal communication will be discussed.

The Literature

Creativity

Creativity, coupled with persuasive rhetoric, has been linked to positively effecting public opinion (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Franken, 1993). Creativity is defined as “any act, idea, or product that changes an existing domain, or that transforms an existing domain into a new one . . . What counts is whether the novelty he or she produces is accepted for inclusion in the domain” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 28). Creativity is further described, by Franken (1993) as the ability to generate and recognize unique ideas, or alternatives, which engages others in entertaining and memorable ways, and altering the listener’s perspective. When a creative person causes change in public opinion, he or she is held in high esteem by that society (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). The creative element of humor is highly effective in rhetoric (Nesi, 2012; Wells & Bull, 2007).

According to two research studies, humor can have a persuasive effect on an audience (Nesi, 2012; Wells & Bull, 2007). Laughter can build rapport and create trust between the rhetor and audience. It helps to access what Aristotle referred to as pathos, or the listener’s emotions (Nesi, 2012). Laughter from audiences can be spontaneous, but often it is invited. A speaker, generally a comedian or a politician, can apply methods, such as pauses in the speech, to prompt their audience to respond in laughter (Wells & Bull, 2007). This study of humor is built on previous research by Bull & Wells (2002) on invited and uninvited applause to rhetorical acts which linked approval of audiences to the creative and effective speech delivery. Humor and
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s applause to humor, whether spontaneous, or invited, indicates the audiences’ emotion has been accessed which can be most effective in changing a listener’s opinions (Wells & Bull, 2007).

**Emotion**

Emotion is the vehicle of persuasion in today’s culture according to recent rhetorical research (O’Shaughnessy, 2007; Vitiello, 2010). There has been a shift from a dominance of reason held by previous generations to a dominance of emotional experience (O’Shaughnessy, 2007). Rather than reasonable decisions based on facts and needs, a person, in today’s society, often makes emotional decisions based on image and desires (O’Shaughnessy, 2007). Thomas Vitiello (2010) uses the transportation theory, which suggests that as a listener becomes emotionally tied to a story within a speech, his or her belief system may vary or change, to analyze two political candidate’s speeches in the 2008 Presidential election. For example, McCain focused on his personal experience as a war hero and leader; he was the main character of his speech. Obama was focused on the people of the United States and the collective action needed to change the political course; the people were the main characters of his speech. Obama’s speech caused listener’s to be emotionally engaged which allowed for transportation to occur. According to Vitiello (2010), this made Obama’s speech more persuasive. This further validates Aristotle’s premise of pathos, or emotion as an important component of persuasive rhetoric.

**Images**

Both verbal and physical images are important in the process of persuasion (Artistotle, 2011; Alcolea-Banegas, 2009; Cyphert, 2007; Hawhee, 2011; Kennerly, 2010; Rice, 2004; Smith, 2007). In separate research, Kennerly (2010) and Hawhee (2011) expanded the rhetorical study on Aristotle’s concept of phantasia, or imagination. The use of well-chosen words in a
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s speech can activate imagination which conjures images in the mind’s eye of a listener, and move the listener on a journey of change (Kennerly, 2010). “Rhetorical phantasia does not merely captivate an audience, it takes them captive” (Kennerly, 2010, p. 273). Meaning, the listeners are lifted from their reality by the vehicle of imagination through words in a speech. This experience, according to Kennerly (2010), is defined as rhetorical transport and can impede or assist in forming opinions and decisions. Hawhee (2011) expands the study of rhetorical phantasia and analyzes what Aristotle referred to as the use of vivid metaphors to persuade an audience.

Aristotle (trans. 2011) encouraged the use of metaphors, or figure of speech, to “set the scene before our eyes” (p. 109) as a means of persuasion. Hawhee (2011) uses this as the basis for her study of rhetorical vision which explores the beauty of words to appeal to the senses of hearing and sight. Neuroscientists have proven that verbal imagery affects the brain activity of the listener and can alter their perceptions and judgments (Hawhee, 2011). As listeners process the images before their eyes, they are engaged with phantasia, which imagines new scenarios and modifies current belief systems (Hawhee, 2011).

Valerie Smith (2007) continues with the concept of words facilitating images in her research on Aristotle’s writing on enthymemes, or “syllogisms based on probabilities or signs” (p. 117), which substantiate the use of visual arguments. As enthymemes appeal to the whole person, the logic (logos), the emotion (pathos) and ethics (ethos), they are seen as powerful tools of persuasion (Smith, 2007). This study identifies three steps in a visual argument: probable premise, an emotional (pathos) and ethical (ethos) appeal; speaker and audience agreement (Smith, 2007). These three functions of visual argumentation are seen in the media coverage of the attacks on the World Trade Centers on September 11, 2001. The premise in the news
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s coverage was that the attacks were caused by the United States’ virtue; reports and images of bloody victims appealed to the emotions and ethics of the audience; and there was agreement between the news anchors and audience in the victimization of the country’s character (Smith, 2007).

Images are pervasive in the current post-modern culture, and therefore an audience expects visuals (Cyphert, 2007; Rice, 2004). In fact, many scholars admit that visuals, such as pictures, paintings, PowerPoint, and film, can make rhetoric clearer and memorable for the audience (Alcolea-Banegas, 2009; Cyphert, 2007; Rice, 2004). It is important that visuals support a speech and not become the dominant force in a speech. This can create confusion for the audience and weaken persuasion (Cypher, 2007). According to Rice (2004), visual communication is difficult to analyze as to its effectiveness, but suggests a screening process of content, form and perception. Content and form deal with the visuals color, shape and material. Whereas analysis of language is based on an already learned code, visual communication is perceived before it is interpreted. This perception is linked to the inner experiences of each individual in the audience and uncovers the deeper meaning of the visual (Rice, 2004). This makes analysis challenging in our current culture.

**Non-verbal Communication**

While the study of rhetoric focuses on persuasive words, arrangements of those words, and also delivery of those words, 55% of communication happens through non-verbal expression (Demir, 2011). In a research analysis of various political leaders around the world, Demir (2011) found that non-verbal communication such as hand and leg movements, silence, posture, eyes, touching and color of clothing have a direct influence on an audience. Listeners will consciously and unconsciously make assessments about the speaker before the delivery of the speech is
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s finished. It is because of this convincing force that non-verbal communication is found to be the biggest factor in persuasive speeches. Therefore, most world political leaders employ image consultants to be both effective verbal and non-verbal communicators (Demir, 2011).

Acknowledging that a person may need help in effectively persuading an audience, Lynn Little (2005) encourages the use of the performing arts. Learning theater performance techniques can enhance a person’s communication skills. Using drama methods that inspire, give energy and confidence have proven to engage and affect an audience. Little (2005) finds that coaching communication skills can improve a leader’s persuasiveness and effectiveness by learning how to read an audience, practicing pauses between words, and positive thinking patterns.

