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Values in international political speeches: Investigating their production, content, media coverage, and impact

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Publication date
2013

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Waheed, M. (2013). *Values in international political speeches: Investigating their production, content, media coverage, and impact*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

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CONCLUSION

Unlike national themed political speeches, international political speeches have not received much research attention. It is important to study political speeches delivered to international audiences because they can affect international public opinion which shapes the political, economic, and social climate of countries involved in these speeches. In addition, researchers have not paid much attention to the role that values play in political speeches. Values are an important construct in people's lives because they guide the evaluation of actions, policies, people, and events (Schwartz, 1992). Therefore, there is reason to believe that values play a role in political speeches. To fill these gaps in research, this dissertation set out to investigate the extent to which values play a role in the production, content, media coverage, and effect of international political speeches.

In this dissertation, we report empirical evidence found regarding the inclusion and presence of values in international political speeches as well as their effects on citizens' opinion. We generally found that some values (more than others) play an important role in international political speeches from their production till the time they reach the audience. In this last section, we present our research findings from the individual chapters, implications of the findings for future research, limitations of this dissertation and suggestions for future research, and contributions of this dissertation.

Research Findings

In chapter 1, we investigated values in the production component of the communication process. More specifically, we investigated factors that contribute towards the inclusion of values in political speeches written for the delivery of UN representatives to audiences of developed and developing countries. We acknowledge that there may be countless factors involved, but, in this chapter, we narrowed our focus to the three factors which we posit were most important: the audiences' values, the speechwriters' values, and the organization's values. The UN's values were found to be the most important factor, followed by the audiences' values by demographics, audiences' values by country of origin (i.e., developed or developing countries), and finally, the speechwriters' values. More specifically,

CONCLUSION

we found that the speechwriters' values were in line with the UN's values. Some speechwriters also explicitly mentioned that the organization's values are the most vital factor of all in the shaping of political speeches. Despite this, we posit that there is still a chance for the speechwriters' values to be included into the political speeches as well.

In terms of audiences, we found that while there were both similarities and differences in the values included into the political speeches written for audiences of different cultures, there was a popular notion among the speechwriters that there were more similarities. However, different styles (i.e., tone) were usually used to express the values. For example, it was mentioned that when writing for an African audience, the language used would excite solidarity, but when writing for an American or European audience, the writing would be more sanitized and direct. Speechwriters also clarified that although there are different styles (tone) used to express values, the differences should not be too big in order to preserve the universal message. It was also suggested that knowing the audiences' demographics is more important than the audiences' country of origin in speechwriting.

In chapter 2, we investigated the presence of values and the tone attached to them in the content component of the communication process. More specifically, we investigated differences or similarities in the use of values between international political speeches from leaders of developed and developing countries. In terms of similarities, the top four most present values were the same: "benevolence", "universalism", "stimulation", and "self-direction". The similarities can be attributed to the idea that there are certain values which are consistently important across societies (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001). Furthermore, developing countries are becoming increasingly modern. Therefore, developing societies incorporate values from institutions of industrialized societies into their value systems (Inkeles, 1975; Levy, 1966; Meyer, Boli-Bennet, & Chase Dunn, 1975; Yang, 1988).

In terms of differences, we found that although the top four most present values were the same, their level of importance differed between speeches from developed and developing countries. Leaders from developed countries more frequently used "benevolence" and "universalism", while leaders from developing countries more frequently used "stimulation" and "self-direction". We also found significant differences in the tone attached to "self-direction", "stimulation", and "achievement" between the speeches of leaders from developed

and developing countries. We attribute the differences to the disparity in living conditions between people of developed and developing countries. In general, findings from this study showed more differences than similarities in speeches of leaders from developed and developing countries.

In chapter 3, we investigated the presence of values and the tone attached to them in the media coverage component of the communication process. The aim of this study was two-fold. First, we focused on the type of values extracted from political speeches that were reported in the news by journalists of developed and developing countries. Second, we studied how these extracted values were depicted by journalists of developed and developing countries. With regards to the first aim, we discovered that the four most present values in the news coverage of international political speeches of both developed and developing countries were similar to one another. They were: “stimulation”, “self-direction”, “power”, and “universalism”. However, further analysis showed that their level of importance differed between speeches from developed and developing countries. “Stimulation” and “power” had a greater presence in the news coverage of developing countries compared to those of developed countries, while “self-direction” had greater presence in the news coverage of developed countries compared to those of developing ones. This is similar to the findings in chapter 2 which suggests that the journalists were able to extract the core values from speeches effectively.

