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Chapter Eleven

Strategic Maneuvering with Speech Codes in a U.S. Presidential Debate

Menno H. Reijven

INTRODUCTION

Speech codes are an important rhetorical resource to get people to understand and act upon speech (Philipsen 1992). One key example of the rhetorical importance of speech codes is an analysis of a speech given in 1971 by Mayor Daley of Chicago (Philipsen 1986; 1992). Philipsen (1986) noted that different communities with different speech codes interpreted this speech differently and consequently spoke differently about its rhetorical efficacy. Mayor Daley, encoding a code of honor in his speech, was perfectly intelligible to his own blue-collar community, but white-collar observers, using a code of dignity, could not make sense of it. In a code of honor, the community and its structural organization is celebrated, while in a code of dignity, the individual is the most important unit, which seemed to be a contrast with different communities across the United States (Philipsen 1992). Today this contrast seems still valid; for example, during the 2016 U.S. presidential election, many people were unable to recognize the rationality of either Hillary Clinton's or Donald Trump's messages due to opposing values guiding and also expressed in speaking.

Using speech codes theory to analyze agonistic encounters, especially the case of a presidential debate, is instructive. In this chapter, I will consider how Clinton and Trump wove particular speech codes into their discourse in the first presidential debate of the 2016 election cycle. In doing so, I contend with the fifth proposition of speech codes theory, which states that “the terms, rules, and premises of a speech code are inextricably woven into speaking itself” (Philipsen, Coutu, and Covarrubias 2005, 62). Analyses of speech codes usually focus on symbolic terms, norms, premises, rules, and values toward communication in localized communities (e.g., Philipsen 1992; Fitch 2005;

Hart 2017). While this approach provides valuable insights that elucidate the specific speech codes used in a community, I propose to gain more granularity in analyses by using argumentation theory. As I show in this chapter, the concept of strategic maneuvering (Van Eemeren 2010) can help to reveal more of the intricate ways in which speech codes are woven into speech.

WEAVING SPEECH CODES INTO DISCOURSE

Within the tradition of speech codes theory, scholars have investigated speech codes that structure communication in the United States. Two central speech codes are a code of honor and a code of dignity (see, e.g., Philipsen 1986, 1992; Carbaugh 1988, 1993, 1994). Within the code of dignity, every person is seen and acknowledged as a unique individual (Philipsen 1992). Within the code of honor, a community is presumed to be most important (Philipsen 1992).

The code of honor was identified by Philipsen (1992) during fieldwork in “Teamsterville,” a blue-collar neighborhood in Chicago. Philipsen (1986, 1992) used the code of honor to describe Chicago mayor Daley’s speech raising various instrumental values like power, wealth, magnanimity, loyalty, and precedence. The central organizing idea for the community was the importance of “connections” (Philipsen 1986, 256), which are enacted and recreated through these values. People believe everyone should prioritize their community, especially their close circle (Philipsen 1986). They do not expect equality but that “everyone is being treated as generously as available resources—and due respect to position and rank—will allow” (Philipsen 1986, 256). Regarding the expressive dimension of communication, the theme of community and connections is also foregrounded in the working-class speech code analyzed by Philipsen (1986) with values such as shame, glory, courage, excellence, and piety. These are all public expressions and established through communal practices. Carbaugh (1993) summarizes that in a code of honor, people are presumed to be “inextricably connected” (127) because an “ancestral voice,” expressed through “precedence, piety, loyalty, and hierarchical institutions,” grounds “the person in social life” (Carbaugh 1993, 127).

In contrast, the code of dignity is centered on an individual with a “self” (Carbaugh 1994, 1988), the “intrinsic humanity divested of all socially imposed roles or norms” (Philipsen 1992, 91). Instrumentally, the code of dignity foregrounds “the intrinsic worth of persons, equality, rights, [and] negotiation” (Carbaugh 1993, 128), presuming people to be “separate and extricable entities” whose “social [identities], positions and relations need to be built or worked upon” (Carbaugh 1993, 127). Thus, central to this code is independence, the valuing of the individual over the group (Carbaugh

1994). Everyone should be treated similarly according to their merits and should attempt to grow and realize their individual potential (Philipsen 1992). Expressively, individuals are expected to be open about their feelings and are expected to stress guilt, conscience, and their authenticity.