**Celebrity Influence**

More celebrities are engaging in diplomacy and causing significant changes in the United States and around the world (Kellner, 2010; West, 2007). Celebrities are often artistic and imaginative people who are experts in their own fields of film, athletics and business, and use their clout to influence others (Biswas, Biswas, & Das, 2006; Kellner, 2010; West, 2007). Douglas Kellner (2010) extends Andrew Cooper’s (2009) historical research of celebrities in politics, as basis for his study of Barak Obama’s creative leadership and celebrity impact on global policy. Kellner (2010) concludes that Obama’s effective use of media outlets, such as YouTube, propelled him into super-celebrity status. This popularity and clout had a positive impact for national interests and calming the anti-American sentiments as he visited Europe, and other places, in his first term as President of the United States (Kellner, 2010).

In another study, which focuses on Angelina Joli, Mia Farrow and Bono as celebrities in politics, Darrell West (2007) examines the power and potential shallowness of celebrity rhetoric on social issues. This research shows that while celebrities bring new ideas and awareness to
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s social issues, they may lack expert knowledge. Because the general public is more likely to listen and respond to celebrities rather than experts, they can mislead the public and cause confusion of the issues (West, 2007). This confirms other research about the use of celebrity endorsements as successful marketing communication strategies (Biswas et al., 2006; Erdogan, 1999). The general public is more apt to believe celebrities over experts, except in the case of high-technological products where consumers feel high risk (Biswas et al., 2006). This effect, of celebrities on society, is referred to by scholars as the “halo effect”. This phenomenon occurs when a person is successful in one aspect of life and is assumed to be successful in all other aspect of life (Erdogan, 1999; Neuman, 2006).

**Summary of Literature**

While Aristotle created the rhetorical framework, various rhetorical scholars have developed additional aspects to the art of rhetoric (Aristotle, trans. 2011; Bitzer, 1968; Enos, 2006; Griffin, 2009; Keifer, 2012). In our current American culture, accessing the emotion, or pathos, is crucial in changing public opinion (O’Shaughnessy, 2007; Vitiello, 2010). The communication theory of transportation in rhetoric is especially effective (Kennerly, 2010; Vitiello, 2010), as is creativity and humor (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Franken, 1993; Nesi, 2012; Wells & Bull, 2007), and also verbal and physical images (Cyphert, 2007; Hawhee, 2011; Kennerly, 2010; Rice, 2004; Smith, 2007). Because the use or arousal of emotion is a strong link to swaying public opinion, there is the ability to abuse rhetoric and mislead audiences (O’Shaughnessy, 2007). Audiences must be encouraged to seek the truth and use non-verbal communication to determine the credibility of the speaker (Demir, 2011; O’Rourke, 2004).

Credibility, or honesty of character, is one of the most important aspects of both rhetoric and leadership (Aristotle, trans. 2011; Dell, 1966; Griffin, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2007). In
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s order to improve rhetorical skills, a theater coach may be able to help a speaker improve persuasiveness and engage audiences through techniques used in the performing arts (Little, 2005).

Celebrities are becoming more involved in public policy and have tremendous influence on public opinion (Biswas et al, 2006; Kellner, 2010; West, 2007). While celebrities may bring attention and new ideas to issues, they often lack expertise in public policy and potentially mislead an audience (West, 2007). Celebrity use of rhetoric as persuasion is not found in this research. Rather is it the “halo effect” that gives celebrities clout to influence an audience (Erdogan, 1999, Neuman, 2006).

**Rationale**

The literature review shows that preparing a speech, according to Aristotle’s five canons of rhetoric that access to varying degrees a listener’s logic, emotion and ethics, is persuasive (Aristotle, trans. 2011; Bitzer, 1968; Griffin, 2009; Keifer, 2012). The added elements of creativity, verbal and physical visuals, and non-verbal communications can make the speech even more memorable and persuasive (Alcolea-Banegas, 2009; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Cyphert, 2007; Franken, 1993; Hawhee, 2011; Kennerly, 2010; Nesi, 2012; Rice, 2004; Smith, 2007; Wells & Bull, 2007). A celebrity, especially an actor and film maker who understands the power of images to move an audience along a journey of thought of ideology (Alcolea-Banegas, 2009), who applies the rhetoric paradigm could potentially be a dynamic and persuasive orator.

**Research Question**

Given the persuasive nature of the rhetorical paradigm and celebrity status, the research question for this thesis is: What are the rhetorical components of Clint Eastwood’s speech at the 2012 Republican National Convention? The objective will be to:
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1. Identify important rhetorical strategies used in Clint Eastwood’s speech using Neo-Aristotelian criticism.

2. Evaluate the success or failure of those rhetorical strategies as to the effect on the Republican audience and the political critics.
Chapter 3 SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study was Clint Eastwood’s speech at the 2012 Republican Convention, delivered on August 30, 2012. This political discourse (Appendix A) contained 1,180 words (Clint, 2012; Transcript, 2012). The transcript was downloaded from Fox News and CBS News websites to compare and assure accuracy. The rhetorical act took 11 minutes and 15 seconds, although it was supposed to be only five minutes (Barbaro, 2012; Gopconvention2012, 2012), and was also analyzed via YouTube video. This was necessary to document non-verbal and visual communication that is not evident in the transcript and may have an influence on the audience (Aristotle, trans. 2011; Cyphert, 2007; Demir, 2011; Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991). The use of neo-Aristotelian analysis was used to evaluate the deliberative text of Eastwood’s rhetorical act (Foss, 2009).

Neo-Aristotelian analysis was also applied to various news articles to determine the rhetoric situation and define the reaction of the audience to Clint Eastwood’s speech (Foss, 2009; Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991). The articles were derived from major news sources found on the internet such as CNN, Fox News, Huffington Post, New York Times, The Washington Post and USA Today. At the time of this research, no scholarly articles were found concerning Eastwood’s rhetorical discourse on August, 2012. Because of Eastwood’s celebrity status, two articles from entertainment news sources such as The Daily Beast and Newsday will also be used to analyze the audience response to Eastwood’s rhetoric act.

The effectiveness of Eastwood’s speech was evaluated on two segments of audience members: the Republican audience, and the nation-wide audience (Foss, 2009; Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991). The Republican audience consisted of listeners who were in the Convention
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s Center at the time of the rhetorical act. The nation-wide audience consisted of those listeners who watched the rhetorical act, within the United States, either as it was broadcast through the news media, or on websites such as YouTube. Analyzing the persuasiveness of Eastwood’s rhetoric to both audience groups is vital to understanding the extent of his influence to those who were politically favorable, uncommitted or contrary to Eastwood’s rhetoric (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991). Analysis of both the rhetoric act and the audience is necessary to answer both research objectives.

