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# 2012 Presidential Campaign and Social Media: A Functional Analysis of Candidates' Facebook Public Pages<sup>1</sup>

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*Functional theory reveals that presidential candidates establish "preferability" in order to win the election. The theory argues that a voter chooses to vote for the candidate who appears preferable to them, on whatever criteria that are most salient to that voter. Messages can accomplish the goal of increasing a candidate's apparent preferability by enacting three functions: acclaims, attacks, and defenses. Candidates utilize various campaign platforms (e.g., TV spots, talk show appearances, and radio spots) to claim credit, attack opponents, and defend their own personal image. Functional analysis has commonly been applied to study traditional media discourse. In this modern era where social media have achieved prevalent popularity, it is insufficiently understood how candidates take advantage of social media channels during political campaigns to build preferability. This paper attempts to expand the scope of functional theory and discusses social media in campaign politics. Specifically, we employ functional theory to analyze President Barack Obama's and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney's Facebook pages during the 2012 presidential campaign. Our findings suggest that Facebook fulfills similar functions for presidential candidates as traditional media in campaign politics to increase preferability.*

## Introduction

Social media are a group of Internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010; Kietzmann et al. 2011; Mangold and Faulds 2009). Social media encompass a wide range of online forums and discussion boards. On these sites, users are not only information receivers, but also information creators. The most popular examples of social media are Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Tumblr, and YouTube. Social media have achieved significant popularity among teenagers and adults. According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2010, 72% of online 18-29-year-olds and about 40% of Internet users age 30 and up visit social media sites (Lenhart et al. 2010).

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Not only has the exponential growth of the popularity of social media sites grabbed regular users' attention, it has also been attracting politicians to create content on some major networking sites. Among these sites, Facebook is a leading one and currently the most commonly used online social network (Sareah 2015). As of September 2015, Facebook has over one billion daily active users on average worldwide (Facebook 2015). In the U.S., 67% of Internet users are on Facebook; 82% of online adults ages 18 to 29 use Facebook, along with 79% of those ages 30 to 49, 64% of those ages 50 to 64, and 48% of those 65 and older (Duggan 2015; Smith 2013). As a popular social media program, Facebook has become part of the most important real estate in presidential politics (Parker 2015). During the 2012 presidential campaign, the two frontrunners, President Barack Obama and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, both enthusiastically took advantage of Facebook to promote political ideology, connect with voters, present general political goals, and even compete with each other. Shortly prior to the Election Day, Obama and Romney each had earned approximately 35,200,000<sup>2</sup> and 11,600,000<sup>3</sup> followers on Facebook respectively. The staggering statistics is worthy of investigation as Facebook continues to retain its critical status in campaign politics.

This study employs a functional analysis approach to examine Obama's and Romney's activities on Facebook during the 2012 presidential campaign. Functional theory indicates that the candidate who appears preferable to voters is likely to win the election. This preferability can be established through three functions in information delivery. *Acclaims* praise the candidate (positive messages). *Attacks* criticize the candidate's opponent (negative messages). When subjected to attack, *defenses* respond to or refute attacks (Benoit 2003, 99). Candidate statements in debates are a means of accomplishing the goal of building preferability and winning the election, which makes campaign discourse instrumental and functional in nature (Benoit 2014a; Benoit, Pier, and Blaney 1997; Benoit et al. 2002). Functional theory has been widely applied to study campaign messages such as TV spots, radio spots, talk show appearances, and primary debates (Benoit and Airne 2005; Benoit, Brazeal, and Airne 2007; Benoit, Pier, and Blaney 1997; Benoit et al. 2002; Benoit et al. 2007). It is inadequately addressed, however, whether social media fulfill the same functions for presidential candidates as traditional media channels in building preferability. This research analyzes campaign discourse on Facebook through the perspective of functional

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/barackobama>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/mittromney>

analysis. Our results indicate that presidential candidates' usage of Facebook and traditional media are consistent. We argue that Facebook fulfills similar functions as traditional media in promoting preferability.

## **Facebook and Campaign Politics**

It is getting more and more challenging for presidential candidates to appeal to large groups of voters simply by articulating generalized partisan values due to the fact that the political view of the majority has been shifting from either Republican or Democratic to Independent (Benoit et al. 2007). Trends in party affiliation have been dramatically reshaped over the past decade. According to a 2012 survey, 38% of the respondents described themselves as Independents, up from 32% in 2008 and 30% in 2004 (Pew Research Center 2012). To meet the new voter values, competing candidates have to "solicit votes from the same group of voters and take similar stands on the issues that matter to those voters" (Benoit et al. 2007, 5). This reality incentivizes candidates to look to the cyber world as an addition to traditional media to target voters and send crafted messages.

Social media were first identified as a significant factor in political elections during the 2000 U.S. presidential campaign (Bentivegna 2002). The 2008 Obama campaign has frequently been reported as taking political communication via social media to new heights (Simba 2009; Walker 2008). In February 2007, Obama was a junior Senator and about 20 months later he was elected the U.S. President. Obama's campaign success should mainly be credited to his use of the Internet and social media to engage new voters in addition to his public speaking and ability to inspire (Simba 2009). With the help of his 8,000 web-based affinity groups, in February 2008 alone Obama raised \$55 million; nearly \$2 million a day, almost all of it in small donations over the Internet. Surprisingly, this was a month in which Obama himself attended not a single fundraising event (Walker 2008). While other candidates were pursuing their busy schedule of fundraising cocktails, receptions, and dinners, Obama strategically raised campaign funds through virtual connections. These affinity groups were composed of online communities that supported the same candidate. For example, the MyBarackObama.com website was one of the organizing and fundraising vehicles for the Obama campaign. Citizens who endorsed Obama could either log in with Facebook or they could create an account with the site if they didn't have a Facebook profile. During the 2008 presidential campaign, Obama supporters created Facebook groups dedicated to creating content and organizing activities for voicing their endorsement for the candidate. For

example, *Students for Barack Obama*<sup>4</sup>— a Facebook community of high school, college, and graduate students in support of President Obama — attracted thousands of young voters to vocally embrace Obama as the 44<sup>th</sup> president. The page *Students for Barack Obama* was created on July 7, 2007 by Meredith Segal, a junior at Bowdoin College who first heard of Obama when he gave the keynote speech at the Democratic National Convention in 2004. After being inspired by the speech, she turned to her Facebook page, created a group and invited people (first her friends, later strangers) to join (the *Washington Post* 2007). Likewise, *Women for Obama*<sup>5</sup> is another Facebook group that gathered users, especially females, who supported Obama to discuss equal rights for women. According to *the Washington Post* (2007), more than 500 Obama groups were created on Facebook during the 2008 presidential campaign. Many of the fundraising activities were initiated by these Facebook group members who voluntarily assembled to collect donations. The MyBarackObama.com website gathered information regarding fundraising activities and recruitment events organized by Facebook groups, and sent mass messages to all members. Individuals who left their contact information with MyBarackObama.com could receive these messages and attend the events regardless of whether they were part of the Facebook community or not.

