

Political Preemptive Apologia: Senator Barack Obama's Memo on Declining Public Financing for the 2008 General Election

Tanya Andrea Cornejo

This research examines Senator Barack Obama's memo released on June 20, 2008 as a preemptive apologia memo. The analysis conducted includes a combination of apologia factors (bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence) in combination with an apologia posture (justification) to explore ways in which then-Senator Obama formulated a preemptive apologetic memo that created a rhetorical exigency. Due to the nature of the preemptive memo, Senator Barack Obama did not use the factor of denial to create a justification, but instead used bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence to achieve justification. The analysis concludes that preemptive apologetic discourse is useful in political campaigning, and changes the arena of political discourse to an offensive stance, which allows for self-defense before a kategoria (accusation) is present.

Introduction

The 2008 presidential elections were a worldwide phenomenon. As with every presidential election, new candidates, new policies, and new political meanings try to make their way into the hearts of U.S. citizens. Shedding a new light on politics, the Democratic nominee for the 2008 presidential election, then-Senator Barack Obama, refused to accept public funding for his general campaign. The decision to opt out of the public funding system is detailed in the memo sent out to his supporters on June 20, 2008.

Senator Obama is the first modern candidate to not accept public funds for the general campaign, thus creating a rhetorical exigency. Previous discussion amongst both presumptive nominees, Senator John McCain and Senator Obama, involved sitting down and discussing whether or not they were both to accept or decline public funding for the general campaign (Nagourney and Zeleny, 2008). The planned discussion never happened, and on June 20, 2008, Senator McCain discovered that his opponent, Senator Obama, had preemptively

decided to decline the public funds for his general campaign. In addition to preemptively releasing the memo depicting his decision to opt out of the public financing system, Senator Obama's memo can be critiqued using the factors of the rhetorical genre of *apologia*. Due to the preemptive nature of the memo, this research seeks to apply preemptive *apologia* genre criticism outlining the use of three factors (*bolstering*, *differentiation*, and *transcendence*), and the posture of *justification* that Senator Obama seeks through the memo released on June 20, 2008. Through the body of this research, I explicate and introduce the memo, explore past methods used in the genre of *apologia* criticism, apply three of the *apologia* factors (*bolstering*, *differentiation*, and *transcendence*), explain the posture of *justification* that Senator Obama is in quest of throughout this memo, and lastly, conclude the findings and interpretations in their entirety.

Site Description

Some U.S. citizens are moved by Senator Obama's "change" slogan, referencing a much needed change in the eyes of those who have had enough of the Bush administration. In this particular memo, Senator Obama exemplifies a change in politics. He wants to change the public financing system because the system "as it exists today is broken" (Obama, 2008). He wants his campaign to reflect the "grassroots values" (Obama, 2008) of the people in the United States—a grassroots movement built from the bottom-up.

Senator Obama denounces the corruption of the public funding system. He states that Senator McCain is "fueled by contributions from Washington lobbyists and special interest PACs¹" (Obama, 2008). The intention of the public funding system overall, as addressed by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1907, was to ban private contributions (F.E.C., 2008). Since the first administered public funding in 1976, presidential candidates have been able to find loopholes, such as the implementation of PACs. Because of the loopholes, the public financing system has been led astray from its original intention. Senator Obama makes clear that he wants to stay away from the "broken" system that is corrupted, and instead "build a broad coalition of small donors" that represents the U.S. citizens more accurately. Senator McCain, in contrast, has "mastered the art of gaming this broken system" (Obama, 2008). Furthermore, Senator Obama has co-sponsored legislation to fix the "broken system." Throughout the

¹ Political Action Committees (PACs) raise money and also spend "hard" money, but in limited amounts. PACs mainly represent businesses; for example, the Teamsters PAC, the Microsoft PAC, and the National Rifle Association are some of the many PACs in existence. For more information, see opensecrets.org.

memo, Senator Obama continuously correlates the broken system with his opponent, Senator John McCain, and in doing so, distinguishes himself as the liable candidate.