With regards to the study’s second aim, we found that the values were expressed more positively by journalists of developing countries compared to those of developed countries. This was the case for “power”, “stimulation”, “universalism”, and “tradition”. This is somewhat different to the findings in chapter 2 which found that the tone attached to “stimulation” was significantly more negative in the political speeches of leaders from developing countries compared to those from developed countries. We attribute this disparity to the differences between journalism practices in developed and developing countries. We posit that journalists of developing countries practiced Development Journalism where they are required to portray their respective countries in a positive light (Skjerdal, 2001; Wong, 2004). On the other hand, journalists of developed countries subscribe to the Western values

of objectivity, neutrality, and detachment (Molotch & Lester, 1974; Tuchman, 1973; Zelizer, 1993).

In chapter 4, we investigated the role of values in the effect component of the communication process. More specifically, we tested the effects on citizens' attitudes towards immigrants when the news coverage of a political speech is framed episodically or thematically, when the speech source is foreign or domestic, and when different levels of importance are placed on values. Our main finding showed that the effect of media news frames and political speech sources on attitudes towards immigrants is moderated by the importance placed on "universalism". This suggests that "universalism" guided the citizens' interpretation of political information that they received from the media. More precisely, in this study, citizens who scored high on 'universalism' were more affected by a foreign source in an episodic news frame, compared to those scoring low on 'universalism' in a thematic news frame. On the other hand, in a thematic news frame, the difference between citizens scoring high and low on universalism was found for the domestic source.

Besides that, we also found that citizens exposed to news coverage of a political speech delivered by a foreign politician from the immigrant group had a more positive attitude towards immigrants compared to those who were exposed to news coverage of a political speech delivered by a domestic politician. This shows that there are certain conditions under which citizens may consider messages of an out-group member more positively than an in-group member (Alport, 1954; Budesheim, Houston, & DePaola, 1996).

Implications of Findings for Future Research

Values

The set-up of this study was to investigate the role of values in the production, content, media coverage, and impact of international political speeches. This may give the general impression that the values present in each of these communication components are isolated from one another. However, our observations suggest that values in the production, content, media coverage and impact of speeches are neither isolated from one another nor do they flow in a linear manner (i.e., values are not cultivated the production component and dissolve in the impact component). For instance, speechwriters have been known to do extensive research on

a speech topic and the country where the speech will be delivered before writing the speech. There are times when they conduct their research by reading news coverage of previous political speeches delivered to the people of a specific country. This means that speechwriters (who are involved in the production component of the communication process) may be affected by news coverage of earlier speeches (which refers to the media coverage component of the communication process).

Another instance is that journalists may report a speech (media coverage component of the communication process) based on how people previously reacted towards speeches by some political leaders (effect component of the communication process). This can be fully explained by certain important concepts in journalism such as sensationalism (Grabe, Zhou, & Barnett, 2001) and media feeding frenzy (Sabato, 1993). When conducting the content analysis on news coverage of political speeches (Chapter 3), it was noticeable that speeches of leaders such as Ahmadinejad (President of Iran) and Gaddafi (former President of Libya) received extensive coverage. This could be due to a couple of reasons with one leading to the other. These political leaders were more outspoken compared to the others. This caught the attention of journalists and led them to writing detailed news coverage on these political leaders' speeches which caught the attention of the public and caused them to react (effect component of the communication process) (e.g., street protests in front of the United Nations building of where the speech was delivered). This reaction encourages the journalists to continue giving more attention to the speeches of these political leaders year after year. In the future, it would be interesting to research the flow pattern of the values in international political speeches between the communication components.