Through effective use, social media are capable of engaging supporters and raising campaign money, but the capacity to expand reach may not be identical across platforms. Standing out among various social media sites, Facebook has been a key place for campaigns to advertise mainly because it facilitates a participatory relationship between presidential candidates and citizens. The popularity of Facebook among voters from different age cohorts provides a highly visible environment for candidates to promote themselves, articulate their propositions in detail, share information, and interact with voters in fundamentally different ways than in previous elections (Vitak et al. 2011). Facebook allows users to interact with each other on political issues and share joint concerns. What the Internet facilitates, that goes beyond the limitation of traditional face-to-face social networks, are connections previously impossible between individuals. Facebook allows users who support the same candidate to group together and create common interest communities. Unlike some conventional communities that are confined to local areas, these cyber communities are glued together solely based on common interest. Many public Facebook groups have their profiles open to

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/obamastudents>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/WomenforObama>

any user to view. It is convenient for politicians to reach out to certain online communities and engage in their online activities. As public figures, many presidential candidates have public Facebook profiles. Supporters can directly interact with a candidate through a number of ways such as liking or commenting on their status, sending private messages, and posting multimedia messages on the candidate's wall (posting information visible to other users and the candidate on their public profile). On the other end of the deal, candidates' campaign teams can trace some users' Facebook activity, target specific groups of users, and send relevant campaign information.

In addition to promoting communication and voter participation, Facebook presents information in a network fashion. Facebook's News Feed page aggregates and displays a user's friends' activities, including status updates, recently shared pictures and videos, recently joined groups, and recently liked public pages. These functions may potentially engage more users to online political activities during the campaign season as the information spreads surprisingly fast in online networks. Undecided voters or uninterested individuals may discover campaign news that sparks their interest through their social network and be exposed to information that they possibly would not come across otherwise. Beyond that, Facebook has its own application which can be downloaded at no cost and installed on smart phones. Users can effortlessly pull out their phone and load their Facebook page at any time and access the latest news on the go. These features have made Facebook extremely user friendly, which explains the large Facebook population. With the understanding of these benefits, both Obama and Romney exhibited their whole-hearted passion for including Facebook as part of their campaign strategy.

### **Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse**

Functional theory argues that presidential campaign discourse serves three functions: acclaims, attacks, and defenses (Benoit, Pier, and Blaney 1997). In other words, presidential candidates utilize campaign messages to claim credit, attack opponents, and defend against attack. Benoit (2014a) argues that some candidates campaign with the intention to espouse a particular political viewpoint, which is presumably the case for some third-party candidates or some candidates in the primary who have no realistic chance of winning. Nevertheless, for those who do have a good chance of winning, which at the presidential level in contemporary campaigns means the Republican or Democratic nominees, campaign messages function as the means to winning the election (Benoit 2014a). In this study, we contend that

Obama and Romney are two appropriate cases because they were the two most prominent candidates and eventual nominees.

As discussed earlier, functional theory suggests that voting decisions are determined by a candidate's preferability (Benoit, Blaney, and Pier 1998). The theory rests on two crucial assumptions. First, the act of voting is comparative. A candidate does not have to be considered perfect to earn a citizen's vote; instead, they need to be perceived as preferable to opponents. A voter chooses between two or more candidates, and the candidate who appears most suitable to this voter will receive that individual's vote (Nie, Verba, and Petrocik 1979; Pomper 1975). As all candidates are fully exposed to media critics under the spotlight, it is unreasonable to expect any one to be utterly without drawbacks. Hence it is critical for a candidate to *appear* preferable to receive voters' endorsement. Use of the word "appear" acknowledges that a citizen's evaluation of a candidate is a perception, which leads to the fundamental goal sought by presidential candidates: to persuade enough voters that they are the better candidate in the race (Benoit 2014b). Consequently, each campaign glorifies its side and tries hard to make the other side look bad (Popkin 1994). With this purpose, candidates use campaign discourse such as press releases, television spots, debates, and official webpages to serve three basic functions: acclaims, attacks, and defenses (Benoit 2007, 2014b). Through the first two functions, a candidate emphasizes their advantages and reinforces their preferability over the competitors. As some candidates attack each other to stress their preferability, the defense function becomes especially necessary, as it may be able to prevent further damage from an attack and restore the harmed preferability.

Presidential candidates do not favor the functions equally. Benoit (2007) suggests that candidates do not use these functions at the same rate. Research on general election presidential debates from 1960 and 1976-2004 indicates that acclaims are more common than attacks, and defense is the least common function. Functional theory explains that although acclaims are not invariably persuasive, they have few drawbacks; which makes acclaims the most favorable function (Benoit 2007; Benoit, Blaney, and Pier 1998). Some voters dislike mudslinging, which gives candidates a reason to moderate attacks (Benoit 2007). Defenses have three potential drawbacks. First, one must identify an attack to refute it, so defending may inform voters of a potential weakness (for voters who were unaware of that attack) or remind them of a potential weakness (if they had forgotten it). Second, given that attacks usually occur on a candidate's weaker areas, defending against



attacks usually takes the responding candidate off-message. Third, responding to an opponent's allegation could make the defending candidate appear reactive instead of proactive. These three factors should make defenses the least common function. Accordingly, we predict that:

*Hypothesis 1a: During the 2012 presidential campaign, **Obama** used Facebook to acclaim more than attack.*

*Hypothesis 1b: During the 2012 presidential campaign, **Romney** used Facebook to acclaim more than attack.*

*Hypothesis 2a: During the 2012 presidential campaign, **Obama** used Facebook to attack more than to defend.*

*Hypothesis 2b: During the 2012 presidential campaign, **Romney** used Facebook to attack more than to defend.*