The limitations to the focus of this study were the lack of acquiring first hand responses from both the Republican audience and the nation-wide audience. Because the rhetorical act occurred several months in the past, and the outcome of the political election has been decided, this study relied on the interpretations of news reporters and political analysts.

**Methodology of the Study**

**Design**

Rhetorical analysis is a qualitative research method which depends upon a critic’s interpretation of the orator, the rhetoric act, rhetoric situation, and the rhetoric audience (Neuman, 2006; Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991). “Interpretation means to assign significance or coherent meaning” (Neuman, 2006, p. 159) to verbal, non-verbal, or visual communication of the rhetoric artifact, or speech text, being analyzed and the intended response from the audience (Foss, 2009; Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991). This interpretation focuses on “critical/cultural approaches involve examining event, messages and structure from a particular perspective” (Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis, & Piele, 2010, p. 214). Because of the political nature of the rhetorical artifact chosen for this research, and the nature of the inquiry, rhetorical criticism is the appropriate methodology, and this process involves applying Aristotle’s five canons of
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery (Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis, & Piele, 2010). The neo-Aristotelian analysis process, one of the common rhetorical criticism methods, is comprised of three steps: reassemble the context of rhetoric artifact; apply Aristotle’s five canons to the rhetoric artifact; and assess the influence of the artifact on the audience (Foss, 2009).

**Procedure**

Using the neo-Aristotelian criticism as a basis for rhetorical analysis and interpretation of Clint Eastwood’s speech at the 2012 Republican Convention, this research applied the following steps:

1. Reassemble the context of rhetoric artifact in the context it was presented by examining news articles for common themes concerning the background and character of Clint Eastwood.

2. Reassemble the context of occasion for which the rhetoric act was presented by examining news articles concerning the 2012 Republican Convention.

3. Reassemble the context by assessing the composition (sex, race, and political party) of the Republican audience and nation-wide audience for which the rhetoric was presented.

4. Apply the five canons of rhetoric to Eastwood’s speech by assessing the use of
   a. Invention – the creation of ideas for speech
   b. Organization – the arrangement of the speech
   c. Style – formal or informal language of speech
   d. Memory – recall and expertise on subject of speech
   e. Delivery – the ease of rhetor’s voice and body during speech
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5. Highlight the strengths and weakness of Eastwood’s rhetoric according to the five canons of rhetoric.

6. Assess the influence of the rhetoric artifact on the Republican audience by observing the Republican audience physical reactions.

7. Assess the influence of the rhetoric artifact on the Republican audience by analyzing news articles of audience opinions.

8. Assess the influence of the rhetoric artifact on the nation-wide audience by analyzing news articles of nation-wide audience opinions.

9. Assess whether the Eastwood succeeded by using available means, celebrity status and visual prop, to influence and elicit the intended response from both the Republican audience and the nation-wide audience (Foss, 2009).

Data Analysis

Words, concepts, visuals, and context are the data analyzed (Neuman, 2006). The challenge for this study is that one could not perceive or understand all that there is to know about Clint Eastwood’s intention and persuasion in his rhetorical act from news sources (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991). Plus, in the interpretation of words, concepts, visuals and context, this researcher’s own perceptions may alter or omit certain insights or conclusions during the rhetorical criticism process (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991). However, the reliability of qualitative research methods, in this case rhetorical criticism and the neo-Aristotelian criticism process, has shown a consistency in observation and analysis (Neuman, 2006, Foss, 2009). While acknowledging personal perceptions, the relationship between the researcher and the rhetorical study will cause an evolution of perceptions into a balanced approach to the subject matter (Neuman, 2006).
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Not only is the reliability of the analysis important, but so is the validity of qualitative research (Neuman, 2006). The pursuit of truth, or validity, is crucial in giving an authentic and balanced portrayal of the rhetor, the rhetorical act and the audience (Neuman, 2006; Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991). Seeking news articles from various viewpoints and political positions assures a stronger validity of this research.

Ethical Considerations

As this research depended upon the researcher’s critical abilities in interpreting articles, an ethical issue needs to be considered. It depended on the integrity of this researcher to select appropriate articles to analyze and draw conclusions (Neuman, 2006). The failure to include evidence or criteria that opposes this researcher’s perceptions or political beliefs would not only diminish the validity of this study, but also erroneously provide false conclusions (Neuman, 2006).
CHAPTER 4 THE STUDY

Introduction

This study considered the persuasive use of communication through verbal and visual rhetoric by a celebrity. Through application of Aristotelian analysis to the artifact of Clint Eastwood’s speech at the Republican National Convention on August 30, 2012, this study sought to identify the rhetorical strategies of that artifact and evaluate its success or failure on the Republican audience and the viewing audience within the United States. News articles were gathered by searching the internet under the topic of Clint Eastwood’s speech at the 2012 Republican National Convention. The articles were evaluated according to perspectives on the rhetor, the rhetoric artifact, and the influence on the audience. Additionally, the artifact was viewed on YouTube to assess the delivery of the artifact and the audience responses.

Results of the Study

Context of Rhetoric Act

Three different dimensions were considered in reassembling the context for the artifact: Clint Eastwood as a rhetor, the political atmosphere surrounding the 2012 Republican National Convention, and the intended audience, both at the Convention center and nation-wide. First, the background and character of Clint Eastwood will be explored to help in understanding his intentions concerning his rhetoric act.

The Rhetor. Growing up in Oakland, California during the Depression, Clint Eastwood learned the value of hard work by taking jobs as a logger, truck driver, farm-hand and steel furnace stoker (Clint Eastwood, 2012; Clint Eastwood born, 2013). In 1950, he entered a four year commitment to the Army Special Forces and was stationed near Monterey, California. After
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being discharged from the Army, Eastwood headed to Los Angeles to audition as an actor. Upon a screen test for Universal Studios, he was contracted for $75 a week (Clint Eastwood born, 2013). By 1959, Eastwood had his first major acting role in the television show called *Rawhide*. This media exposure propelled Eastwood into starring roles in Italian films, called *spaghetti westerns*, which made him popular around the world (Clint Eastwood, 2012; Clint Eastwood born, 2013). In 1971, Eastwood moved behind the camera to direct his first film. Over the next forty years, Eastwood directed and/or acted in over 30 popular and critically acclaimed films, earning 10 Academy nominations for Best Director, and winning two whereby he made a short humorous acceptance speech (Clint Eastwood born, 2013). His roles, behind and in front of the camera, helped shape his reputation as being both tough and fair (Clint Eastwood, 2012, Clint Eastwood born, 2013). Becoming the mayor of Carmel, California extended Eastwood’s influence beyond that of actor and director.