As stated in Philipsen, Coutu and Covarrubias (2005, 62), the fifth premise of speech codes theory is that “the terms, rules, and premises of a speech code are inextricably woven into speaking itself.” Thus speakers employ various discursive resources to weave a speech code—like a code of dignity foregrounding the individual or a code of honor projecting the value of community—into their speaking. Philipsen (1992, 131–36); Philipsen, Coutu, and Covarrubias (2005, 62) has identified four key ways in which speech codes are woven into talk. First, elements and particles of a speech code can be found in local patterns of speaking. Second, communities use a unique metacommunicative vocabulary where certain words are key terms for them to describe their communication. Third, these metacommunicative terms are not just used to describe communication but also to regulate it through guiding its interpretation and explaining or justifying its use. Fourth, this metacommunicative vocabulary is also a central part of a community’s totemizing rituals, myths, and social dramas (Philipsen 1987).

The ways in which speech codes are woven into talk are heuristic aids to discovering and formulating the speech codes used (Philipsen, Coutu, and Covarrubias 2005). After all, these are places where these codes are activated in talk, but this does not enable investigation of all the intricate ways in which speech codes are encoded into discourse. By recognizing that speech codes play an important role in local conceptions of rhetoric (Philipsen 1992; Philipsen, Coutu, and Covarrubias 2005), we can look more closely at other ways in which speech codes are woven into communication. Therefore I posit that insights from argumentation theory—and in particular the concept of strategic maneuvering (Van Eemeren 2010)—can improve the analysis of speech codes in discourse. Consequently, more ways in which the values of a speech code are encoded into speech can be systematically dissected and, vice versa, this also offers more ways in which a speech code can be identified by researchers.

The concept of strategic maneuvering has been developed as a part of the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation by Van Eemeren (2010) to better understand the strategic choices arguers make in argumentative discourse. In this theory, argumentation is conceptualized as an interactive affair between a protagonist and an antagonist who attempt to resolve a difference of opinion on the merits (Van Eemeren 2010). However, besides orienting toward reasonableness, discussants typically also aim at being effective in resolving the difference of opinion in their favor (Van Eemeren 2010). By maneuvering strategically,

the arguer attempts to be maximally effective while remaining reasonable (Van Eemeren 2010). According to Van Eemeren, to analyze these strategic maneuvers through which discussants attempt to enhance the effectiveness of their speech, the analyst has to consider three analytically distinct but empirically inseparable aspects of language use: the topical potential, audience demands, and presentational devices (2010, chap. 4). These aspects are theorized based on models developed in classical rhetoric (Van Eemeren 2010, 95).

First, a speaker has to select the content for their argumentative discourse. Van Eemeren (2010) defines the “topical potential” as “the (not always clearly delineated) repertoire of options for making an argumentative move that are at the arguer’s disposal in a certain case and at a particular point in the discourse” (93–94). The topical potential has been defined through status theory (an overview of the different positions one can take in a legal defense [see, e.g., Van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2001]) or different available argument schemes (Van Eemeren 2010); argument schemes have been defined as a “represent[ation] of the relation between what is stated in the argument and what is stated in the standpoint” (see Van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992, 96). As noted by Fitch (2003) and Reijven and Townsend (2021), the options for argumentative moves are constrained by the cultural system this discourse is a part of. Therefore, a speech code used in a community limits the potential content for argumentative discourse through its terms, rules, and premises (Fitch 2003). It defines which propositions are meaningful in a community and which inferences and interpretations are possible (Philipsen 1992; Fitch 2003).

The second aspect of strategic maneuvering identified by Van Eemeren (2010) is adaptations to “audience demand,” defined as “the requirements pertinent to the audience that is to be reached” (94). Thus, to be effective argumentatively, a protagonist has to anticipate the audience’s orientations and belief system to determine what can be taken as common ground or persuasive or which context makes the matter understandable to them. As a speech code exists within a speech community, it is “a system of socially constructed symbols and meanings, premises, and rules, pertaining to communicative conduct” (Philipsen 1997, 126) shared between the protagonist and their audience. The cultural conceptions held by the audience determine what they believe is persuasive and commonsensical (Fitch 2003; Reijven and Townsend 2021) or artful (Philipsen 1997). With regard to adaptation to audience demands, a speech code links the discourse of a protagonist to the expectations and understanding of the world an audience has.

Third, a protagonist has to exploit “presentational devices” as protagonists will have to choose “how the argumentative moves are to be presented in the way that is strategically best” (Van Eemeren 2010, 94). A speaker could decide to “formulate their standpoints as reasonably and effectively as they

can without provoking counter-standpoints” (94). Similarly, implicitness, indirectness, and figures of speech can also be exploited strategically (120–21). Thus, exploiting presentational devices is about employing stylistic and discursive tools to foreground the most desirable interpretation of the utterances of the speaker. A speech code defines which presentational choices are persuasive within a particular speech community. It points out which terms carry symbolic meaning within a particular community (Hart 2017) but also, importantly, how people should talk, meaning that when speaking through certain code, a particular style of talking or phrasing may be required to get the message across effectively (Philipsen 1992).