Incumbent candidates, as compared to their challengers, tend to acclaim more and attack less (Benoit 2007). This is partially due to the fact that most citizens develop relatively solid perceptions of the performance of an incumbent candidate by judging the economy and going about their normal lives (Mayer 2010). A voter will vote for the incumbent if they believe that the incumbent has performed well in office. This performance is largely determined by the politician's policy record and the perceived effectiveness of this record (Benoit 2007). Voters who think that the incumbent has performed poorly will consider someone else who could potentially perform better. Voters highly value leadership abilities and candidate issue positions (Hacker 2004), therefore it is reasonable to believe that voters would elect someone they think is appropriate for the office. Performance is fairly subjective to voters. Since the position presidential candidates pursue is the presidency, voters naturally will care about how a candidate has performed or will perform if elected president. For the incumbent, it is important to remind voters of their positive record in the office, draw attention to their accomplishments, and avoid talking about political mistakes. Challengers, on the other hand, have no record in the Oval Office; hence criticizing the incumbent may help reduce the likelihood of the re-election of the incumbent. This leads to the propositions:

*Hypothesis 3a: During the 2012 presidential campaign, Obama (the incumbent) used Facebook to **acclaim more** than Romney (the challenger).*

*Hypothesis 3b: During the 2012 presidential campaign, Obama (the incumbent) used Facebook to **attack less** than Romney (the challenger)*

The second assumption functional theory relies on is that candidates try to persuade voters of their preferability on two broad topics: policy (what they do) and character (who they are) (Benoit 2007, 2014b). Functional theory divides policy into three forms – past deeds, future plans, and general goals; and character into three forms – personal qualities, leadership ability, and ideals (Benoit 2007; 2014a; 2014b). Past deeds refer to the past record in office of an elected official, including accomplishments and failures. Future plans specify proposals for political action (means to an end). General goals can be understood as the ends rather than means. For example, improving public education should be viewed as a general goal. Proposing programs that would help public schools improve student test scores (in order to realize the general goal) should be considered as a future plan. Personal qualities are the personality traits of a candidate such as ambition, honesty, and compassion. Leadership ability refers to experience in office and the ability to accomplish things. Ideals are the values and principles a candidate endorses such as gender equality and gay rights.

In order to persuade voters of their preferability, the best evidence of how a candidate will perform as president is how they have performed in the White House. However, only the incumbent has a record in the office sought; challengers often have records in other offices, such as governor or Congress, but that experience is not the same as experience in the Oval Office. Accordingly, candidates will discuss the incumbent's record more frequently than the challenger's record. When an incumbent discusses their own record, they usually portray themselves in a positive manner; when challengers discuss the incumbent's record, they focus on the negative side. Hence, we anticipate that:

*Hypothesis 4a: During the 2012 presidential campaign, Obama (the incumbent) used Facebook to **acclaim more** than Romney (the challenger) when discussing past deeds.*

*Hypothesis 4b: During the 2012 presidential campaign, Obama (the incumbent) used Facebook to **attack less**, than Romney (the challenger) when discussing past deeds.*

As indicated earlier, policy themes address government actions or problems that may evoke such actions. Character themes refer to the

candidates' characteristics, traits, abilities, or attributes (Benoit 2007). Although some voters may view presidents (and presidential candidates) mainly as role models, voters also expect them to address important national issues (Tyler 1982). In making voting decisions, the significance of heuristic cues such as a candidate's personality and characteristics can sometimes be bound by the salience of the issue depending on voters' motivation to evaluate the arguments (Forehand, Gastil, and Smith 2004). Put simply, solely relying on establishing a positive character will not help a candidate too much in a campaign. After all, the public expects the future president to solve national problems. During the 2012 presidential campaign, the national economy was one of the most important political topics because we were still in the economic recovery. The high unemployment rate not only had far-reaching influence on citizens' everyday life, but also hurt the infrastructure of the U.S. economy. Under that circumstance, policy issues may naturally outweigh the significance of personal character. For this reason, we propose that:

*Hypothesis 5a: During the 2012 presidential campaign, **Obama** used Facebook to discuss policy more than character.*

*Hypothesis 5b: During the 2012 presidential campaign, **Romney** used Facebook to discuss policy more than character*

Statements concerning general goals and ideals are, in general, easier to acclaim than to attack (Benoit 2007). In order for a candidate to gain support, making ambitious goals and pursuing ideals are usually a plus. It is unlikely that voters would oppose the general goal of creating more jobs or keeping America safe. Neither would voters disagree with the ideal of justice or freedom. These general goals and ideals are usually positive and beneficial to the general public. Therefore, it is difficult for a candidate to attack an opponent for these types of statements. This leads us to anticipate that:

*Hypothesis 6a: During the 2012 presidential campaign, **Obama** used Facebook to acclaim more than to attack when discussing **general goals**.*

*Hypothesis 6b: During the 2012 presidential campaign, **Romney** used Facebook to acclaim more than to attack when discussing **general goals**.*

*Hypothesis 7a: During the 2012 presidential campaign, **Obama** used Facebook to acclaim more than to attack when discussing **ideals**.*

*Hypothesis 7b: During the 2012 presidential campaign, Romney used Facebook to acclaim more than to attack when discussing ideals.*

## Method

This study analyzes Obama's and Romney's Facebook public profiles through the lens of functional theory. As argued above, functional analysis is appropriate for studying campaign messages from winning candidates. We selected Obama and Romney as our cases because they were the eventual nominees<sup>6</sup>. We used content analysis as our approach. Content analysis is an important method for political communication research because the method itself was developed explicitly as a research tool for investigating the nature of communication generally (Benoit 2011). Because the purpose of our research is to investigate presidential candidates' Facebook messages, we considered content analysis as an appropriate method. Over the summer of 2013, we collected and analyzed the Facebook posts put up by the two candidates from January 1, 2012 to the Election Day November 6, 2012.