With this memo, the presumptive democratic nominee does two things simultaneously. He shows the correlation between the “broken system” and Senator McCain, while associating himself with his supporters. Senator Obama distinctly portrays himself as the non-corrupter by not accepting public funds, leaving Senator McCain as the corruptor who is flowing in “big donor” money.² Using phrases such as “help us,” “we’ve already seen,” and “declare our” (Obama, 2008, emphasis added), Senator Obama puts himself at the same level as his supporters. The “us” language is used to reflect the “grassroots” movement that has “already changed our politics” according to Senator Obama (2008). Both the correlation and the self-association help Senator Barack Obama to accomplish the justification needed to keep his supporters (and even gain more). For further understanding, the development of the apologia genre criticism must be explicated and addressed to better understand the analysis portion of this research.

Methodology

A framework for apologia criticism can be taken from the classical article of Ware and Linkugel (1973). Many rhetorical critics have found their ideas on *factors* and *postures* useful (e.g. Gold, 1978; Ryan, 1982; Mueller, 2004; Armstrong, Hallmark, & Williamson, 2005). The four factors presented by Ware and Linkugel (1973) can be applied to self-defense speeches: 1) denial; 2) bolstering; 3) differentiation; and 4) transcendence. Denial is when a rhetor tries to reject the relationship between itself³ and the feeling/object/subject that the audience associates negatively with. Bolstering strategies associate the speaker with something that is viewed positively by the audience. Differentiation happens when the speaker separates a feeling/object/subject from a larger context, thus creating a different situation and meaning for the audience. The last factor, transcendence, is a strategic factor that seeks to be joined with some feeling/object/subject that is part of a larger context, but is not presently viewed by the audience. The four factors (denial, bolstering, differentiation, and

² President Barack Obama has been the first candidate to decline public funding for his general campaign since the installment of the Presidential Election Campaign Fund (PECF) in 1976.

³ To be politically correct, and taking into consideration that in the political climate today there are women candidates who are contesting for presidency, the word “itself” will be used in places to reference “him/herself.” The reason is to avoid clashing of words and to avoid confusion.

transcendence) are suggested as variables that can be used to explain the different phenomena that occur in apologetic speeches.

Furthermore, Ware and Linkugel (1973) argue that denial and bolstering are reformatory factors, and differentiation and transcendence are transformative factors. The use of either one or both of the reformatory factors improves the rhetor's image by removing faults. ("I didn't kill her. I only ended her suffering.") When a rhetor uses the transformative factors (differentiation and transcendence), the speaker changes the meaning of the context. ("This is not about killing, but putting an end to human suffering. No human deserves to suffer. It is inhumane to allow suffering to happen.") The rhetor in transformation wants the audience to associate a different kind of meaning to itself. In order to accomplish transformation the rhetor must strategically exempt itself from the negative light and accomplish both differentiation and transcendence adequately.

Along with the factors of apologetic criticism, Ware and Linkugel (1973) explain what they call postures. The postures represent a subgenre of the apologia lens. Each posture has a combination of two factors that were explained previously. The postures are *absolution*, *vindication*, *explanation*, and *justification*. The posture of absolution combines the factors of denial and differentiation; the speaker *in absolution* seeks exoneration. Vindication relies heavily on the factor of transcendence because the speaker grants itself "greater ease in going beyond the specifics of a given charge" (p. 283). Both postures of explanation and justification rely on bolstering, but the difference is that one relies on differentiation and the other relies on transcendence. In a speech that is explanative, the rhetor imagines that the audience comprehends its actions and therefore is unable to condemn him/her (p. 283). In a justificative speech the rhetor not only wants the audience to understand her/him, but also seeks support from her/his audience (p. 283).

On a similar note, other critics use stasis or stases that resemble Ware and Linkugel's postures. Critic Halford Ross Ryan (1982) contends that the four postures used by Ware and Linkugel are in correspondence to Cicero's four stases. The four stases are *fact*, *definition*, *quality*, and *jurisdiction*. Kramer and Olsen (2002) use the same stases outlined by Ryan, but use them as separate entities. The issue of *fact* is introduced as an absolute denial (e.g. "It means that there is not a sexual relationship, an improper sexual relationship, or any other kind of improper relationship") (qtd. in Kramer and Olsen, 2002, p. 353). Stasis of definition is an explanation of a matter that was left ambiguous on purpose (e.g. President Clinton, during the Lewinsky scandal, was ambiguous when