To analyze how a speech code is present in a specific piece of discourse, I will employ the concept of strategic maneuvering and consider each of these three aspects: topical potential, audience demands, and presentational devices. In this study, I focus on how presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump wove speech codes into their discourse during the first debate of the 2016 presidential election cycle.

DATA AND METHOD

In the 2016 general election, two candidates—Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton—were in the race to assume office. On September 26, 2016, the first debate was held at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York. At the beginning of the debate, moderator Lester Holt explained that the debate was “sponsored by the Commission on Presidential Debates,” who drafted the format, and that these rules had been accepted by both parties. The debate was to be ninety minutes long and divided into six 15-minute segments covering three distinct topic areas: “achieving prosperity, America’s direction, and securing America.” Each segment started with a lead-off question that both candidates could answer for up to two minutes and that was followed by an open discussion. Lester Holt formulated the questions himself and did not share them with anyone before the debate.

The debate itself was described, for example, in the *New York Times* (Healy and Martin 2016) as “relentlessly antagonistic” but also as having a “surreal quality at times.” Throughout the debate, Trump and Clinton clashed heavily and also made very personal attacks. Often the candidates were not able to delve into a discussion of the issues. It was noted that the candidates got on each other’s nerves as Trump got “more irritable and impatient” and at some points “lost his cool.” His attacks were described as “pleas[ing]” his Republican base” but off-putting for others. More generally, Clinton’s debating skills were praised while it was remarked that Trump “improvi[sed]” and

was “stunningly personal in his attacks.” They summarized the debate as “like no other in the television era” as “the first female presidential nominee of a major party [was] facing off against an alpha male businessman with no political experience.” For the public, they were just “hoping to see their preferred candidate blow the other to smithereens.” Thus in the reporting, the agonistic encounter between the two seems to have been defined not only through policy differences but also through opposing speech codes.

The data for this study was collected through the website of the Commission on Presidential Debates (www.debates.org). On this website, I accessed a recording of the debate¹ and the transcript.² First I checked the accuracy of the transcript by comparing the video recording with the transcript. Then the video and transcript were used simultaneously to conduct the analysis. In this study, the code of dignity and the code of honor are taken as two general iterations of a speech code and are used as a heuristic to understand how speech codes were woven into Clinton’s and Trump’s discourse. That is, as these two speech codes in an antagonistic encounter will give rise to discursive contrasts grounded in an opposition of honor and dignity, we can look at the way in which propositions belong to this code, the worldview of the audience is appealed to, and the presentational devices are exploited to reinforce the argument.

The analysis centered on key themes on which these two codes typically produce contrasting discourse. Specifically, as central to a speech code are ideas on what it means to be a person, what society is, and how people and societies relate to each other through communication (Philipsen 1992), I compare the discourse of the two candidates based on their projected conceptions of personhood and an associated speech code of leadership. I posed the question “How does the candidate position himself or herself as a leader?” looking at each of the three aspects of strategic maneuvering. That is, I considered the selected proposition, the presumptions the protagonist made, and his or her choices regarding style and formulations. Below, excerpts are provided from the data that are closely analyzed to show how speech codes and the aspects of strategic maneuvering relate. Throughout, references to the excerpt are presented by first referring to the excerpt and then to the line (e.g., 1:3 would refer to excerpt 1, line 3).

AN INDIVIDUALISTIC CODE OF LEADERSHIP

To investigate how speech codes were woven into the debate discourse, I first investigate the speech code used by Clinton during the debate. During election debates, candidates make various promises to the electorate. These

promises are part of a communicative practice that is shaped through a speech code. Specifically, in excerpt 1, I look at Clinton's response to the first question posed in the debate. Both candidates were asked how they plan to "create the kind of jobs that will put more money into the pockets of American voters." In other words, the candidates were asked to explain what they would do if they were elected, and thus were asked to share their commitments with the public.

Clinton and Trump took different routes to respond to this question. For one, Clinton focused on restructuring the U.S. economy while Trump reasoned that other countries are mistreating the United States. As a consequence, Clinton argued that the wealthy should pay more in taxes while Trump claimed that taxes for companies should be reduced. These are of course ideological differences between Democrats and Republicans more generally. For my purposes though, the focus is on how Clinton and Trump differed throughout the debate in terms of their speech code. That is, given different presumed conceptions of personhood in their speech, the speech acts advanced by Clinton and Trump were shaped through opposing speech codes.