As a resident of Carmel, California, Eastwood had to interact with City Government for a building permit. After being denied the permit, Eastwood sued the City Council and won in an out of court settlement. This frustration with the City Administration instigated his mayoral campaign and subsequent victory in 1986. During his two year term as Mayor of Carmel, Eastwood fulfilled his campaign promises of bringing the community together through softening building and renovating regulations, preserving a city landmark, and opening an annex to the city library for children (Anderson, 2012). As mayor, Eastwood had to address the community and city council, preferring to give talks, unstructured communication, rather than delivering scripted speeches (Barbaro, 2012). Eastwood decided against pursuing another mayoral term. He lacked political aspirations, felt that his goals for the community had been met, and decided life was too short to deliberate over the slant of a local doctor’s roof (Anderson, 2012).
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s

One could speculate that Eastwood’s motivation to become mayor was primarily his goodwill for his community and his ability to work hard for a cause he believed in. While he has repeatedly stated he doesn’t have political aspirations, Eastwood has consistently aligned himself with Republican Party and had publically endorsed Mitt Romney for President a few months before the Republican National Convention (Clint Eastwood, 2012, Clint Eastwood born, 2013).

The Rhetoric situation. Storms, both climatic and political, surrounded the Republican National Convention of 2012. Tropical Storm Isaac threatened the safety of the city of Tampa, Florida, and the visiting 2,286 Republican delegates, therefore delaying the start of the Convention (Huffman, 2012; Roberts, 2012; Wolf & Bacon, 2012). While the climatic storm eventually dissipated, the political storm was accelerating. By the time of the Republicans opened their session on August 28, 2012, CNN reported that President Obama was leading the polls over Republican nominee Mitt Romney (Roberts, 2012). Having lost the Presidential election four years earlier, and blaming President Obama for the sluggish economy and record unemployment, the Republicans recognized the importance of convincing the American public to their ideals through the Convention (Huffman, 2012).

The Audience. While the speaker roster for the 2012 Republican National Convention showed a mixture of Latinos and Blacks, the audience was primarily White (Helderman & Cohen, 2012). Only 2 percent, or 47 of the total 2,286 Republican delegates, were Black, thus causing a concern for Republicans as they focused on winning over minorities (Bositus, 2012). Through camera shots from a network video, one can see an equal mixture of men and women of various ages in the audience (GOPconvention2012, 2012), although exact numbers could not be found for this investigation. Diversity of age was much more apparent in the nation-wide audience.
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According to the Nielsen Ratings, over 30.3 million people viewed the final evening on August 30, 2012, which included Clint Eastwood’s speech, of the 2012 Republican National Convention (James, 2012; Final night, 2012). Approximately three million of those viewers were between the ages of 18 and 34; over eight million were between the ages of 35 and 54; and over 17.5 million were over 55 years old (Final night, 2012). No data could be found as to the sex or race of the nation-wide audience at the time of this investigation. As a whole, this was about 8.6 million less than the Republican National Convention in 2008 (Final night, 2012).

A major factor that contributed to this slump in television viewership for the 2012 Republican National Convention was the method of conveying information has changed since the last convention in 2008. The popularity of Facebook and YouTube allow viewers to watch according to their schedule and interest (Fouhy, 2012). Research showed that most of the discussion on Facebook concerning Clint Eastwood was done by those over 55 years of age (Fouhy, 2012). Also, Twitter has become the hub of information with nearly instant transmission of ideas and news, thus causing the news media to respond with shorter news cycles (Lee, 2012). The Republican National Convention elicited over 5 million tweets, whereas in 2008, Twitter was barely in existence. In response to Clint Eastwood’s speech, the most re-tweeted item was from President Obama’s campaign who had a picture of the President seated in his chair in the Cabinet room with the caption: “This seat is taken” (Fouhy, 2012, par. 20).

Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s Speech

Examining Clint Eastwood’s rhetoric act through the five canons of rhetoric will further the research of his intentions, the quality of the rhetoric, and evaluate the effectiveness of persuading the audience (Aristotle, trans. 2012, Foss, 2009; Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991).
Invention. The argument, or invention, by Clint Eastwood included appeals to the logic (logos), emotions (pathos), and ethics (ethos). First, Eastwood used a logical and inductive approach in his rhetoric act. Through the parody of interviewing President Obama via the empty chair, Eastwood named several specific incidents where he felt President Obama had not done his job: record unemployment, closing of Gitmo (Guantanamo Bay military prison in Cuba), the war in Afghanistan, and military withdrawal from Iraq. He used these four logical proofs to conclude that Romney should be the next President of the United States. Eastwood’s reasoning is that a politician is the nation’s employee, “And when somebody does not do the job, we got to let them go” (Transcript of Clint, 2012, par. 23). This conclusion was appropriate for the context of the Republican National Convention as its purpose was to name Romney as the Republican candidate to oppose the Democrat President. While Eastwood’s logical proofs were sufficient for the Republicans, they didn’t convince the majority of the nation-wide audience as President Obama was re-elected a few months later. Emotional aspects were also contained in Eastwood’s speech.

Eastwood used humor to appeal to the emotion, or pathos, of the audience. Using the empty chair on stage, near the podium, Eastwood acted like he was asking an imaginary President Obama questions (GOPconvention2012, 2012). He paused, as if listening to the imaginary President’s reply, and then said “what do you mean shut up?” (Transcript of Clint, 2012, par. 7). The audience laughed and applauded at Eastwood’s playful parody which implied President Obama had no answers to his broken promises (GOPconvention2012, 2012; Transcript of Clint, 2012). Later in his speech, Eastwood directed his attempts at humor at Vice President Biden by referring to him as “the intellect of the Democratic Party (par. 14), and “a grin with a body behind it” (par. 15). Throughout Eastwood’s 11 minutes on stage, there seemed to be
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s systematic appeal to the emotion through the use of humor that created a boisterous atmosphere within the Convention Center. The laughter and applause by the audience indicated that the audience was listening, connecting and possibly agreeing to Eastwood’s ideas to “make my day” by supporting Romney for President (GOPconvention2012, 2012; Transcript of Clint, 2012, par. 26).