describing his relationship with his female intern, and therefore, left room for definition to be addressed in the future).⁴ Stasis of quality uses arguments for the audience to assess the misconduct through a broader perspective or a special circumstance (e.g. President Clinton, sometime after the Lewinsky scandal, addressed the nation to “unite in turning its attention to more pressing [matter]”) (qtd. in Kramer and Olsen, 2002, p. 362). And stasis of jurisdiction asserts that the speaker appeals or becomes justifiable to the audience (e.g. President Clinton, during the Lewinsky scandal, wanted the people of the United States to be the ultimate judge of the situation).⁵ Although the postures and the stases are named differently, they serve a similar purpose to the genre of apologia.

Ryan (1982) takes a different approach on apologia criticism as he emphasizes both the *kategoria* (accusation) and the *apologia* (apology) as a speech set. The *kategoria* is the exigency and the motivational factor for an apologia. A *kategoria* can be an attack of character or policy. It is the critic’s duty to identify what type of *kategoria* is being set forth, an attack on character, or an attack on the rhetor’s policy. With the identification of the *kategoria* as an attack of character or policy, the critic can then better understand the motives of the apologia speech. Kramer and Olsen (2002) observe the *kategoria* and apologia of the Clinton and Lewinsky scandal. They analyze the different accusations that arose during the scandal, and how President Clinton strategically used the four stases (fact, definition, quality, and jurisdiction) for a successful line of self-defense speeches throughout the entire scandal.

Although some critics use both the *kategoria* and the *apologia* for analysis, having the *kategoria* as the exigency and the *apologia* as the rebuttal, Mueller (2004) points to the *apologia* as the exigency. Mueller argues that traditional apologia results from an accusation, and proposes another leg to explore, *preemptive apologia*. Through preemptive apologia the speaker defends itself “against the personal criticism [she or] he believes [she or] he would face using the model of an apologia” (p. 30). Mueller points out yet another glitch conflicting with traditional apologia, in which the *apologia* is usually delivered as a speech. He argues that the choice of medium to depict a speech/memo should not matter.⁶

⁴ Example taken from Kramer and Olsen (2002).

⁵ Example taken from Kramer and Olsen (2002).

⁶ In his article, Mueller (2004) quotes from Noreen W. Kruse’s article “The Scope of Apologetic Discourse: Establishing Generic Parameters.”

It must also be noted that some critics only use one or two of the factors from Ware and Linkugel (1973) for their analyses. Armstrong, Hallmark, and Williamson (2005) use the factor of bolstering to analyze the successful talk show of evangelist John Ankerberg. They state that Ankerberg, through the use of bolstering, is able to “advance his brand of orthodox Christianity” (p. 74). One ought to remember that bolstering is when a speaker identifies himself with something that is viewed favorably (Ware and Linkugel, 1973). Armstrong, Hallmark, and Williamson (2005) argue that it is because of Ankerberg’s bolstering skills that he has been able to maintain his show running for more than twenty years. Therefore, according to Armstrong, Hallmark and Williamson’s analysis, it is acceptable to not use all four of the factors within the apologia genre.

On a different note, critic Gold (1978) applies apologia criticism to political campaign speeches. Gold points to the constant questioning that candidates endure “about possible inconsistencies in their statements or incongruences” (307) from previous behavior(s). Under the persistent questioning, a candidate has to attempt to defend its policy, which becomes a rhetorical exigency. The exigency needs to carry a justification of the candidate’s “motives and intent—in short, an apologia” (p. 307). As a public figure, every move needs to be justified and explicated. Senator Obama’s memo declining public funds for the general campaign is providing a justification that will tackle the constraints needed to be addressed.

Through the methodology described above, Mueller’s (2004) notion of preemptive apologia is used to analyze the memo. Second, the factors of bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence as defined by Gold (1978) will assist in the analysis of the text. The final process to be assessed is the effect the posture of justification from Ware and Linkugel (1973) employed within the memo.