In excerpt 1, the individual is central to the speech acts advanced by Clinton, in line with the code of dignity. This conception of personhood defines the campaign promise Clinton makes. The turn shown in excerpt 1 is taken from the beginning of her two-minute response to the first question posed in the debate by moderator Lester Holt (at 2'54"). She had just briefly thanked Lester Holt and Hofstra University and stressed that she had thought a lot about what kind of future she would want to "build together."

Excerpt 1

1. First, we have to build an economy that works for
2. everyone not just those at the top. That means
3. we need new jobs, good jobs, with rising
4. incomes. I want us to invest in you. I want us
5. to invest in your future. That means jobs in
6. infrastructure, in advanced manufacturing,
7. innovation and technology, clean renewable energy
8. and small business because most of the new jobs
9. will come from small business.

Clinton commits herself here to two actions. First, she advances a commissive through using "have to" combined with an inclusive-social "we" (see Dori-Hacohen 2013, 1:1). This commits Clinton to building an economy that is more equal (1:1–2) as anyone should pursue this future goal. Clinton

elaborates on this campaign promise (“that means,” 1:2) by explaining that “we need new (. . .) [and] good jobs” (1:3) to realize this. Topically, Clinton commits to realizing equality within the community, which is the propositional content of the speech act. The future she promises to realize for the public is one where the opposition between “everyone” and “those at the top” is resolved. She aims to accomplish this by creating more “jobs,” which are held by individuals. Thus this commissive is focused on enabling every person to work and earn a living. Moreover, given that people receive “rising incomes” through having these “new,” “good jobs” (1:3–4), rewards are projected to be based on people’s individual effort and skill. Throughout this practice of committing, Clinton presumes that individuals are the meaningful basis for her communication. The promises concern ordinary U.S. citizens, projecting their interests as the most meaningful. By claiming that there is a problem with people “at the top,” Clinton disregards the importance of the interests of the powerful. In terms of presentation, Clinton articulates this code by using inclusive, first-person-plural pronouns suggesting a homogeneous group, emphasizing “everyone” and offering a juxtaposition with a “them” who threaten the equality of the people within the group. This seems to stress Clinton’s concerns with relations within the community. In this way, her campaign promise can be heard as a manifestation of the code of dignity.

The second speech act Clinton advances is also commissive as she claims to want to invest in the audience’s future (1:4–5)—another campaign promise. The action “invest” is future oriented as benefits are given based on the potential for something or someone to improve. Hence benefits are not given generally to members of a society based on their past accomplishments but such that future potential is maximized. Topically the promise is thus concerned with improving people’s lives by allowing them to pursue their own goals as individuals. This presumes a worldview wherein people can improve their lives by working hard but also one wherein collective problems are solved through the work of individuals as is marked by the fact that the jobs mentioned have beneficial consequences for society. Again, the individual is the basis for communication as a better future is promised to individuals. Regarding presentational devices, Clinton uses the metaphor of “investing,” which reinforces the focus on people as individuals. Through syntactic resonance (i.e., copying elements of a previous utterance [Du Bois 2014]), Clinton suggests that investing in people means that they will have a better “future” (1:5), strengthening the content of these utterances.

Excerpt 1 shows how each of the three aspects of strategic maneuvering contributes to manifesting the code of dignity as the basis for Clinton’s commissive speech acts. She focuses on a key theme of realizing equality and self-improvement (topical potential) while addressing her audience as

individuals (audience demands) and using various discursive devices (presentation). By aligning these three aspects, speaking through the code of dignity was accomplished in the previous excerpt. The code of dignity is articulated even more explicitly when Clinton engages in metacommunication as in excerpt 2. This further supports the claim that the promises in excerpt 1 are directed at individuals and shaped within this perspective of communication. This is the end of her opening turn in the debate at 4'36" after Clinton has listed a few more policy proposals and just before she will have to hand over the floor to Trump.

Excerpt 2

1. We're going to have a debate where we are talking
2. about the important issues facing our country. You
3. have to judge us, who can shoulder the immense,
4. awesome responsibilities of the presidency, who can
5. put into action the plans that will make your life
6. better. I hope that I will be able to earn your
7. vote on November eighth.