The BHV Framework

Findings from all chapters in this dissertation showed that “universalism” is the most important value in international political speeches. This supports the claim made by Rokeach (1973) that “freedom” and “equality” are paramount political values. However, we feel it important to point out that although this value is undeniably most salient in international political speeches, there are also others which had substantial presence in our studies. Although not as prominent as “universalism”, we found “benevolence”, “stimulation”, and “self-direction” to be highly present in the production, content, and media coverage

CONCLUSION

components of the communication process. This means that among the four dimensions of the BHV, values from the dimension of openness to change and self-transcendence are most important with regards to politics. Findings from chapter 1 indicated that speechwriters refer to “universalism” and “benevolence” as the values that are highly related to peoples’ professional life but referred to “achievement” and “tradition” to their personal lives. Could this mean that certain values in the BHV model are particularly suitable for certain instances and not to others? If so, then, it would be interesting for future research to investigate when each of the values are most important.

Following this, we also question whether values are trans-situational as claimed by Schwartz (1992). We think it is reasonable to claim that if a woman places high importance on “power” in her career where she enjoys having authority, this neither means that she enjoys having power over her family members at home, nor does it mean that she supports her country exerting power over other nations. Therefore, we argue that perhaps there are differences between personal values and public values in the BHV. Should there be a difference, then this shows that values are more situational than trans-situational. However, this is merely a speculation and only further research on this matter can provide better insights to the classification of values in the BHV.

Tone and Values

Findings from chapter 1 tell us that the values included into political speeches for audiences of developed and developing countries are largely similar to one another, but, the style (tone) used to express those values differ. Later on in the same chapter, we discovered that differences in style (tone) affect the values themselves. One speechwriter mentioned that there are differences in the way he writes a speech for an African audience compared to an American or a European audience. When communicating the same message, a speech to the African audience will be written in a way that excites solidarity which brings about the values of tradition and conformity. On the other hand, speeches to the American or European audience would more direct and sanitized which would be void of those values. This suggests that values and the tone attached to them are dependent on circumstances (i.e., type of audience, subject). This seems to disagree with Feather’s (1995) claim that values are a

quality of a person, but tone is linked to a specific subject and time frame. Instead, we believe that the vulnerability of values indicate that both values and the tone attached to them are linked to a specific subject and time frame.

Feather's (1995) claim was once again in question when we were in the process of deciding on a political speech issue for the experiment in Chapter 4. Based on this experience, we realized that certain topics were always linked to certain values. For example, in a speech about war, it would be inevitable to include values pertaining to "power". An anti-war speech would possibly mean a negative tone attached to "power", while a pro-war speech would mean a positive tone attached to this value. Whichever way we looked at this speech topic, it was inevitable for "power" to be a prominent value. Furthermore, we believe that it is intuitive for most people to associate "power" with war. Once again, this pointed us to the reasoning that values and the tone attached to them are both linked to a specific subject and time frame. Therefore, in the future, researchers studying values and the tone attached to them in political speeches must always take the following variables into account: type of audience, subject of speech, and time frame.

Cultural Similarities and Differences

Unlike the previous studies of some scholars (Hofstede, 1983; Triandis, 1995), chapters in this dissertation used developed and developing countries to classify different cultures in different parts of the world. From this, we discovered that there were different methods one can use to classify countries as developed or developing. In chapter 2, developed and developing countries were differentiated by levels of economic development. However, chapters 1 and 3 applied the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Report (HDR) (2010) to classify the countries. Despite the differences in methods, there were no conflicts in the sample of countries that we consider as developed or developing (e.g., Sri Lanka is a developing country by the calculation of both the World Bank and UNDP HDR). However, future scholars who would like to apply the developed and developing country classification should be aware of the different methods because while it did not cause conflicts in our studies, there may be some disparity in the list of countries between the two methods.

CONCLUSION

The differentiation between developed and developing countries in our chapters found that while there were differences in the values present in political speeches delivered by leaders of developed and developing countries to audiences of these two cultures, there were also some glaring similarities (chapters 1, 2 , and 3). In our studies, we implied that the similarities were due to globalization. In turn, this phenomenon affects how international political speeches are written, presented, and reported. As a result to this, an international standard set of values in political speeches has emerged.