We began our data with January 1, 2012 because the election year is critical in a presidential campaign, and the messages candidates send are especially important in that year. Timing makes a noticeable difference; voters' memories of political information in earlier years may be faint, they weigh the information they receive in the election year heavily when it comes to making voting decisions (Healy and Lenz 2014). Studies (Achen and Bartels 2004; Healy and Lenz 2014) reveal that voters reward incumbents not broadly throughout incumbents' terms, but narrowly for conditions in the six months or year before Election Day, therefore voters usually evaluate the president based on their election-year performance, which incentivizes the incumbent to heavily acclaim their record and the challenger to attack the incumbent. It is crucial to engage voters and refresh their memories on the candidates' policy propositions and reinforce preferability in the election year. For this reason, we considered January 1, 2012 through the Election Day the appropriate time frame for our data. However, we did not make specific isolation of general election messages from nominating contest messages because our main focus of this paper is the functions of the Facebook messages. Although it would certainly be helpful to make such distinction, the functions of campaign information

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<sup>6</sup> It would certainly be helpful to examine other candidates' Facebook pages, but we observed that Obama and Romney were the two candidates with the highest support rates when this research idea came up. This will be readdressed in the Conclusion below.

remain the same. The ultimate goal of campaign messages — establishing preferability — also continues throughout the campaign.

The data was gathered over the summer of 2013. We printed off the information available from the candidates' Facebook pages and manually coded the material. We did not account for the posts that were deleted because they were inaccessible to us. From the candidates' public pages, both text and non-text based information displayed was analyzed. The data was coded by both authors using the rules developed by Benoit and colleagues (Benoit et al. 2002; Benoit, Brazeal, and Airne 2007<sup>7</sup>). This approach uses themes as the coding unit. A theme is defined as "a simple sentence, a string of words with a subject and a predicate" (Berg 2007, 246). A theme can also be conceptualized as an argument about the candidates, according to O'Keefe (1977). First, each theme was coded into one of the three functions:

*Acclaims* portray the candidate in a favorable light.

*Attacks* portray the opposing candidate in an unfavorable light.

*Defenses* respond to (refute) attacks, attempting to repair the candidate's reputation.

Next, each coding unit was coded by topic: policy or character.

*Policy* statements concern governmental action (past, current, or future) and problems amenable to governmental action.

*Character* statements address characteristics, traits, abilities, or attributes of the candidates.

Third, policy themes were further broken down into subcategories of past deeds, future plans, and general goals. Character themes were divided into subcategories of personal qualities, leadership ability, and ideals. The definition of each subcategory has been noted above. In Appendix A, we provide examples of acclaims and attacks on all these forms of policy and character topics. Posts that concern promoting merchandise from a candidate's official website, giving away free products with a candidate's team logo, announcing a new campaign event, asking for votes or support, and fundraising were not categorized (these types of messages made up less

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix B for the original codebook.

than 5% of the total number of posts) and were excluded from the analysis. These messages were dropped because they did not fit in any of the above categories established in functional theory. Further, these posts are either generally informative or intended to raise funds, which has little to do with the functions described in functional theory.

Posts that serve more than one function were coded into multiple themes. For example, on July 27, 2012, Romney posted: "Raleigh business owner Juan joins small business owners across the country telling President Obama that his hard-work and risk taking built his business, not the government. It's time we encourage their success, not punish it." This message contains both attack and acclaim functions. The first sentence attacks Obama for not giving enough credit to small businesses, and the second sentence acclaims Romney for recognizing the importance of the success of small businesses. Therefore, we categorized this post under both "attack" and "acclaim" themes.

Posts that include more than one subtopic were coded as many times as the message covers each subtopic. For example, on July 6, 2012, Romney stated on his Facebook that "The same old ideas of the past that have failed. My plan calls for action & will create jobs. America can do better." The first sentence regards Obama's past record as a failure, and the second sentence acclaims Romney's general goals of "calling for action" and "creating jobs". Hence this message was coded under the categories of "acclaim" and "attack"; and subcategories "past deeds" and "general goals".

Posts that cover the same topic more than once were coded multiple times under this topic. For example, the post "Mitt Romney is showing an unparalleled disdain for transparency. Take a look at five ways Romney isn't coming clean with the American people, and then share this with your friends (Obama, July 12, 2012)" attacks Romney for his intransparency in the first sentence, and lack of "being clean with the people" in the second sentence. For this reason, we coded this message as "attack" twice.

As indicated above, functional theory was developed to analyze traditional campaign discourse; therefore it does not specify the format of campaign messages. Facebook, as an online social media website, allows users to post multi-media information. For the purpose of organizing our data and learning more about the candidates' Facebook activities, we decided to categorize each post into text-based, image-based, and video-based format. Text-based posts are posts that only contain information in

text format. Image-based posts are posts that contain picture(s) or graph(s) with or without text description. Video-based posts are posts that contain video(s) with or without text description. To ensure accuracy, we checked inter-coder reliability by calculating Cohen's kappa values. Inter-coder reliability measures the extent to which independent researchers make the same coding decisions in evaluating the characteristics of messages (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Bracken 2002). Inter-coder reliability check is important because it is "near the heart of content analysis; if the coding is not reliable, the analysis cannot be trusted" (Singleton 1993, 294). Cohen's kappa measures inter-coder agreement for categorical items. High values imply high consistency and reliability of the coding analysis. Both authors reached the conclusion that Cohen's kappa for functions is .87, for topics is .85, for forms of policy is .91, for forms of character is .83, which denotes high consistency and reliability.

The categorization of format (text-, image- or video-based information) generates frequency data. Accordingly, non-parametric statistics were used for our analysis since we do not assume that the outcome is approximately normally distributed. Two forms of chi-square were required. Chi-square is best thought of as a discrepancy between the frequencies observed for a set of categories. In social science, the chi-square statistics is a common tool for comparing different samples (Williams and Monge 2001). For tests of one variable (e.g., functions, topics) a chi-square goodness-of-fit test was appropriate. For tests with two variables (e.g., incumbency and functions), a chi-square test of cross-classification was the correct test.

## Results

Given that Facebook allows multi-media messages, we first observed the formats of these available posts. Table 1 displays the frequency of the three formats of Facebook posts and the distribution of these forms of posts over time. Together, the two candidates had 1589 posts from January 1, 2012 through the Election Day November 6, 2012 with 328 text-based messages (20.64%), 1023 image-based messages (64.38%), and 238 video-based messages (14.98%). A chi-square goodness-of-fit test reveals that these forms occurred with different frequencies ( $X^2 [df = 2] = 696.88, p < .0001$ ).