Clinton directly addresses the audience and comments on the debate itself. She announces that "we [Trump and Clinton] are going to have a debate" (2:1). The point of the debate, according to Clinton, is that "you [the audience] have to judge us" (2:2–3) based on who will be able to improve the lives of individual Americans (2:5–6). Last, Clinton does not presume to be the preferred candidate by saying that she has to "earn" (2:6) the people's vote. Regarding the commissive utterances she has shared, she presumes that a go ahead is needed as she is not automatically entitled to the presidency. Her approach to the debate is one of negotiation with the public. Her promises presume that the public has to make up their mind. The approach of describing the debate as a place for politicians to be judged appeals to the audience using a code of dignity as they are called upon to decide. Values of negotiation and talking move to the foreground. Regarding presentation, Clinton uses deferential wording by "hoping" to earn people's vote, which reinforces her description of the debate.

The code of dignity also resonates during moments when Clinton defends her proposals as the best ones. The public does not have to take her on her word but is offered the perspective of experts. Rather than grounding her promise on her relationships, she stresses its objective value. Thus Clinton, while presenting herself as a leader, focuses on negotiation and talking, which is a key sign of respecting other people as individuals. In excerpt 3,

Clinton explains why her plans are better than Trump's, and she does so by invoking the voice of experts. Thus she values other people for the skills and knowledge they have and grants them a central role in the discussion at hand. Before the turn shown below, Trump was posed a question on how he would bring back jobs to the United States. Then Clinton was granted the floor to respond, which she first used to criticize Trump for rooting for a housing crisis in 2006 before she moved to discussing the candidates' current economic policy proposals, as shown below (at 13'06" in the debate).

Excerpt 3

1. Independent experts have looked at what I've proposed
2. and looked at what Donald's proposed, and
3. basically they've said this, that if his tax
4. plan, which would blow up the debt by
5. over 5 trillion dollars and would in
6. some instances disadvantage middle-class families
7. compared to the wealthy were to go into effect,
8. we would lose three and a half million jobs
9. and maybe have another recession.
10. They've looked at my plans and they've said
11. okay if we can do this and I intend to get it done,
12. we will have 10 million more new jobs,
13. because we will be making investments where we can
14. grow the economy.

Trump's and Clinton's economic policy proposals are evaluated based on the evaluations of "independent experts" (3:1). These experts have evaluated both candidates' plans and project negative effects when implementing Trump's plans and positive effects when implementing Clinton's plans. To criticize Trump's plans, she thus lets the experts speak for her. Topically Clinton invokes here an evaluation of both candidates' plans by experts (i.e., paraphrasing *them*). Regarding audience demands, Clinton presumes that a leader does not know everything and will connect with relevant experts to ensure they are making the right decision. Policies should be objectively good and not implemented because Clinton herself is appreciated as a leader. This means that a politician has to refer to relevant authorities throughout their debate discourse in order to persuade the public to vote for them. In addition, Clinton has a focus on plans and ideas rather than herself as a person. For example, Clinton talks about her "inten[tion] to get it done" (3:11) rather than emphasizing her ability which would make her the most competent candidate.

By juxtaposing her own and Trump's plans, Clinton avoids invoking a hierarchical difference between herself and the audience as the audience can make up their mind not relying on the candidate's word. When she uses her past experience, it is to indicate that she will be able to keep her promise to the American people. With regard to presentational devices, Clinton stresses the word "independent," marking that people who have acclaimed her proposals are specifically not part of her personal network. She also uses emphasis to press the differences between her plans and Trump's plans, diverting away from comparing their past accomplishments. Lastly, Clinton chooses to use the word "intend," which is tied to an individual's psychology, providing a uniquely individualistic motivation for a leader. Thus again her way of talking to the public manifests the code of dignity.

The foregrounding of ideas is used more often by Clinton to criticize Trump. Consider excerpt 4 where Clinton discusses their different approaches toward dealing with the criminal justice system. This excerpt is taken from the third segment of the debate, on "America's direction" when the discussion is on race. Holt has asked Clinton how the racial divide in the country can be healed. In her first turn following this question, Clinton stresses the need for criminal justice reform. Next Trump stresses the need for law and order, citing "thousands of shootings" in Chicago. After Trump is challenged by Holt on his proposal to implement stop-and-frisk as it is unconstitutional, Clinton stresses that she believes in "community policing" but also acknowledges that there are still problems as Black men are more likely to be "arrested, charged, convicted and incarcerated" compared to white men. Then Clinton continues as follows (at 48'51").

Excerpt 4

1. So we've got to address the systemic racism in our
2. criminal justice system. We cannot just say law and
3. order. We have to say—we have to come forward with
4. a plan that is going to divert people from the
5. criminal justice system, deal with mandatory minimum
6. sentences, which have put too many people away for too
7. long for doing too little.