In chapter 2, we suggested the possibility for globalization to lead leaders and citizens of developing countries to embrace the values that are prominent in the speeches of leaders from developing countries. Following this, there is likelihood that in the future, there will be an even higher degree of similarities in the values projected in the political speeches of leaders from developed and developing countries. Several questions have surfaced from this line of argumentation. While we acknowledge that values are a stable construct among adults (Feather, 1971; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1997), this does not mean that values remain unchanged among citizens of different generations (after all, we are suggesting that people of developing countries will embrace values of those from developed countries in the future). Therefore, we find it important to ask how likely is it for leaders and citizens of developed countries to remain stagnated in their values? If there is low likelihood, then we believe that because people around the world are progressing at different pace, there will never be a time where the exact same values will be embraced by all. It also brings about the question of: After “universalism”, what values will leaders and citizens of developed countries embrace? Are there new values which have yet to be discovered, or, is the value system/BHV model cyclical (i.e. the values in the BHV model embraced by societies change clockwise or anticlockwise)? To answer these questions, longitudinal research need to be conducted on a world-wide level.

The implications of our findings have already pointed out some important points for future research. However, more will be suggested in the following section where we discuss the limitations of our studies.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The limitations of each study have been discussed in their respective chapters. However, there are also more general limitations which were not previously touched upon. In this section, we discuss general limitations of the studies, and combine them with some suggestions for future research.

With regards to political speeches, those which were investigated in this dissertation were heavily international and positive in nature. Moreover, there was quite a big emphasis on UN speeches (chapters 1 and 3) which were only mildly controversial if at all. Tables 2.3 and 3.3 show that the tone attached to the values present was mostly positive. As we have previously mentioned, due to globalization, there seem to be a standard set of values present in political speeches delivered to international audiences. Therefore, it is logical to think that these speeches are not necessarily representative of values embraced by the leaders and citizens of the individual countries. Rather, the values present are those considered diplomatic and acceptable in international relations. In the future, the types of values embraced by the individual countries, values in local political speeches delivered within each country should also be investigated. In order to do this, we need to conduct investigations on values in political campaign speeches inauguration speeches, and among the general public within each country. From this, we can better understand the values that are truly embraced by leaders and citizens of the individual countries. Only then can we make fair cross cultural comparisons.

Another way of interpreting the results from this dissertation is that perhaps the positive nature of the international political speeches studied in this dissertation led to the presence of similar values in the international political speeches of leaders from developed and developing countries. Should this be the case then future studies should focus on values in the production, content, media coverage and impact of more controversial international political speeches (e.g., “Tear Down this Wall” speech by Ronald Reagan). There is a possibility that the values present in this type of speech are more representative of the values held by the people of the political leaders’ country. Despite the presence of similar values in international political speeches, future research focusing on this type of speech should take the speakers’ and the audiences’ country of origin into consideration as we did find some significant differences in the presence of values and the tone attached to them in the

CONCLUSION

production, content and media coverage elements in the communication process (chapters 1, 2, and 3).

With regards to values, chapters in the dissertation substantially relied on Schwartz's (1992) definition and nature of values. We feel it necessary to note that his definition is from a Western perspective which we applied to political speechwriters, speeches, and news coverage of political speeches of different cultures. According to Mowlana (1997), people's understanding of communication differs between people of different cultures. Should this basic concept have different meanings, then we cannot be sure that values have the same meaning everywhere in the world. Therefore, there are some concerns that values that were not present were labeled as present and vice versa in our studies due to the application of a lopsided understanding of values. In the future, studies should be conducted to explore what values mean to people from different parts of the world before making cross cultural comparisons.

Chapters 2 and 3 relied on the Schwartz and Boehnke's (2004) BHV model. This model was helpful in aiding us to understand the content in the different types of values. By way of content analyses, the ten values of the BHV were identified in the political speeches as well as their news coverage. However, results from this dissertation were unable to find support for the structure of the model. We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis with the data set from chapter 2 and found that only two out of four dimensions were confirmed to be similar to those of the BHV model. These were values from the dimension of self-transcendence (universalism and benevolence) and conservation (tradition and conformity).

To further investigate this, we also conducted a confirmatory factor analysis with the data set from chapter 4. Here, participants were required to rate how important each of the ten values were to their lives. The confirmatory factor analysis found only one out of the four dimensions to be similar to the BHV model. This was the values from the dimension of self-transcendence. The failure to find the same BHV structure in our second attempt could be due to multiple reasons. One of which is that we used single items to measure the importance of the ten values whereas the SVS used 57 items. However, we believe that the differences in both attempts of confirmatory factor analyses are an indicator for the nature of values pertaining to politics in general, and political speeches in particular. In the future, the SVS

should be conducted to investigate citizens' perception on values with regards to politics. From that data, we can conduct a confirmatory factor analysis once again to test if the model is similar to the BHV. Should it be completely different, then, perhaps the original model is applicable specifically in organizational settings and less so in politics. If this is the case, then it would confirm that values are more situational rather than trans-situational.