The first two pairs of hypotheses predict that both candidates used Facebook to acclaim more than to attack, and to attack more than to defend

**Table 1: Formats of Obama's and Romney's Facebook Posts**

Month	Text-based Posts	Image-based Posts	Video-based Posts	Total
<b>Obama</b>				
January	5	10	10	25
February	3	31	11	45
March	7	29	21	57
April	7	31	20	58
May	4	44	15	63
June	0	39	8	47
July	0	49	7	56
August	0	72	3	75
September	1	59	5	65
October	0	79	3	82
November	0	15	0	15
Total	27 (4.59%)	458 (77.89%)	103 (17.52%)	588
<b>Romney</b>				
January	58	26	14	98
February	80	20	1	101
March	59	16	7	82
April	44	29	8	81
May	28	36	21	85
June	10	61	13	84
July	7	64	15	86
August	8	98	16	122
September	7	107	20	134
October	0	86	14	100
November	0	22	6	28
Total	301 (30.07%)	565 (56.44%)	135 (13.49%)	1,001
Total for Both Candidates	328 (20.64%)	1,023 (64.38%)	238 (14.98%)	1,589

$X^2 [df = 2] = 1049.04, p < .0001$ . Source: The two candidates' Facebook public pages (January 1, 2012-November 6, 2012)

<sup>8</sup> The predictions are confirmed: acclaims constituted 60.45% of the posts, followed by attacks (38.73%), and then defenses (0.82%). On the individual level, the predictions also hold true for both candidates. A chi-square goodness-of-fit test confirms that these forms occurred with different frequencies ( $X^2 [df = 2] = 1049.04, p < .0001$ ).

<sup>8</sup> We observed that the attack messages from both candidates' Facebook profiles were directed at each other. No attack message was identified making negative comments about a third candidate. Further, the defense posts were intended to respond to each other. No defense message was identified responding to attacks from a third candidate.



The third pair of hypotheses expects that the incumbent (Obama) used Facebook to acclaim more, and attack less, than the challenger (Romney). The data confirms that Obama used the acclaim function noticeably more frequently than Romney (74.48% to 53.85%), and attacked less than his opponent (25.36% to 45.02%). A chi-square test of cross-classification demonstrates that these differences were significant ( $X^2 [df = 1] = 145.35, p < .0001, Phi = .26$ ). These data are reported in Table 2.

**Table 2: Functions of Obama's and Romney's Facebook Posts**

Month	Acclaim	Attack	Defense
<b>Obama</b>			
January	25	1	1
February	40	4	1
March	49	5	0
April	47	7	3
May	43	21	0
June	49	13	0
July	45	24	1
August	34	27	1
September	44	9	0
October	77	42	0
November	11	5	0
Total	464 (74.48%)	158 (25.36%)	1 (0.16%)
<b>Romney</b>			
January	88	68	0
February	76	32	4
March	56	22	0
April	28	65	0
May	58	81	0
June	67	53	0
July	61	99	10
August	85	64	0
September	84	29	0
October	85	63	1
November	25	20	0
Total	713 (53.85%)	596 (45.02%)	15 (1.13%)
Total for Both Candidates	1,177 (60.45%)	754 (38.73%)	16 (0.82%)

$X^2 [df = 1] = 145.35, p < .0001$ . Source: The two candidates' Facebook public pages (January 1, 2012-November 6, 2012)

The fourth pair of hypotheses anticipates that when discussing past deeds (record in office), Obama used Facebook to acclaim more, and attack less, than Romney during the 2012 presidential campaign. The analysis confirms that Obama acclaimed much more frequently than Romney on past

deeds (80.43% to 11.55%) while Romney attacked Obama's first term record much more frequently than Obama's attack on Romney's record as the Governor of Massachusetts (88.45% to 19.57%). A chi-square test of cross-classification demonstrates that these differences were significant ( $X^2 [df = 1] = 203.15, p < .0001, Phi = .68$ ). The results further indicate that the two candidates most often discussed general goals (58.87%), followed by past deeds (29.98%), and then future plans (11.15%). A chi-square goodness-of-fit test concludes that these sub-topics occurred with different frequencies ( $X^2 [df = 2] = 164.99, p < .0001$ ). Both Obama and Romney preferred acclaiming to attacking when addressing general goals (71.82% to 28.18%; Obama: 82.31% to 17.69%; Romney 66.43% to 33.57%), which supports our sixth pair of hypotheses. A chi-square goodness-of-fit test confirms that these frequencies are significantly different ( $X^2 [df = 1] = 164.99, p < .0001$ ). These data are reported in Table 3.

**Table 3: Forms of Policy Discussed in Obama's and Romney's Facebook Posts**

Candidate	Past Deeds		Future Plans		General Goals	
	Acclaims	Attacks	Acclaims	Attacks	Acclaims	Attacks
Obama	111 (80.43%)	27 (19.57%)	21 (27.63%)	55 (72.37%)	242 (82.31%)	52 (17.69%)
Romney	35 (11.55%)	268 (88.45%)	53 (60.23%)	35 (39.77%)	380 (66.43%)	192 (33.57%)
Total Both Candidates	146 (33.11%)	295 (66.89%)	74 (45.12%)	90 (54.88%)	622 (71.82%)	244 (28.18%)
	441 (29.98%)		164 (11.15%)		866 (58.87%)	

$X^2 [df = 1] = 164.99, p < .0001$ . Source: The two candidates' Facebook public pages (January 1, 2012-November 6, 2012)

The fifth pair of hypotheses predicts that these candidates would discuss policy more than character in their 2012 general campaign Facebook pages. This prediction is confirmed: 76.18% of their statements were about policy and 23.82% about character. On the individual level, the predictions also hold true for both candidates. The frequencies of these two topics are recorded in Table 4. A chi-square goodness-of-fit test confirms that these topics occurred with different frequencies ( $X^2 [df = 1] = 529.32, p < .0001$ ).