Analysis

Preemptive Apologia

As mentioned previously, an apologia speech is intended to clear the air in regards to an accusation. Mueller (2004) explains that most apologia genre theory is treated as a defensive tool, not as an offensive tool. In this case, Senator Obama uses apologia to offensively justify his views on the “broken” financial system. Using a preemptive strategy Senator Obama defends himself “against the personal criticism he believed he would face” (Mueller, 2004, p. 30).

Senator Obama acknowledged sitting down with Senator McCain to discuss the public funding for the general campaign (Nagourney and Zeleny, 2008). But the memo was released before both candidates sat and deliberated about the public financing system. Senator McCain, after the release of the memo, attacked Senator Obama's "trustworthiness" and the action taken by Senator Obama, despite previous statements about deliberating (between each other) to accept public funds, should be disturbing to all U.S. citizens (Nagourney and Zeleny, 2008). The release of the preemptive memo shows that Senator Obama was aware of the type of *kategoria*-accusation that would or could be made against him.

The nature of apologia is often viewed as a defensive strategy, as opposed to offensive; however, this does not mean that this memo does not use apologetic factors. Mueller (2004) provides the vehicle to analyze preemptive apologia and through the preemptive vehicle, it is clear that an accusation is not necessary for the installments of factors from apologia criticism. The rhetor can be aware of the *kategoria* that can arise given the circumstance and context. Furthermore, preemptive apologia is a different form of approaching a situation and can be a beneficial tool for a rhetor. In Senator Obama's case, he was aware of some of the attacks that could be made against him from the opposing side, having stated previously that he would sit with Senator McCain to discuss public funding. Because of previous statements, Senator Obama knew there was going to be some backlash, and therefore the memo was sent out preemptively. Senator Obama beat them to the punch. Through the use of preemptive apologia the factor of bolstering will be applied to further assess the argument.

Factor of Bolstering

Ware and Linkugel (1973) use four factors that Gold (1978) also uses in her article. For the purpose of this research, three of the four factors will be used, leaving the factor of denial out. The reason for this is that denial, as defined by Gold (1978), is when the rhetor denies with intention, or is arguing that its statement was misinterpreted or misunderstood (p. 308). Senator Obama does not deny anything nor does he argue for anything through the memo. The accusation is not present; the memo was a preemptive strike, and therefore the factor of denial is not suitable for this assessment. The other three factors of bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence are more suitable and clearly represented throughout the memo.

Taking a look at Senator Obama's campaign as a whole (from past to present), he has been promoting "change." Through the memo, Senator Obama

(2008) uses phrases such as “*reforming* the system,” “declare *our* independence,” and “*free* from the influence” (Obama, 2008, emphasis added). As a reminder, bolstering is when a speaker associates himself with something that is viewed favorably with the audience (Gold, 1978). Senator Obama accomplishes being viewed in a favorable light as he uses phrases such as, “*reforming* the system,” “declare *our* independence,” “*free* from the influence,” “brought *us* this far,” “help *us* build,” and “*this* campaign is *in the voters’ hands*” (Obama, 2008, emphasis added). Senator Obama keeps up with his character, the character of change and reform. He wants to keep the influence of big donors away from his campaign, and instead “build a broad coalition of small donors *free* from the influence of PACs and Washington Lobbyist” (Obama, 2008, emphasis added). He supports legislation to reform the broken system, another notion added to his character of “change.” In summation, Senator Obama uses the bolstering strategy 1) to keep up with his character and his message of change, and 2) to associate himself with things that are viewed by his audience in favorable light.

Factor of Differentiation

The differentiation process enacted through Senator Obama’s memo is used to attach new meaning to the context. When he states, “help *us* build,” he is showing unity between himself and his supporters. To reiterate, Ware and Linkugel (1973) describe how differentiation is used to suspend judgment until the rhetor can separate itself symbolically and create new meaning for the existing context. The present context is: not accepting public funds. By not accepting public funds Senator Obama differentiates himself and creates a new context: unification between himself and his supporters. Senator Obama wants his supporters to be “free from the influence” (Obama, 2008) of corrupt politics. He assures his supporters that their small donations have not been in vain as “1.5 million [other] people have [already] contributed” (Obama, 2008). His supporters have not been “big money” contributors, but instead, contributors of “\$25 or less.”