The credibility and appeal, or *ethos*, of Clint Eastwood was evident from Eastwood’s first moments on stage. The Convention Center lights came up to reveal the “mystery guest speaker” as Clint Eastwood standing in front of a backdrop of a gunslinger from Eastwood’s movie, *The Outlaw Josie Wales*, a movie Eastwood directed and had the lead role (Clint Eastwood born, 2012; GOPconvention2012, 2012). The continual applause and cheering by the audience forced Eastwood to quip, “Save a little for Mitt” (GOPconvention2012, 2012; Transcript of Clint, 2012, par. 1). As a well-known actor and director, Eastwood had immediate influence because of his celebrity status. Eastwood extended his influence and goodwill beyond the Republicans in the audience by speaking to the different political positions watching through the media broadcast. “Whether you are a Democrat or Republican or whether you’re Libertarian or whatever, you are the best. And we should not ever forget that” (Transcript of Clint, 2012, par. 23). With the divisiveness that often occurs around political beliefs, Eastwood attempted to unify his diverse nation-wide listeners under the banner of American pride. Eastwood also proved his intellect and common-sense, not only by his referrals to President Obama’s broken promises, but also by invoking his business savvy in stating, “. . .when somebody does not do the job, we got to let them go” (Transcript of Clint, 2012, par. 23). After the speech, it was reported that Eastwood’s morals were in contrast to Romney’s family values. Eastwood was known as a womanizer in Hollywood, and fathered seven children from five different women (Stern, 2012). It’s not known
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s
whether the general public is fully aware of Eastwood’s past infidelities. In his speech Eastwood, didn’t talk about family values, but remained focused on President Obama’s failures and Romney’s business expertise.

**Organization.** An analysis of Clint Eastwood’s organization, or arrangement, of his rhetoric shows evidence of a problem-solution order. Eastwood highlights the issues of the President Obama’s lack of leadership and offers the solution in Mitt Romney as “a stellar businessman” (Transcript of Clint, 2012, par. 18). At the conclusion of Eastwood speech, he emphasized that the American citizen owns the country, that we, as Americans, employ politicians and therefore, firing an inadequate politician and hiring a businessman for the job, needs to happen (Transcript of Clint, 2012).

**Style.** In terms of language and words used by Clint Eastwood in his rhetorical act, an informal and conversational style was used. This seems to be Eastwood’s style whether he is accepting an award, addressing his constituents in Carmel, California, or the audience of the Republican National Convention (Anderson, 2012, Barbaro, 2012, Transcript of Clint, 2012). Where it appeared that most of the speakers at the Republican National Convention were rehearsed and their speeches scripted (Chaggaris, 2012), Eastwood’s informal style was unconventional. He didn’t use forceful or eloquent words, but rather common language to converse with the American viewer and the empty chair. In perusing the transcript of Clint Eastwood’s speech (2012) (see Appendix A), casual phrases such as “I’ve got Mr. Obama sitting here” (par. 5), “I have to give credit where credit is due” (par. 10), and “have a little chat about that” (par. 13), were used. This conversational style allowed the audience to feel on an equal level with Eastwood.
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s

**Delivery.** Clint Eastwood seemed to be confident and comfortable as he presented his speech to the Republican audience. He had good eye contact with both the Republican audience and the nation-wide audience via the camera (GOPconvention2012, 2012). His ease and poise most likely comes from experience as an actor in front of the camera. However, Eastwood’s improvising left him, at times, stammering and seeking his next thought. Several times during his speech, Eastwood started a sentence, stuttered over a word, and then changed directions on his thought process. For example, early in his speech Eastwood refers to President Obama’s acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention four years earlier. Eastwood described the outdoor setting, the audience crying, the lighting of candles and then says, “They were saying. I just thought, this was great. Everybody is crying. Oprah is crying. I was even crying. And then finally – and I haven’t cried that hard since I found out that there is 23 million unemployed people in this country” (Transcript of Clint, 2012, par. 5). The Republican audience applauded after this segment, but later, some of the media criticized Eastwood for his unscripted and rambling speech (Huffman, 2012).

**Memory.** This last segment of the five canons of rhetoric is not often used to critique modern rhetoric as most speeches are read from a script (Foss, 2009). In this instance where Clint Eastwood improvised his speech, his memory was crucial to the rhetoric act. From viewing the speech on the internet, it doesn’t appear that Eastwood has notes on the podium (GOPcontention2012, 2012). And it was later reported by *The New York Times* that Eastwood had rejected any talking points from Romney’s aides, as he preferred to give a “talk” rather than a scripted speech (Barbaro & Shear, 2012). For an 82 year old man, Eastwood handles the political subject using only his memory, although he did misquote the number of unemployed. He stated there were 23 million out of work when there were actually 12 million (Isadore, 2012).
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s

**Analysis of Audience response**

The second aspect of this study is to evaluate the audience response. First, an examination of the audience’s response inside the Convention Center will be assessed as to the persuasiveness of Clint Eastwood’s speech. Secondly, the nation-wide audience’s response by way of the news media political analysts, will be examined to determine the effectiveness of Eastwood’s speech.

**The Republican Audience.** The audience attending the 2012 Republican National Convention had a favorable response to Clint Eastwood’s speech. Through the informal “talk” and the empty chair prop, Eastwood argued that President Obama was not efficient at his job and needed to be fired. The ad-lib banter between Eastwood and the invisible President Obama had the audience cheering and chanting (GOPconvention2012, 2012). At the end of Eastwood’s speech, he led the audience in a familiar line from one of his movies, *Dirty Harry*. Eastwood started, “Go ahead”, and the audiences replied, “Make my day” (Transcript of Clint, 2012, par. 26). From the audience’s actions, one could suggest that the rhetoric was successful in producing the desired response of endorsing Mitt Romney, although the audience probably didn’t need much persuasion towards that goal.

**The Nation-wide Audience.** Clint Eastwood’s speech, which included a parody with an empty chair, created an impassioned response from media and nation-wide viewers. *CNN* called it “bitingly satirical” (Abdullah, 2012, par. 7). A survey conducted on the *CNN* website asked for the viewer’s take on Clint Eastwood’s speech:

What did you think of Clint Eastwood's appearance at the RNC?

- 20,666 Made my day (41.57%)
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s

- 15,016 Stay off this lawn, Hollywood (30.20%)
- 14,036 Unforgiven (28.23%)


This survey indicates that CNN viewers had a tepid response to Eastwood’s rhetoric. Less than third of those who participated in the survey felt negatively towards Eastwood’s speech. Another third felt that celebrities should not be on the political stage. Yet over 40% approved of Eastwood. This survey is consistent with the reactions from the political media.

A longtime friend of Clint Eastwood’s, Eugene Hernandez, the co-founder of the film society for the Lincoln Center, in which Eastwood is also a member, stated that Eastwood’s speech was weird (Stern, 2012). Hernandez concluded that while he didn’t like Eastwood’s speech, he still respected him as a filmmaker and would see Eastwood’s next movie (Stern, 2012). Howard Kurtz, a host for CNN’s “Reliable Sources” also described Eastwood’s rhetoric act as weird (Lang, 2012). Other descriptive words used for Eastwood’s speech included: kooky, longwinded and pathetic (Lang, 2012). A report from CNN concluded that Eastwood, an American icon, should not be judged by political standards (Abdullah, 2012). Not all news reporters and analysts were so critical.