Regarding the frequency of the three forms of character on their general election Facebook pages, ideals were the most common form of character (51.09%), followed by personal qualities (38.48%), and then leadership ability (10.43%). A chi-square goodness-of-fit test confirms that these sub-topics occurred with different frequencies ( $X^2 [df = 2] = 175.36, p < .0001$ ). The last pair of hypotheses posits that these candidates would use ideals as the basis

**Table 4: Topics of Obama's and Romney's Facebook Posts**

Month	Policy	Character
<b>Obama</b>		
January	15	11
February	36	8
March	51	3
April	51	3
May	51	13
June	55	7
July	53	16
August	55	6
September	25	28
October	109	10
November	7	9
Total	508 (81.67%)	114 (18.33%)
<b>Romney</b>		
January	108	48
February	75	33
March	57	21
April	69	24
May	119	20
June	93	27
July	89	71
August	114	35
September	76	37
October	129	19
November	34	11
Total	963 (73.57%)	346 (26.43%)
Total for Both Candidates	1471 (76.18%)	460 (23.82%)

$X^2 [df = 1] = 529.32, p < .0001$ . Source: The two candidates' Facebook public pages (January 1, 2012-November 6, 2012)

for acclaims more often than attacks. This is confirmed in the data: when discussing ideals, Obama acclaimed far more than attacked (96.72% to 3.28%); so did Romney (91.95% to 8.05%). For both candidates, 93.19% of ideals were acclaims and 6.81% were attacks. A chi-square goodness-of-fit test confirms that this difference was significant ( $X^2 [df = 1] = 75.326, p < .0001$ ). Table 5 reports this information.

**Table 5: Forms of Character Discussed in Obama's and Romney's Facebook Posts**

Candidate	Personal Qualities		Leadership Ability		Ideals	
	Acclaims	Attacks	Acclaims	Attacks	Acclaims	Attacks
Obama	26 (54.17%)	22 (45.83%)	5 (100%)	0 (0.00%)	59 (96.72%)	2 (3.28%)
Romney	59 (45.74%)	70 (54.26%)	26 (60.47%)	17 (39.53%)	160 (91.95%)	14 (8.05%)
Total Both Candidates	85 (48.02%)	92 (51.98%)	31 (64.58%)	17 (35.42%)	219 (93.19%)	16 (6.81%)
	177 (38.48%)		48 (10.43%)		235 (51.09%)	

$X^2 [df=1] = 75.326, p < .0001$ . Source: The two candidates' Facebook public pages (January 1, 2012-November 6, 2012)

## Conclusion

Functional theory predicts that presidential candidates build preferability with voters through campaign discourse in order to win the election. The theory further argues that campaign messages play an essential role in the accomplishment of this goal by serving three functions: acclaims, attacks, and defenses. Since the 2000 U.S. presidential election, candidates have been taking advantage of Facebook to send campaign information. It is insufficiently understood, however, whether Facebook fulfills the same functions for presidential candidates as traditional media channels in achieving preferability. A content analysis guided by functional approach was conducted to examine the Facebook pages of the two frontrunners in 2012, President Barack Obama and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney. We closely analyzed the two candidates' Facebook activities from January 1, 2012 through the Election Day November 6, 2012. We conclude that presidential candidates used Facebook to acclaim, attack, and defend during the campaign. We have shown that both candidates acclaimed more than they attacked, and attacked more than they defended. Functional theory explains that acclaims have few drawbacks (although that does not mean they are invariably persuasive), attacks may provoke the ire of voters who detest mudslinging, and defenses have three drawbacks, as noted earlier. Obama, the incumbent, acclaimed more and attacked less, than Romney the challenger, especially when discussing past deeds. The candidates addressed policy more than character in their Facebook posts. When discussing general goals and ideals, the candidates acclaimed more than they attacked. The basic features of an election campaign – candidates attempting to persuade voters that they are preferable to opponents – yield important similarities across Facebook and conventional media platforms (e.g., TV spots, debates, radio spots).

Although this is an early effort to apply functional theory to expand our understanding of Facebook in campaign politics, we believe it is an important inquiry as Facebook continues to play a critical role in campaign politics. This study points to additional avenues for future research. First, we did not take into consideration the deletability and editability nature of Facebook messages. It is possible that some messages had been deleted or modified after their initial publication. It would be helpful to trace the edits of Facebook messages over time. As discussed in the literature review, different than traditional media channels, Facebook facilitates a two-way communication. Therefore, presidential candidates can monitor the reactions of their Facebook followers to the posted information and craft their messages accordingly. Future research is recommended to look into the feedback from candidates' followers; and see if followers' comments have potential influence on a candidate's Facebook activities. Second, we only compared two candidates' Facebook profiles in this study. We believe that including more candidates' Facebook pages and conduct a thorough analysis of multiple candidates' campaign discourse would produce more comprehensive results. Third, this research only investigated the Facebook content of the election year. We think that examining presidential candidates' Facebook from the very beginning of the campaign season could help provide further details on how they utilize Facebook to build preferability. Further, although the ultimate goal of establishing preferability remains the same throughout the entire course of a presidential campaign, independently examining Facebook messages from each stage of the campaign (primaries, general elections) may possibly generate new findings as well. It is possible that candidates use each of the three functions differently in primaries than in general elections.

## Appendix A: Examples of Acclaims and Attacks on the Forms of Policy and Character<sup>9</sup>

### *Policy*

Example of Acclaim on Past Deeds:

-As Governor of Massachusetts, I cut taxes, balanced the budget, wiped out a \$3 billion deficit and left behind a \$2 billion rainy day fund <http://mi.tt/GFXgSh> (Posted by Mitt Romney on April 24, 2012)

Example of Attack on Past Deeds:

-Romney economics: It didn't work then, and it won't work now. Share this video to help get the word out. <http://OFA.BO/iLUfXP> (Broken Promises: Romney's Massachusetts Record) (Posted by Barack Obama on May 31, 2012)

Example of Acclaim on Future Plans:

-Make sure your friends and family see President Obama's second-term plans to keep us moving forward: <http://OFA.BO/AefFhG>

01 Make education & training a national priority

02 Build on our manufacturing boom

03 Boost American-made energy

04 Reduce the deficits responsibly

05 End the war in Afghanistan & nation-build here at home

(Posted by Barack Obama on October 24, 2012)

Example of Attack on Future Plans:

-President Obama has a specific plan to create jobs and grow the economy. Mitt Romney doesn't. "Gov. Romney doesn't have a five-point plan. He has a one-point plan – and that plan is to make sure that folks at the top play by a different set of rules." –President Obama (Posted by Barack Obama on October 17, 2012)

Example of Acclaim on General Goals:

-President Obama: "We don't turn back. We leave no one behind. We pull each other up." If this sounds like the America you believe in, keep us moving forward: <http://OFA.BO/FzuNUH> (Posted by Barack Obama September 6, 2012)

Example of Attack on General Goals:

-Last night's no. 1 takeaway: the President has a plan to move us forward – Romney doesn't. <http://OFA.BO/gUjxPP> (Posted by Barack Obama on October 4, 2012)

### *Character*

Example of Acclaim on Personal Qualities:

-President Obama has revealed himself to be a man who cares about all Americans. If you're with him, commit to vote: <http://OFA.BO/nhKoda>. "I have seen firsthand that being president doesn't change who you are – it reveals who you are." First Lady Michelle Obama<sup>10</sup> (Posted by Barack Obama on September 5, 2012)

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<sup>9</sup> Appendix A provides examples of acclaims and attacks on each of the forms of policy and character. The examples are quoted directly from the candidates' Facebook public profiles.