Senator Obama does not want his campaign to reflect the influence of “big donors” as he is wholeheartedly committed to “reforming the system” when he is elected as the next president. He wants his supporters to join him in “declar[ing] *our independence*” (Obama, 2008, emphasis added). Senator Obama wants his campaign to reflect grassroots values, showing that change *can* be built from the bottom-up. And at the end, Senator Obama extends his

hands, and gives his campaign to the voters in a way no other campaign has ever done before.

Using unifying words such as “we” and “us,” Senator Obama is creating the differentiation between the exigency, which is not accepting public funds, and creating a new context that is the inclusion of his supporters. Including his supporters makes them a larger, and more valuable commodity within this rhetorical situation (e.g. this is not about killing, but putting an end to human suffering. No human deserves to suffer. It is inhumane to allow suffering to happen). By differentiating himself from the first rhetorical exigency of not taking public money, he strategically sets the stage for unification and continues to promote “change” as he has been throughout his entire campaign. Providing the differentiation between not taking public funds, Senator Obama still does not dismiss the first context, which is the broken system. Using transcendence, Senator Obama is able to label the object of public financing of elections as broken and joining it with his Republican opponent, Senator McCain. It is also essential to keep in mind that the factors of differentiation and transcendence are transformative. To successfully accomplish transformation the rhetor must strategically exempt itself from the negative light and accomplish both differentiation and transcendence adequately.

Factor of Transcendence

In the opening paragraph, Senator Obama states, “Republican Party apparatus has mastered the art of gaming this broken system” (Obama, 2008); thus Senator Obama creates a new context that no longer associates himself with this game. The context of the broken system and the “Republican apparatus” that has mastered the escape hatches of the “broken system” was not present in the context of the memo, but Senator Obama transcended this fact to better suit his purpose (becoming the next U.S. president). The factor of transcendence is used to join feeling/object/subject to a larger context, which is not presently viewed by the audience (Ware and Linkugel, 1973). The public financing system of presidential elections is not associated with the Republican apparatus until Senator Obama puts the two together. Senator Obama begins by stating that his decision to not accept public funds “wasn’t an easy one” (Obama, 2008), but further along justifies not accepting the funds because the public financing system is “broken.” After a few sentences, which explicate why he is not accepting public funds for his general campaign, he transcends the broken system with Senator McCain.

Gold (1978) explains that “transcendence is less useful in campaigns because it requires more subtle techniques and a more developed discourse than are typically available to those contesting for office” (p. 308). Senator Obama uses the factor of transcendence subtly. With transcendence, Senator Obama causes the audience to associate the broken system with the Republican presumptive nominee, Senator McCain. Transcendence is present in Senator Obama’s memo and used strategically to condemn Senator McCain through the entire memo. Senator Obama instead switches from bolstering to differentiation and transcendence simultaneously through the memo. He closes the door on corrupt politics, and transcends his audience to a brighter light of “grassroots values” and “free from the influence” of the corrupt politics he denounces in his memo.

Throughout Senator Obama’s memo, the factor of transcendence is present and useful. Transcendence provides a fulfilling underlying motive in the memo, which according to Gold (1978) is not present because those contesting for office need more subtle techniques and a more developed discourse. The transcendence of corrupt politics and Senator McCain helps Senator Obama close the door on corruption, and instead walks through the door that exemplifies “free” and “independent” politics.

Putting Together the Three Factors

Transcendence, differentiation, and bolstering work together to illustrate the reformation and transformation that Senator Obama enacts with this memo. With bolstering, Senator Obama reforms his character by favorably associating himself with the voters and his supporters using words such as “us” and “we.” The audience then reforms his character as not only a presidential candidate, but also as one of them, just an everyday, ordinary person. Senator Obama transforms his character by both associating himself with politics of “change” and pointing out the “corrupt” politics with using the factors of differentiation and transcendence. He differentiates himself from the corrupt politics by creating the context of unification between himself and his supporters. Therefore, Senator Obama transforms the memo from the decision “not to participate in public financing” to let us “run the type of campaign that reflects the grassroots values that have already changed our politics” (Obama, 2008). With the use of the three factors (bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence), and then accomplishing reformation and transformation, Senator Obama is led to justification.