Clint Eastwood’s unscripted rhetoric, with the visual of the empty chair, was seen as up-staging Romney’s acceptance speech according to most news media (Abdullah, 2012, Gay, 2012; Hoffman, 2012, Lang, 2012). Derrick Lang (2012) of the Associate Press wrote that there was more discussion surrounding Eastwood and the empty chair than on Romney and his scripted speech. On his blog for Newsday, Verne Gay (2012) proposed that Eastwood, as an experienced actor, knew what he was doing when he “stole the scene” with his empty chair parody. In the midst of a structured Republican convention, Gay (2012) felt that Eastwood’s
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s speech was “electrifying — a glorious, bizarre, fun, wild, weird, kooky, incendiary moment” (par. 6). Gay (2012) also stated that although some political analysts thought it was a disaster, Eastwood’s speech awoke the common viewer from the typical scripted political pander. 

_Huffington Post_ reported that the country needs more honest and unscripted communication like Eastwood gave (Huffman, 2012). “In today’s politics you have to be outrageous to get everyone’s attention” wrote Jim Huffman (2012). Huffman (2012) felt that although Eastwood’s speech was poorly delivered and somewhat disrespectful, Eastwood was just being himself as he expressed his frustration about the condition of the country. Fellow actor and director Ben Affleck took more of a neutral position and felt that Eastwood had the right to speak his mind and that the speech was not an embarrassment (Stern, 2012). _The Washington Post_ concluded that the Independents loved Eastwood’s speech because it broke the stereotypes of celebrity Democrats and up-tight Republicans (Cillizza, 2012, Flock, 2012). In fact, a week after his speech, Eastwood said his target audience was the Independent voter (Siemaszko, 2012). Exit polls at the time of the election showed that Romney won the Independent vote in every swing state but North Caroline (Flock, 2012). This was a direct change from 2008 where Obama carried the Independent votes in the same States (Flock, 2012). In this regard, one could suggest that Eastwood’s rhetoric act was very successful in that it created a national discussion on the effectiveness of President Obama and whether the Presidential chair was truly empty, and influenced Independent voters.

**Discussion**

In conducting a rhetorical analysis of Clint Eastwood’s speech, several effective strategies were revealed: the appeal to the _logos_, _pathos_ and _ethos_ of the audience, the use of creativity of humor and visual image, and his credentials.
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s

First, Eastwood’s appeal to the audience’ logic or *logos* was sound. He laid out the failures of President Obama as the nation’s leader and stated that when someone doesn’t do his job, they need to be fired (Transcript of Clint, 2012). Americans can agree with that reasoning as most people know they must effectively complete a required set of tasks to keep their job. Because of our current culture, as stated in the literature review, reasoning wasn’t enough to persuade. Eastwood used the creativity of humor and visual prop to move the audience from *logos* to *pathos*. This created a rhetorical act that was both entertaining and unforgettable as it accessed the emotions of the audience. Whether one agreed or disagreed with Eastwood’s political view, it was an unprecedented event at a political gathering which sparked emotional responses such as laughter, applause, disagreement and condemnation. The creativity was an extension of Eastwood’s identity as an actor and director in the film industry. Effectively using humor and visuals is commonplace for Eastwood as demonstrated by the success of his films and awards for his creative achievements. Having watched many of his films, the audience felt they could trust him as a forthright speaker, thus accessing the listener’s *ethos*. This shows that Eastwood adequately employed *invention*, the first canon of rhetoric.

Secondly, using creative means to persuade an audience has been effective in research and is evident in Clint Eastwood’s rhetoric act. Humor, a cogent element of creativity was used throughout Eastwood’s speech. From his opening statement to save a little applause for Romney, Eastwood used of humor as a strategy to build rapport between himself and the audience. Eastwood’s humor engaged the Republican audience, as evidenced by the applause and boisterous laughter. Though some of the news media found it disrespectful, many members of media found it refreshing in the midst of scripted political rhetoric. From the research conducted about Eastwood, he spontaneously used humor when he received awards (Clint Eastwood born,
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s 2013). This application of humor salvaged his inarticulate delivery. As the audience laughed, he could collect his next thought. His spontaneous and irreverent sense of humor also lightened the mood in the Convention Center making Eastwood more of a warm-up act for the main event of Romney’s acceptance speech.

Eastwood’s speech effectively used the creative aspect of visual image to persuade the audience. The empty chair as a visual prop was a means to visualize President Obama being interviewed on stage. As research has shown, a visual image accesses the “mind’s eye” causing an image on the memory of each audience member (Cyphert, 2007; Rice, 2004, Smith, 2007). This parody was a unique idea that engaged the Republican audience at the Convention (GOPconvention2012, 2012). He created a memorable moment that prompted media frenzy. His creativity was so compelling that his 11 minute speech caused more discussion and analysis than Romney’s acceptance speech to run as the President of the United States (Lang, 2012). For many news analysts, talking to an empty chair was weird and implied dementia on Eastwood’s part (Lang, 2012, Stern, 2012). The imagined visual of the President being interviewed, as Eastwood intended, evolved by a few news media analysts, into the Presidential chair being empty (Abdullah, 2012; Avlon, 2012; Huffman, 2012; Lang, 2012). This shows that while Eastwood presented an image, the audience can bring their own interpretations or ideology and potentially result in an abuse of metaphor (Rice, O’Shaughnessy, 2007). The empty chair acquired an essence that inspired Republicans, attracted Independents and repelled Democrats.

While Aristotle (trans. 2011) encouraged orators to use whatever means to persuade, Dale Cyphert (2007) cautioned against an orator’s words becoming secondary to the visuals. His research showed that in presenting ideas, words should dominate communication and visuals
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s should support and clarify the rhetoric. Eastwood’s visual of the empty chair overshadowed his rhetoric. This is due to his unscripted and rambling delivery.

Thirdly, the selection of Clint Eastwood by the Mitt Romney campaign was based not on Eastwood’s rhetoric capabilities, but on his celebrity status. As research has shown, celebrity influence is powerful in audience persuasion, especially for those celebrities who use media outlets (Kellner, 2010). Eastwood’s success and popularity in the film industry has given him a super-celebrity status. This notoriety of Eastwood has created a “halo” affect which the public attributes success in all areas of life because of success in one aspect of the celebrity’s life, and is therefore, credible (Erdogan, 1999; Neuman, 2006). While there is a concern that celebrity endorsements are uninformed and shallow (West, 2007), this is not the case in Eastwood’s rhetoric act. Although he misquoted the number of people unemployed, that error didn’t negate the unemployment crisis, or his knowledge of the political issues surrounding the Presidential election. Without being scripted by the Republican Party, Eastwood’s rhetoric was aligned with the Party’s contention with President Obama. Eastwood’s depth was evident by his passionate reminder to American’s of their ownership and greatness.