<sup>10</sup> This is part of the post and a direct quote from Michelle Obama on her husband's character.

Example of Attack on Personal Qualities:

-In my view, it's not just bad economics; it is immoral for us to pass on the burden of debt to future generations. <http://mi.tt/NYd3x5>

(Posted by Mitt Romney on August 20, 2012)

Example of Acclaim on Leadership Ability:

-Mitt Romney has the character, values, and leadership America needs to turn our country around. <http://mi.tt/OkdcIP> (Posted by Mitt Romney on September 4, 2012)

Example of Attack on Leadership Ability:

-We can't afford four more years of failed policies and weak leadership. Click "Like" and let's get America back on track. (Posted by Mitt Romney on August 10, 2012)

Example of Acclaim on Ideals:

-President Obama's policies aren't working for women. We need a president who will make sure all women have the opportunity for a bright and prosperous future <http://mi.tt/T0nbmp>

(Posted by Mitt Romney on October 17, 2012)

Example of Attack on Ideals:

-We've heard how little President Obama values small businesses <http://mi.tt/QK9koA>

(Posted by Mitt Romney on September 26, 2012)

## Appendix B: Functional Analysis of Political Discourse: Codebook<sup>11</sup>

The coding unit is the *theme*. There are four basic steps in coding. First, the messages must be unitized into themes. Then themes are classified into function (acclaim, attack, defend). Third, themes are classified by topic (policy, character). Next, the proper sub-form of policy (past deeds, future plans, general goal) or character (personal quality, leadership ability, ideal) is identified. It is possible that Research Questions or Hypotheses might call for addition steps (see “Other Possible Coding Decisions” at the end of this document).

1. *Unitizing Themes*. A theme is the smallest unit of discourse capable of expressing a coherent idea (in this case, not just any idea, but acclaims, attacks, and defenses). Because discourse is enthymematic (an enthymeme is an argument which is incomplete; the assumption is that the audience will supply the missing parts) -- and because several sentences can work together to develop a single idea -- themes can vary in length from a phrase to a paragraph (several sentences).

### Examples of Themes

In 1996, a Clinton spot acclaimed his accomplishments:

Ten million new jobs [T1]. Family income up \$1,600 (since 1993) [T2].  
President Clinton cut the deficit 60% [T3]. Signed welfare reform --  
requiring work, time limits [T4]. Taxes cut for 15 million families [T5].

This passage contains five themes: T1 jobs, T2 income, T3 deficit reduction, T4 welfare reform, T5 tax cuts.

Richard Nixon’s Acceptance Address attacked the failures of the Democratic Administration in 1968:

When the strongest nation in the world can be tied down for four years in a war in Vietnam with no end in sight [T1], when the richest nation in the world can’t manage its own economy [T2], when the nation with the greatest tradition of the rule of law is plagued by unprecedented lawlessness [T3], when a nation that has been known for a century of equality of opportunity is torn by unprecedented racial violence [T4], and when the President of the United States cannot travel abroad or to any major city at home without fear of a hostile demonstration [T5]. (p. 675)

This passage contains five themes: T1 Vietnam, T2 poor economy, T3 crime, T4 racial violence, T5 demonstrations against the President.

A message which said “I will reduce taxes, create new jobs, and keep our country safe from terrorism” would be unitized into three themes, one for each topic (taxes, jobs, terrorism), even though these are all contained in a single sentence.

On the other hand, a statement which said “Jobs are the backbone of a strong economy. We cannot have economic recovery without jobs. That’s why I will increase jobs” would be coded as one theme, jobs (the first two sentences explain why jobs are important, but do not comment on a problem or a solution for jobs).

Finally, a message which said “The present administration has lost over a million jobs. If elected, I will create new jobs” would be coded as two themes: the problem of lost jobs under the current administration; my solution to create more jobs if elected.

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<sup>11</sup> This codebook is developed and provided by William Benoit.



The *context unit*, used to interpret the theme, consists of the rest of the message; the part of the message that preceded and/or followed the theme. In a debate, the context unit could be other statements from the candidate on the same topic as the theme being coded; the context unit in a debate could also include a question prompting a candidate's statement or the statement of an opposing candidate which prompted the theme. If a television spot has more than one theme, the rest of the spot can be used to interpret the theme. Other portions of a speech (or any other message form) relevant to the theme constitute the context unit.

2. *Classifying Themes by Function: Acclaims, Attacks, Defenses.* Some themes do not function as acclaims, attacks, or defenses (themes which do not enact these functions are not coded). For example, "Vote for Smith" does not give any reason to prefer Smith over other candidates and should not be coded. "I am happy to be here to speak to you" similarly does not give a reason to prefer one candidate over another and should not be coded. Coders must decide whether a theme performs one of these functions, and, if so, identify which one.

*Acclaims* are themes that portray the candidate (or the candidate's political party) in a favorable light.

In the first 1960 Nixon-Kennedy debate, Nixon acclaimed the past deeds of the Eisenhower administration, when he was Vice President: We have built more schools in these last seven and a half years than we built in the previous seven and a half. It is obvious that Nixon believes building more schools is a desirable accomplishment, one that "we" accomplished.

*Attacks* are themes that portray the opposing candidate (or that candidate's political party) in an unfavorable light.

In the third 1960 debate, Kennedy attacked his opponent by declaring that: I don't think it's possible for Mr. Nixon to state the record in distortion of the facts with more precision than he just did. Distorting the record is clearly considered to be an undesirable act. Kennedy adds a touch of humor, saying that Nixon distorts the record with great precision.

*Defenses* are themes that explicitly respond to a prior attack on the candidate (or the candidate's political party).

Later in the third debate, Nixon responded to Kennedy's accusation, denying that he had distorted the record:

Senator Kennedy has indicated on several occasions in this program tonight that I have been misstating his record and his figures. I will issue a white paper after this broadcast, quoting exactly what he said. . . and the record will show that I have been correct.