Posture of Justification

The denunciation of the use of public funds from Senator Obama created a rhetorical exigency. Through the memo, Senator Obama justifies his actions by declaring the public financing system as “broken.” One must remember that in a justificative speech (or, in this case, a memo) the speaker seeks understanding and approval for his actions (Ware and Linkugel, 1973). Senator Obama claims the system as broken, and therefore sets himself apart from those who accept the funds from a broken system. The memo needed to address and establish the basis for Senator Obama’s denunciation of public funds. The memo concerns his opposition to accepting public funds from the broken system and addresses his supporters to steer away from unregulated political activity. Senator Obama wants to lead by example. He didn’t accept public funds from the broken system, and therefore his supporters shouldn’t contribute to or join unregulated political activities either.

Conclusion of Analysis

Senator Obama’s memo was a preemptive memo that addressed issues that he assumed would be present because of the previous statements involved with sitting down with Senator McCain to discuss public funding. Because of the preemptive vehicle, Senator Obama’s memo does not illustrate the factor of denial. Denial is when the rhetor tries to reject the relationship between itself and the feeling/object/subject that is viewed negatively by the audience (Ware and Linkugel, 1973). The factor of bolstering (the rhetor associating itself with something that is viewed favorably by the audience) is present in Senator Obama’s memo as he associates himself with his supporters. He creates an “us” and “we” environment through his memo. The creation of two different contexts (the broken system and “grassroots values”) differentiates Senator McCain and Senator Obama. The creation of these two contexts allows the audience to associate bad politics with Senator McCain and good politics with Senator Obama. Senator Obama uses transcendence to close the door on bad politics and instead walk through the door of “grassroots values” and “independence.” With the use of the three factors (bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence), Senator Obama reforms and transforms his image. Eventually, the combination of factors leads him to justification, in which he gains audience approval for his actions.

Although the aim of this research was clearly to analyze the memo of declining public funds for the general campaign by then-Senator Obama with an apology stance and a deep analysis of spoken rhetoric, it should be noted that

the 2008 presidential elections were the most expensive elections in the nation's history. The campaigns reached "the size of an economic stimulus package" (Wayne, 2008). It was the first election to pass the \$5 billion mark while also setting a record for individual donations (Wayne, 2008). Then-Senator Obama raised a record-shattering \$750 million for his 2008 campaign, which speaks powerfully to the financial goals set for this year's presidential election to also hit the \$600 million mark by the Republican party nominee (Confessore, 2012). It is speculated that President Obama is likely to match, or even exceed, his first campaign's financial record (Confessore, 2012). It is obvious that neither candidate for the 2012 presidential election will take public funds. This was the case in 2008 for then-Senator Obama, who was able to raise more money on his own than if he would have taken public funds. Accepting public funds is to accept spending limits on their campaigns, which neither 2012 candidate is willing to do.

In 2010, the law governing PACs changed. It now allows corporations and unions, as well as others, to "spend money on behalf of almost any cause" (Carr, 2011). PACs and their seemingly complex entities were explained on *The Colbert Report*. In April 2012, Stephen Colbert persuaded his fans to make their own contributions to his PAC, named "Colbert's Americans for a Better Tomorrow, Tomorrow super PAC" by buying the "Super Fun PAC" that included a t-shirt, tube socks, Allen wrench, a treasure map, and instructions on how individuals could register their own Super PACs (Levinthal, 2012). Although seen as a mockery, Colbert clearly states that his PAC is "100 percent legal and at least 10 percent ethical" (qtd. in Carr, 2011). The entire goal of the public funding system was to avoid the influence of big money flowing into federal elections, but with PACs and Super PACs being susceptible markers in the financial political arena, politics continues to be a broken system.

Conclusion

The analysis of Senator Obama's memo, released on June 20, 2008, provides new insight into the genre of apologia. First, by applying the preemptive vehicle it demonstrates that an apologia does not always stem from a kategoria, but can instead assume the kategoria, and strike preemptively. Second, using the factor of transcendence in political apologia gives the critic greater insight in the underlying strategies of the rhetor. And third, applying preemptive apologia, the factors of bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence lead into the posture of justification, thus providing the underlying meaning behind the memo. I was better able to see how a strategic political figure can blindsides an audience into

believing that his/her word is the truth, and nothing but the truth. Criticism therefore provides the necessary tool(s) needed to deconstruct any speech, or in this case a simple memo, to its core to see the underpinnings that hold all speeches together.