In summary, Eastwood successfully appealed to the logic, emotions, and ethics of his audience. As an extension of who he is, Eastwood added the creative elements of humor and the empty chair. His credibility as a world famous celebrity and former mayor of a California town added clout to his message. These three rhetorical strategies address the RQ1 of this study.

The key to assessing the effectiveness of rhetoric, especially deliberative, is in the actions of the audience (Aristotle, trans. 2011). As Eastwood was originally slated to speak only five minutes, rather than the eleven minutes he used, his purpose at the Convention Center was to endorse Romney as Presidential candidate for the Republican Party. Romney was clearly the
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s front-runner for the Republicans and therefore persuasion wasn’t necessary. Eastwood’s purpose as a warm-up act was to engage the audience and get them enthusiastic for the main event. Rather, Eastwood’s celebrity power and purpose was mainly directed to the nation-wide audience.

According to a variety of news articles, Clint Eastwood received mixed responses. Many political analysts criticized Eastwood for his disrespectful parody of President Obama and his bumbling delivery. And yet, just as many analysts praised Eastwood for breaking from the political party routine and for being informal and unscripted in his delivery. By Aristotle’s standards, Eastwood’s speech met most of the requirements for deliberative rhetoric. His invention, organization and style were adequate, but his delivery lacked fluidity. His stumbling over words and disconnected thoughts were, at times, a distraction from the core of his message. Had Eastwood used notecards to refer to, not a scripted speech, but not completely relying on memory, his delivery would have been smoother and would have considerably improved his speech. In the past, his informal talks may have been appropriate as mayor or when accepting an award, but on this larger political stage, Eastwood’s rambling delivery detracted from persuading the nation-wide audience. But this analysis reveals that the use of a visual, the empty chair, may have been the key in the success of the rhetoric act.

The visual image of the empty chair prompted an overwhelming response from news sources that provided discussions through the United States. Currently, that empty chair resides at the Republican Headquarters where tourists take pictures with it (Hirschhorn, 2013). As the CNN (2012) survey revealed, a third of American’s liked Eastwood’s speech. But without knowing whether the participants the responded favorably on that survey voted for Romney, one cannot assume the effectiveness of Eastwood’s speech. Contrary, the fact that Romney didn’t
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s win the Presidential election doesn’t prove that Eastwood’s speech was totally ineffective. Rather, this study, in reference to RQ2, indicates that while persuasion is optimum when the five canons are sufficiently followed, especially delivery, the addition of creative elements can increase persuasion. Particularly in our current culture, where visuals are expected and people are emotionally responsive to visuals, creativity can enhance persuasion.

Implications

Celebrity clout has limits

One of the problems focused on in this study was the influence of celebrities over public opinion. Asking Clint Eastwood to endorse Mitt Romney as the Republican Presidential candidate was a typical marketing strategy as seen in research from the literature review. While Eastwood has super-celebrity status because of his success and longevity in the film industry, the power of celebrity clout has limits. The results of the study show that society expects a polished delivery in a speech even if one is a celebrity. By the strong criticism of many news analysts, even a celebrity needs to be properly prepared when entering the political stage. In fact, the CNN survey (2012) indicated that about a third of the participants didn’t like a Hollywood celebrity at the convention. Whether it was his age, or the saturation of celebrity endorsements, Eastwood’s star power didn’t give him a VIP pass on the political stage.

Delivery is crucial

Another implication from this study is that the delivery component of the five canons of rhetoric is most important. Criticism from the news media predominately focused on his rough and bumbling delivery. Because of this, Eastwood’s intellect, sanity and credibility came into question. In our youth-centered culture, discrimination because of Eastwood’s age may be a factor. Also, where even reality shows are staged with very little is spontaneity, the nation-wide
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s audience expected better articulation by Eastwood. This implies that while all of Aristotle’s five canons of rhetoric are important to persuasion, delivery is foremost among those elements of rhetoric.

**Visuals make a difference**

It was the empty chair that grabbed the attention of the audience and news media. If Eastwood would have given a five minute speech like he was originally allotted, and if he had left the chair backstage, the rhetoric act would not have received attention and this study would not have been conducted. Instead, the empty chair became the focal point of perception and interpretation from the media. As stated earlier in the study results, Eastwood’s intention was to use the chair as a prop as he did a play-act interview with President Obama. While some of the news media viewed talking to a chair as weird and kooky, some thought it entertaining and stimulating. Through perceptions, interpretations and abuse of metaphor from some of the media, the empty chair became a symbol of an incompetent President Obama. This implies that visuals are powerful influences and can potentially be misinterpreted as they are first perceived by audience members. It is crucial for a rhetor to focus on giving a speech where words and ideas dominate, and the visual merely supports.
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Chapter 5 SUMMARIES AND CONCLUSIONS

Limitations of the Study

A major limitation to this study was the reliance on interpretations and analysis of the news media in regards to the persuasiveness of Clint Eastwood’s speech. Because Mitt Romney lost the Presidential election, it would be easy to assume that Eastwood’s speech to persuade voters was a failure. And yet, given the uniqueness of Eastwood’s speech and the controversy it created, it’s difficult to believe that his speech didn’t have an impact on voters, especially the Independent voter. Also, it was difficult to track how the empty chair interview evolved into a symbol of presidential inadequacies. To actually assess the nation-wide audience, by interviews or a survey immediately after the speech, would have accurately measured the responses and given a forthright balance to this study.

Recommendations for Further Study

Several unanswered questions occurred during the analysis and result process. First, did the negative responses by the media occur purely because of Clint Eastwood’s bumbling delivery or could ageism been a factor? Is a celebrity more influential if he or she is younger? Further research as to the age appeal of celebrities is suggested.

Secondly, with the use of television and Internet, do the five canons of rhetoric need to be adjusted? Historically, a scripted persuasive speech via the newspapers or radio was accepted, but with the commonplace of scripted reality shows, would a rhetor need to script a spontaneous type of speech to be effective? Has the delivery of a speech, become more crucial than the ideas and organization behind it? The current culture, which gravitates towards image, emotion, and a
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s variety of truths, may dictate a variation of the five canons of rhetoric. Only further studies could determine this.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to identify rhetorical strategies used by Clint Eastwood in his speech at the 2012 Republican National Convention. From the use of neo-Aristotelian analysis, several rhetorical tactics were highlighted. Eastwood effectively used appeals to the *logos, pathos, and ethos* of the audience. He also incorporated humor into his speech which built rapport with the audience and further accessed the audience’s emotions. This is significant as our current culture depends upon emotions to make decisions. The use of the visual prop, the empty chair, was the key to Eastwood’s persuasive capability. This use of visual communication propelled the rhetoric act into national debate and overshadowed Mitt Romney’s acceptance speech as Presidential candidate for the Republicans. While Eastwood’s intention was to provide an image of interviewing President Obama, the perception of the visual by many news reporters was that the Presidential chair, or authority and position, was vacant. As mentioned in the literature review, visuals are interpreted from one’s perception of the meaning of the visual.