With regards to conceptualization, there are limitations to how we differentiate values in political speeches from different cultures. Although we made value comparisons between political speeches of leaders from developed and developing countries, we must clarify that values that the people deem salient within each of these cultures are not homogenous. There are likely differences in value importance among people within the same country (e.g., there may be differences between those who subscribe to high culture and popular culture, between those who live in urban areas and rural areas, between those who have different religious affiliations). In the future, it would be interesting to conduct studies investigating cultural differences in terms of value importance from different groups within the same country and/or region and see how these differences measure up to our findings on values in international political speeches. From this we will better understand the contributing factors of the salience of values among people from different cultures.

Finally, although we conducted a study on journalism in developed and developing countries (chapter 3), but, we did not investigate the presence of values through the perspective of journalists. We believe that this gap in research needs to be filled as it could provide a more detailed understanding concerning values in international political speeches.

Dissertation Contribution

The different chapters in this dissertation filled several gaps in extant research. They provide useful contributions to communication science and particularly to the research areas of political communication, speech communication, and journalism. The findings also contribute to the further understanding of the BHV inventory as well as the understanding of cultural differences.

The gaps filled and the contributions provided by this dissertation are as follow: First, previous studies on political speeches mostly paid attention to national themed political

CONCLUSION

speeches (Bruss & Lawrence, 2010; Medhurst, 1987; Vaughn & Villalobos, 2006). Investigations in this dissertation are the first few to focus on international political speeches which are as important as national themed political speeches because globalization requires for not only relationships within nations, but also those between nations to be cultivated. Therefore, this dissertation contributes to the field of political communication and speech communication by providing first insights to the understanding of international political speeches with a focus on values in their production, content, media coverage, and impact.

Second, previous studies looked into isolated angles of political speeches such as the challenges faced by speechwriters (Bruss & Lawrence, 2010), determinants of political speech content (Vaughn & Villalobos, 2006), and impact of political rhetoric on public opinion (Cohen, 1995). These studies provided valuable pieces to the puzzle, but, they were never put together to fully understand political speeches. The chapters in this dissertation have managed to provide the first contours of the bigger picture of international political speeches in the different and interrelated communication components with a focus on values. By this, findings from the chapters also contribute to the field of political communication and speech communication by providing a broader picture of international political speeches from their production to their effect on public opinion.

Third, unlike previous studies on political speeches, findings from this dissertation contribute to the field of journalism (see chapter 3). Our investigation on values in the news coverage of political speeches of leaders from developed and developing countries has shed light to journalism practices in different parts of the world. More than that, our findings imply that the role of journalists go beyond the news reporting as they play an important role in public opinion formation.

Fourth, previous studies that applied the BHV inventory typically did so by way of surveys in organizations (Schwartz & Bardi, 1997, 2001; Schwartz & Saggie, 2000). Chapters 2 and 3 in this dissertation are the first few studies to apply the BHV inventory by way of content analyses to investigate values in international political speeches and their news coverage. This contributes to the understanding of the BHV in terms of its flexibility and applicability.

Finally, previous scholars distinguished cultures according to nations or nationality (Hofstede, 1983) or the psychology of people from different regions of the world (Triandis, 1995). However, chapters in this dissertation took the industrialization approach in differentiating cultures (i.e., by comparing developed and developing countries). Results from the individual chapters show that there are differences in the values present and the tone attached to them in the production, content and media coverage of international political speeches of leaders from developed and developing countries. This shows that differentiating cultures using the industrialization approach is valid. Hence, this dissertation also contributes to a different method of looking at cultural differences.

Despite these contributions, findings from this dissertation have only grazed the surface of international political speeches. Future research must continue to investigate how values in international political speeches contribute to forming international public opinion in democratic countries which determines the political, economic, and social climate within and between the countries involved in these speeches.

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CONCLUSION

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