Clinton starts here with articulating the problem she has just described: there is systemic racism which has to be addressed. According to her, Trump "just say[s] law and order" (4:2–3), which she criticizes as being insufficient. Her alternative is that leaders should "come forward with a plan" (4:3–4). Thus topically Clinton provides a critique of Trump for not being focused

enough on ideas. This presumes again that ideas are more important than the specific person, who can get help from experts, and can take the public seriously to assess proposals. Regarding presentation, Clinton minimizes Trump's position through the use of "just" (4:2) and at first turns to her own position through dialogic resonance, contrasting "cannot" with "have to" and noticeably omitting "just." Her repair from "say" to "come forward" also stresses that leaders should do something more substantial than just "saying" things.

In sum, Clinton seems to repeatedly invoke the code of dignity, using it to position herself as a politician and as an appealing potential leader. She makes promises to individuals and presumes that people work for their own good. She uses the insights of experts rather than claiming everything based on her own authority. She prioritizes ideas rather than her own person. She utilizes this speech code throughout her responses through propositions, presuppositions, and presentation.

A COMMUNAL SPEECH CODE OF LEADERSHIP

In his response to the first question of the debate, Trump projects a different conception of personhood compared to Clinton that undergirds the speech acts he advances. Consider the following criticism of the current state of affairs which forms the basis of Trump's committing to solve these problems (excerpt 5). The excerpt below is taken from Trump's first turn in the debate in response to the question of how he plans to "put more money in the pockets of American workers." After Clinton's response stressing the need to resolve the inequalities between workers and "those at the top," Trump starts as follows (5'06" in the debate).

Excerpt 5

1. Our jobs are fleeing the country. They're
2. going to Mexico, they're going to many other
3. countries, you look at what China is doing to our
4. country in terms of making our product. They're
5. devaluing their currency and there's nobody in
6. our government to fight them, and we have a very
7. good fight and we have a winning fight, because
8. they're using our country as a piggy bank to
9. rebuild China, and many other countries are doing
10. the same thing.

Trump consistently uses the first-person plural to include himself with the people he is addressing while also creating an opposition “them” (see Dori-Hacohen 2013 for the opposing general “we”): “Mexico” (5:2), “China” (5:3) and “many other countries” (5:2–3). He observes that “our jobs are fleeing the country” “to many other countries” (5:1–3), showing his focus on personhood as grounded in membership in a community. He advances a number of assertives to criticize the political establishment. This is the basis for his commissives at the end of his turn (not given) where he explicitly commits to solving these problems. Topically, Trump criticizes the Obama administration (and thereby Clinton as well) for not fighting those other countries (5:5–6) to protect U.S. jobs (5:1). That is, the government is criticized for losing communal wealth. He stresses that other countries are actively doing things to gain jobs while U.S. officials do not do anything. He strengthens the blame by claiming that it is a “winning fight” (5:7). This speech is based on a number of presuppositions regarding the world. Individuals cannot control the movement of wealth; instead, it is the responsibility of “government” (5:6), that is, the elite, to act to gain “jobs” (5:1) for the rest of the community. Moreover, rather than valuing equality, Trump talks about “very good” and “winning” fights (5:6–7), suggesting that fighting for good outcomes for the own community is what counts. The fact that the fight is to be fought because it will be won implies that respecting outsiders to the community is not important. The world is thus organized in deeply hierarchical ways, and blame is allocated accordingly.

Concerning presentational devices, Trump creates a basic opposition between “us” and “them.” He talks about “our jobs” that go to “other countries” (5:1–3); “China” is doing things “to our country” (5:3–4); “our government” should “fight them” (5:5–6); “we” will win because “they” are simply using “our country as a piggy bank” to “rebuild China” (5:8–9). These oppositions are also stressed through vocalizations. Right in the beginning, “Mexico” (5:2) is elongated and “China” (5:3) is stressed. In this way Trump emphasizes that others are hurting us. Trump also uses a metaphor for what government action should be like—“fight” (5:7)—which is also stressed, to signify its importance. Rather than negotiating, which is based on equality and reasonableness between participants, the term “fight” (5:6–7) highlights that the goal is to overpower the other party, and thus it foregrounds the normative inequality between the ingroup and others. Similarly, stressing “winning” (5:7) also implies this inequality, as a good outcome is more important than a fair outcome. The lack of fighting of the government is also indicated by implying the United States is passive. Trump says that “they’re using our country” (5:8). He also uses the metaphor of “piggy bank” (5:8), which turns the United States into a passive entity. That the U.S. government should be

blamed for this is communicated through the metaphor “fleeing” (5:1) as this implies that the American community (“we”) itself is causing jobs to move elsewhere. Thus all these presentational devices reinforce Trump’s criticism that leaders ought to be able to solve problems for the community.