Limitations

Because then-Senator Barack Obama was the first modern candidate to deny public funding for the general election, supporting evidence of the “broken” system is not available using current research. Although the 2012 presidential election is still underway, it is difficult to foresee how much money in total that both parties will spend during their campaigns. Therefore, the analysis conducted on then-Senator Obama’s memo is a unique rhetorical exigency. In addition, the preemptive tool is also a limitation because there is not a sufficient amount of criticism on preemptive speeches. Finally, Gold’s (1978) claim of the non-viability of transcendence in a political setting is also a limitation due to the existing criticism in the genre of political apologia that does not acknowledge the factor of transcendence as present.

Suggestions for Future Studies

An interesting future study can include a genre of speeches by then-Senator Barack Obama through his primary and/or his general campaign trail and can now include his presidential speeches as well as current re-election speeches. What is he saying during the 2012 presidential election about the broken system and his current stance on public funds? More importantly, what are both parties saying about their decline of public funds? It would be interesting to see something similar to Kramer and Olsen’s (2002) assessment of President Bill Clinton’s twenty-something speeches in regards to the Lewinsky scandal. Conducting a genre criticism of Barack Obama’s speeches before becoming president, as well as his presidential speeches could be an important way to delve into modern political motives and maneuvers. President Obama has been the first at many things: the first president to mobilize a younger generation through the use of social media, the first president to be African-American, the only president who successfully killed Osama Bin Laden, and the list continues.

References

- Armstrong, R.N., Hallmark, J.R., & Williamson, L.K. (2005). Televangelism as institutional apologia: The religious talk show as strategized text. *Journal of Media and Religion*, 4(2), 67-83.
- Carr, D. (2011, August). Comic's PAC is more than a gag. *NYTimes.com*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/22/business/media/stephen-colberts-pac-is-more-than-a-gag.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all
- Confessore, N. (2012, April). In cash push, 2 campaigns likely to reject public funds. *NYTimes.com*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/13/us/politics/campaigns-plan-maximum-push-to-raisemoney.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all
- Federal Election Commission. (1996). Public funding of presidential elections. Retrieved from http://www.fec.gov/pages/brochures/pubfund.shtml#Party_Limit
- Gold, E.R. (1978). Political apologia: The ritual of self-defense. *Communication Monographs*, 45, 306-316.
- Kramer, M.R., & Olsen, K.M. (2002). The strategic potential of sequencing apologia stases: President Clinton's self-defense in the Monica Lewinsky scandal. *Western Journal of Communication*, 66(3), 347-368.
- Levinthal, D. (2012, May 20). Stephen Colbert super PAC numbers pick up. *Politico.com*. Retrieved from: <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0512/76553.html>
- Mueller, A.G. II. Affirming denial through preemptive apologia: The case of the Armenian genocide resolution. *Western Journal of Communication*, 68(1), 24-44.
- Nagourney, A., & Zeleny, J. (2008). Obama forgoes public funds in first for major candidate. *NYTimes.com*. Retrieved from: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/20/us/politics/20obamacnd.html?_r=1&oref=slogin&pagewanted=print
- Obama, B. (2008, June 20). The system is broken, I support public financing and will work to make it viable. *USA TODAY*. Retrieved from <http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20080620/oppose20.art.htm>
- OpenSecrets.org: Center for Responsive Politics. (n.d.). Types of advocacy groups. Retrieved August 17, 2008, from: <http://www.opensecrets.org/527s/types.php>
- Ryan, H.R. (1982). Kategoria and apologia: On their rhetorical criticism as a speech set. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 68(3), 254-261.
- Ware, B. L., & Linkugel, W.A. (1973). They spoke in defense of themselves: On the generic criticism of apologia. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 59, 273-283.

Wayne, L. (2008, October). Campaign '08: Most expensive ever. *NYTimes.com*. Retrieved from <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/10/24/campaign-08-most-expensive-ever/>