The other purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of Clint Eastwood’s speech in persuading the Republican audience and the nation-wide audience. The Republican audience at the Convention center was engaged and needed little persuasion by Eastwood’s speech. The nation-wide audience was conflicted in its response by the interpretation of news articles. Some thought the speech with the empty chair was weird and pathetic, some thought Eastwood had the right to express his opinion, and others loved the unscripted and memorable rhetoric. Most of the audience expressed the need for Eastwood to be better prepared and more
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s fluent in his delivery. Eastwood’s speech was effective in that his aim was to persuade the Independent voter, which according to exit polls, did indeed support Romney for President.
References


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Transcript of Clint Eastwood’s speech at RNC. (2012). Retrieved from


EASTWOOD: Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much. Save a little for Mitt.

(APPLAUSE)

I know what you are thinking. You are thinking, what's a movie tradesman doing out here? You know they are all left wingers out there, left of Lenin. At least that is what people think. That is not really the case. There are a lot of conservative people, a lot of moderate people, Republicans, Democrats, in Hollywood. It is just that the conservative people by the nature of the word itself play closer to the vest. They do not go around hot dogging it.

(APPLAUSE)

So -- but they are there, believe me, they are there. I just think, in fact, some of them around town, I saw John Voigt, a lot of people around.

(APPLAUSE)

John's here, an academy award winner. A terrific guy. These people are all like-minded, like all of us.

So I - so I've got Mr. Obama sitting here. And he's – I was going to ask him a couple of questions. But - you know about - I remember three and a half years ago, when Mr. Obama won the election. And though I was not a big supporter, I was watching that night when he was having that thing and they were talking about hope and change and they were talking about, yes
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we can, and it was dark outdoors, and it was nice, and people were lighting candles.

They were saying, I just thought, this was great. Everybody is crying, Oprah was crying. I was even crying. And then finally - and I haven't cried that hard since I found out that there is 23 million unemployed people in this country.

(APPLAUSE)

Now that is something to cry for because that is a disgrace, a national disgrace, and we haven't done enough, obviously – this administration hasn't done enough to cure that. Whenever interest they have, is not strong enough, and I think possibly now it may be time for somebody else to come along and solve the problem.

(APPLAUSE)

So, Mr. President, how do you handle promises that you have made when you were running for election, and how do you handle them? I mean, what do you say to people? Do you just - you know - I know - people were wondering - you don't - handle that OK.

Well, I know even people in your own party were very disappointed when you didn't close Gitmo. And I thought, well closing Gitmo – why close that, we spent so much money on it. But, I thought maybe as an excuse - what do you mean shut up?

(LAUGHTER)

OK, I thought maybe it was just because somebody had the stupid idea of trying terrorists in downtown New York City.

(APPLAUSE)
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I've got to hand it to you. I have to give credit where credit is due. You did finally overrule that finally. And that's - now we are moving onward. I know you were against the war in Iraq, and that's okay. But you thought the war in Afghanistan was OK. You know, I mean -- you thought that was something worth doing. We didn't check with the Russians to see how they did it -- they did there for 10 years.

(APPLAUSE)

But we did it, and it is something to be thought about, and I think that, when we get to maybe - I think you've mentioned something about having a target date for bringing everybody home. You gave that target date, and I think Mr. Romney asked the only sensible question, you know, he says, "Why are you giving the date out now? Why don't you just bring them home tomorrow morning?"

(APPLAUSE)

And I thought - I thought, yeah - I am not going to shut up, it is my turn.

(LAUGHTER)

So anyway, we're going to have - we're going to have to have a little chat about that. And then, I just wondered, all these promises - I wondered about when the - what do you want me to tell Romney? I can't tell him to do that. I can't tell him to do that to himself.

(APPLAUSE)

You're crazy, you're absolutely crazy. You're getting as bad as Biden.
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(APPLAUSE)

Of course we all know Biden is the intellect of the Democratic party.

(LAUGHTER)

Kind of a grin with a body behind it.

(LAUGHTER)

But I just think that there is so much to be done, and I think that Mr. Romney and Mr. Ryan are two guys that can come along.

See, I never thought it was a good idea for attorneys to the president, anyway.

(APPLAUSE)

I think attorneys are so busy - you know they're always taught to argue everything, and always weight everything -- weigh both sides...

I think attorneys are so busy -- you know they're always taught to argue everything, always weigh everything, weigh both sides. *(While both CBS and FoxNews have this repetitive phrase, the YouTube video of speech does not show that Eastwood repeated himself.)*

EASTWOOD: They are always devil's advocating this and bifurcating this and bifurcating that. You know all that stuff. But, I think it is maybe time -- what do you think -- for maybe a businessman. How about that?

(APPLAUSE)

A stellar businessman. Quote, unquote, "a stellar businessman."
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And I think it's that time. And I think if you just step aside and Mr. Romney can kind of take over. You can maybe still use a plane.

(APPLAUSE)

Though maybe a smaller one. Not that big gas guzzler you are going around to colleges and talking about student loans and stuff like that.

(APPLAUSE)

You are an - an ecological man. Why would you want to drive that around?

OK, well anyway. All right, I'm sorry. I can't do that to myself either.

(APPLAUSE)

I would just like to say something, ladies and gentlemen. Something that I think is very important. It is that, you, we - we own this country.

(APPLAUSE)

We - we own it. It is not you owning it, and not politicians owning it. Politicians are employees of ours.

(APPLAUSE)

And - so - they are just going to come around and beg for votes every few years. It is the same old deal. But I just think it is important that you realize, that you're the best in the world. Whether you are a Democrat or Republican or whether you're libertarian or whatever, you are the
Rhetorical Analysis of Clint Eastwood’s best. And we should not ever forget that. And when somebody does not do the job, we got to let them go.

(APPLAUSE)

Okay, just remember that. And I'm speaking out for everybody out there. It doesn't hurt, we don't have to be

(AUDIENCE MEMBER): (inaudible)

(LAUGHTER)

I do not say that word anymore. Well, maybe one last time.

(LAUGHTER)

We don't have to be - what I'm saying, we do not have to be metal (ph) masochists and vote for somebody that we don't really even want in office just because they seem to be nice guys or maybe not so nice guys, if you look at some of the recent ads going out there, I don't know.

(APPLAUSE)

But OK. You want to make my day?

(APPLAUSE)

All right. I started, you finish it. Go ahead.

AUDIENCE: Make my day!

EASTWOOD: Thank you. Thank you very much.