This hierarchical perspective of the world is also used by Trump when producing metacommentary on his speech, as is shown in excerpt 6. Similar to the previous excerpt, Trump focuses on the failures of the current politicians to successfully solve the United States’ problems. Yet rather than focusing on ideas, he focuses on his ability to resolve these problems. This segment is taken from the second section on the candidates’ positions on taxing the wealthy. Trump argues that lowering taxes for the wealthy allows them to better invest in the U.S. economy, and in response Clinton argues that trickle-down economics does not work. Trump is then asked a follow-up question on whether it is fair that he is not sharing his tax returns with the American public. Trump turns this into a contrast between him with skills the country needs and the “political hacks” who are now negotiating for the United States. After Trump deflects to talking about Clinton’s emails, and after Clinton has addressed this, Clinton asks why Trump does not want to show his tax returns. Trump defends his ability to govern then as follows (at 34’32”) after having stressed that people should look at his company’s financial disclosures.

Excerpt 6

1. I am very underleveraged. I have a great company.
2. I have a tremendous income. And the reason I say
3. that is not in a braggadocious way. It’s because
4. it’s about time that this country had somebody
5. running it that has an idea about money.

Throughout the debates, Trump has brought in his experience as a businessman to substantiate that he would be a successful president. He claims here that he is “very underleveraged” (6:1) and that he has “a tremendous income” (6:2). While these comments are recurring ones Trump makes, in this excerpt he continues by offering a metacommentary on why he is sharing this with the public (“the reason I say that,” 6:2–3). It is not meant “in a braggadocious way” (6:3), but because the country needs someone in office who “has an idea about money” (6:5). Trump thus focuses not on his plans to convince people to vote for him but shares why he is the right person to lead given that he has the skills needed to advance the community. The topic of being a successful businessman is grounded on the presumption that the person and not their ideas matters most for a leader. The critique is not to brag

but to stress that he is the better leader who can deliver better results for the community.

This focus on the person rather than the plan is also stressed in excerpt 7. Trump projects what his leadership communication will be like. Just before this excerpt, taken from the first topic on putting money in the pockets of American workers, Trump talked about his proposal to implement more tax benefits for companies so that the companies will decide to stay in the United States. Moderator Lester Holt then asked him how he would make sure that companies were not leaving in order to get him to provide some specifics. Rather than focusing on a plan, Trump claims that what should be done is talk sternly to them (11'21").

Excerpt 7

1. And what you do is you say fine. You wanna go
2. to Mexico or some other country, good luck we wish
3. you a lot of luck. But if you think you're going
4. to make your air conditioners or your cars or your
5. cookies or whatever you make, and bring them
6. into our country without a tax, you're wrong.

Trump provides here an example of what a leader should say if companies are considering moving their business to another country. When companies decide to move their production to another country, they leave the community and should not expect preferential treatment. He explains that if "you" move to "some other country" (7:2), then "we wish you a lot of luck" (7:2-3), and you are on your own. Trump warns companies that if they leave, they become part of "them," thereby presuming that one is either with us or against us. "Your" products cannot be brought "into our country" (7:6) anymore without being taxed like the products of any other outsider.

This means that typically a leader should respond when companies are threatening to leave and uphold the distinction between insiders and outsiders. A leader simply has to accept that someone may leave but can then deny them advantages because of their leaving. This leadership communication is based on an us-versus-them perspective where considerations are only given to members of the in group. There is not something to negotiate. The leader just has to be strict with and respectful of their own community. Regarding presentational devices, Trump manifests his code of leadership even further. By "quoting" his future self as president, Trump projects that as a leader he would issue a warning to the ones who leave the community, stressing what he believes the right leader should do. His emphasized response, "fine" (7:1), to people who

leave acknowledges that people can leave but shows the negative attitude he has toward this. By opposing “you” and “our” and by his stressing “into” (7:6), Trump shows that he, as a leader, will treat those who leave as outsiders.

This connects to criticisms Trump has of the then-current administration. In his opening turn to the second topic section on whether or not the rich should be taxed, Trump raises the problem that money is put in banks outside the country as taxes are too high, caused by “politicians like Secretary Clinton.” Specifically, moderator Holt asks the two candidates to defend their perspectives on the wealthy, and Trump receives the first slot to react. After he briefly touches on what he wants to do, Trump goes on to criticize president Obama’s inability to solve the issue of companies leaving the country (23’54”).