Nixon explicitly denies that he misstated the record, promising to prove this claim later

Themes that do not perform one of these functions are ignored. Mark P (acclaims [praise]), A (attack), or D (defense).

3. *Classifying Themes by Topic: Policy or Character.* These themes may address either policy or character.

*Policy:* Utterances that concern governmental action (past, current, or future) and problems amenable to governmental action.

George Bush touted his past deeds:

Over the past six years, eighteen million jobs were created, interest rates were cut in half. Today, inflation is down, taxes are down, and the economy is strong (“Bush Positive Economy”).

Jobs, interest rates, inflation, taxes, and the economy all concern policy.

Michael Dukakis stressed his future plans:

Mike Dukakis wants to help. His college opportunities plan says that if a kid like Jimmy has the grades for college, America should find a way to send him (Dukakis, 1988, “Jimmy”).

Education is also a policy topic.

In 1984, Republican Katherine Ortega’s Keynote described President Reagan’s general goals: President Reagan is a candidate who can and will achieve peace without caving into Soviet threats (p. 12). Peace without caving in is obviously a desirable state of affairs.

*Character:* Utterances that address characteristics, traits, abilities, or attributes of the candidates (or their parties).

In 1988 George Bush lauded his preparation for office: “Perhaps no one in this century is better prepared to be President of the United States” than Bush (Bush, 1988, “Oath of Office”). This does not tell what he will do (policy) but his (personal) preparation for office.

Bill Clinton listed one of his positive personal qualities in 1992: “I care so much about people” (Clinton, 1992). Again, he does not tell how he plans to help people (policy), but discusses his character.

In the 1988 presidential debates, Michael Dukakis proclaimed that: I desire “a future in which there is opportunity for all of our citizens.” “Opportunity for all” is an ideal and not a policy proposal.

Every acclaim, attack, or defense should concern either policy or character. Mark each utterance as P (policy) or C (character).

4. *Classify each Policy or Character Utterance According to the Forms of Policy and Character.*

4A. *Classify Form of Policy Utterance.* Policy utterances can address Past Deeds, Future Plans, or General Goals. Past Deeds are, of course, actions taken in the past, while future plans are proposed actions. Both PD and FP are more specific than GG.

*Past Deed*

Dole attacks Clinton’s record on teen-age drug abuse in 1996:

The stakes of this election? Our children. Under Clinton, cocaine and heroin use among teenagers has doubled. Why? Because Bill Clinton isn’t protecting our children from drugs. He cut the drug czar’s office 83 percent, cut 227 Drug Enforcement agents, and cut \$200 million to stop drugs at our borders. Clinton’s liberal drug policies have failed. Our children deserve better (Dole, 1996, “At Stake”)

These are listed as failures of the Clinton administration (undesirable past deeds).

This spot acclaimed Clinton’s accomplishments on welfare reform, also in 1996:

He signed tough welfare reform. Work requirements. Time limits. Force teenage mothers to stay in school or lose benefits (Clinton, 1996, "Responsibility").

These are touted as positive accomplishments of Clinton's first term in office.

#### *Future Plan*

Bob Dole's Acceptance Address in 1996 explained that if elected, he will reduce taxes 15% across-the-board for every taxpayer in America" (1996, p. 7). This is a specific future plan for tax relief, one that was attractive to many voters.

In 1996, Bill Clinton's Acceptance attacked Bob Dole's future plans, his proposed tax cut: our opponents have put forward a very different plan, a risky \$550 billion tax scheme that will force them to ask for even bigger cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment that they passed and I vetoed last year" (p. 9)

Clearly, Clinton portrays this proposal from Dole in an unfavorable light.

#### *General Goal*

George McGovern's Acceptance Address describes general goals in 1972: It is also the time to turn away from excessive participation overseas to rebuilding our own nation" (p. 611). An emphasis on domestic, rather than foreign, policy is a general goal.

George Bush's 1992 Acceptance Address attacked the general goals of Bill Clinton and the Democratic Congress: Clinton and Congress don't want to close legal loopholes and keep criminals behind bars" (p. 709). Bush does not specify which legal loopholes would be closed by the Democrats.

Code each policy utterances for form of policy (PD, FP, GG).

4B. *Classify Form of Character Utterance.* Character utterances can address Personal Qualities (e.g., courage, compassion, honesty), Leadership Ability (e.g., experience, vision), or Ideals (e.g., values, principles).

#### *PQ (Personal Qualities)*

In 1976, Gerald Ford discussed the personal qualities important to him in his Acceptance Address: I have demanded honesty, decency, and personal integrity from everybody in the executive branch of the Government (p. 708). Honesty, decency, and personal integrity are elements of character (personality).

John Kennedy's Acceptance Address attacked his Republican opponent's personal qualities, explaining that the Republicans will invoke the name of Abraham Lincoln on behalf of their candidate--despite the fact that his [Nixon's] political career has often seemed to show charity toward none and malice for all (1960, p. 610). A lack of charity and malice are personality traits.

#### *LA (Leadership Ability)*

George Bush's 1988 Acceptance Address touted his leadership ability when he declared that I have held high office and done the work of democracy day by day (1988, p. 5). Surely this experience would serve him well if elected.

In 1980, Ronald Reagan attacked the Carter Administration's (and the Democratic Congress's) leadership abilities in his Acceptance Address when he declared that

The major issue of this campaign is the direct political, personal, and moral responsibility of the Democratic Party leadership--in the White House and in the Congress--for this unprecedented calamity which has befallen us (1980, p. 642).

Reagan indicts Carter's leadership ability.

*ID (Ideals)*

In 1980, Reagan's Acceptance Address declared that his party is ready to build a new consensus with all those across the land who share the community of values embodied in these words: family, work, neighborhood, peace, and freedom (p. 642). These values represent ideals toward which he strives. These passages illustrate acclaims on character grounds.

Barry Goldwater's Acceptance Address criticizes the ideals of his opponents in this passage:

Their mistaken course stems from false notions, ladies and gentlemen, of equality. Equality, rightly understood as our founding fathers understood it, leads to liberty and to the emancipation of creative differences; wrongly understood, as it has been so tragically in our time, it leads first to conformity and then to despotism (1964, p. 643).

These excerpts reveal how attacks may be advanced on character grounds.

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