Excerpt 8

1. Instead of that, they’re leaving our country to get
2. their money, because they can’t bring their money back
3. into our country, because of bureaucratic red tape,
4. because they can’t get together. Because we have—we
5. have a president that can’t sit them around a table
6. and get them to approve something.

Trump identifies that the problem at hand is that there is “bureaucratic red tape” (8:3). That this problem persists is due to the government and rich people not being able to “get together” (8:4). More specifically, the president “can’t sit them around a table and get them to approve something” (8:5–6). Trump does not care about a precise policy, just that the president solves the issue. Thus the topic here is that there is a criticism that the leader has been ineffective, blaming the government for pushing people away. This presumes that if hierarchies are not respected, people will abandon their community and that they would rightfully do so. In terms of presentation, Trump uses a lot of “can” to stress that a solution is possible, which is further strengthened by using “something” to not lock down a specific solution.

In sum, Trump invokes the code of honor throughout his discourse during this debate, using it to position himself as a politician and to make himself appealing as a potential leader. He criticizes his opponents based on their inability to handle problems and bolsters his own case by highlighting his past accomplishments. His speech is based on the presumption that a leader has to provide a better life for the community and that the leader is the one who has to accomplish that. This speech code becomes manifested throughout the discourse on three distinct levels. Again, the speech code provides topical content and presuppositions, and it guides stylistic choices.

CONCLUSION

In election debates, candidates strategically project a conception of leadership through their communication about themselves and others. As articulated in speech codes theory proposition 3 (Philipsen, Coutu and Covarrubias 2005), speech codes not only suggest how people see themselves as individuals but also how they see themselves as part of a group. By extension, speech codes also provide information on how leaders see themselves connected to the rest of the community. The promises made by Clinton suggest her presumption that politicians and citizens should be considered as equals and also that the United States is not necessarily better than any other country. In contrast, Trump seems to presume that a leader must recognize and abide by the hierarchy between a leader and their people and the hierarchy between one's own and other communities.

More importantly, given that conceptions of rhetoric are central to a speech code, this chapter has shown how argumentation theoretical methods are indispensable for researchers to fully contend with speech codes in language. In this chapter, I have focused on the use of the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation and particularly the concept of strategic maneuvering (Van Eemeren 2010). What this analysis has shown is that speakers in order to be rhetorically effective have to contend with speech codes in multiple ways—with respect to each of the three aspects of strategic maneuvering. By employing this concept, it is possible to show with more detail how speech codes and rhetoric are intertwined in discourse. These findings have two implications for speech codes theory.

First, by using the idea of strategic maneuvering (Van Eemeren 2010), I have shown that speech codes are not just “inextricably woven into speaking” but that this takes place in multiple ways simultaneously. Speakers use speech codes to determine content, presuppositions, and presentation. In general for speech codes theory, separating these layers will improve our understanding of the connection between the speech code and speaking itself. Thus, the fifth premise of speech codes theory (Philipsen, Coutu, and Covarrubias 2005) has to be specified to recognize that speech codes are “inextricably woven into speaking in multiple ways.” Future research has to show how speech codes relate to other discourse analytic methods and in which other ways speech codes can be manifested in talk.

Second, while not one of the primary focal points of this chapter, the analyses presented also enable a commentary on the third proposition of speech codes theory, that “a speech code implicates a culturally distinctive psychology, sociology, and rhetoric” (Philipsen, Coutu, and Covarrubias 2005, 61). A speech code implicates a culturally distinctive rhetoric as it provides input

on the three aspects of strategic maneuvering. This concept clarifies the connection between rhetoric and a speech code. A speech code is tied to a unique conception of rhetoric to persuade an audience and is determined through careful choices made regarding the content, presuppositions, and presentation of the talk. This suggests that speech codes theory can be systematically integrated into argumentative discourse analytic studies to better our understanding of local argumentative practices, thereby continuing the argument made by Reijven and Townsend (2021).

As a last comment, in this study only the discourse by the candidates in the debate was analyzed. A comprehensive analysis would also take into account interpretation of and orientations to the talk by the audience. This shows that the close analysis through various discourse analytic lenses, like argumentation theory, should be combined with ethnographic studies to be able to fully grasp the speech code at play. The use of the concept of strategic maneuvering can contribute by showing in more precise and detailed ways how the speech code is woven into speaking.

NOTES

1. www.c-span.org/video/?414225-1/presidential-candidates-debate.
2. <https://debates.org/voter-education/debate-transcripts/september-26-2016-debate-transcript/>.

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