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Advances in Research Using the C-SPAN Archives

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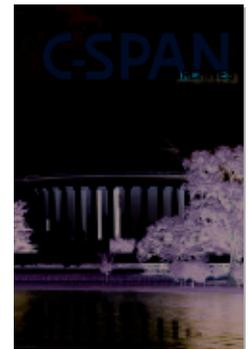
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CHAPTER 11

REPRESENTING OTHERS, PRESENTING SELF

Zoe M. Oxley

Albeit focusing on rather different topics, the previous two chapters well display the research potential of the C-SPAN Video Library. C-SPAN's coverage of both legislative activity in the U.S. Congress and campaigning for president is especially rich. Legislative politics scholars have many data sources at their disposal, of course, including roll call votes and transcripts of floor debates and committee hearings. C-SPAN video coverage of legislative floor debates captures the words spoken by representatives, but also the speakers' body language and interactions with other legislators. Analyzing the multiple dimensions that are contained in these videos can advance our understanding of representation, as demonstrated by Nadia Brown and Sarah Gershon's research. In particular, they provide insights into the representation of group interests during a debate on the U.S. House floor.

Candidate-voter interaction is the focus of Kurtis Miller's chapter. For him, analyzing C-SPAN videos was critical. The C-SPAN cameras continue to roll after formal candidate events, capturing presidential candidates as they informally greet audience members. This video footage documents interactions that are essentially unavailable elsewhere, making the C-SPAN campaign archive a veritable treasure trove for researchers of political communication, electoral campaigns, and leadership. As illustrated by Miller and in chapters earlier in this volume, examinations of unscripted political moments can yield interesting findings.

REPRESENTING OTHERS: DEBATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGISLATION

As Hannah Pitkin (1967) so eloquently articulated decades ago, representation is multifaceted. Representatives may stand for their constituents and groups in society, either symbolically or via descriptive resemblance, or they may act for others by substantively representing citizens' policy interests. Disentangling these types of representation has long interested scholars, especially those focused on the representation of women or racial and ethnic minorities. The title of Jane Mansbridge's 1999 article exemplifies this approach: "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes.'" Nadia Brown and Sarah Gershon's chapter fits squarely into this research tradition. Whether the descriptive and symbolic representation of women translates into substantive representation for women is contingent, they conclude, on partisanship.

Debate in the U.S. House over the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act in 2012 proved very good empirically for Brown and Gershon, largely because the majority of representatives who spoke on the floor were female. Using an intersectional approach, as well as quantitative and qualitative analyses, they explored whether the positions taken by representatives and the content of their comments varied by party, gender, or race/ethnicity of the lawmakers. Brown and Gershon's primary conclusion is that the contours of the debate were shaped most by party. Democratic women were more likely than Republican women to engage in substantive representation of women when debating this domestic violence legislation. In contrast, House Republicans deployed female legislators more symbolically (as bill

sponsor, floor speakers, and presiding officer) than as substantive advocates for domestic violence victims. Brown and Gershon's analyses contribute to a growing body of work demonstrating the role of party in influencing women's representation (e.g., Osborn & Kreitzer, 2014; Swers, 2014). By virtue of using C-SPAN videos, however, and by examining racial/ethnic identity alongside party and gender, Brown and Gershon present a more nuanced picture of representation than is typically found in the literature.

PRESENTING SELF: PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES WORK THE CROWD

What do political candidates say and do when they work the crowd after a campaign event? More specifically, do these brief encounters resemble the introductory exchanges we engage in when first meeting someone during our day-to-day lives? These questions guide Kurtis Miller's research. Much is known about introduction sequences during everyday conversation. Drawing upon this work, most notably that of communication scholar Danielle Pillet-Shore (2011), Miller analyzes meet-and-greet sessions of presidential candidates at the Iowa State Fair and other venues during the summer of 2015. These interactions between candidates and voters do contain many familiar elements. The two conversants orient their bodies toward each other. Body contact, typically in the form of a handshake, occurs. Greetings are sometimes exchanged. "How are you" inquiries do happen, although less commonly than during typical day-to-day introductions.

Perhaps not surprisingly, introductory exchanges between candidates and the public do depart from everyday situations. As Miller notes, many of these disparities reflect the status differential between the candidate and the person the candidate is meeting. People in the crowd sometimes share their names with the candidates, while candidates rarely use their names during introduction sequences. Little speaking time is devoted to preexisting knowledge claims, or exploring what the two might already know about each other. Very often, candidates and voters thank each other, such as the woman who told Ted Cruz, "Thank you for you bein' here and all you do" followed by Cruz's "thank you very much." Expressions of gratitude rarely crop up in other introduction scenarios. Finally, although Miller's main contribution is in demonstrating whether candidate-voter introductory sequences resemble those we

encounter in everyday contexts, he does uncover some interesting differences among candidates. Two candidates, Martin O'Malley and George Pataki, did introduce themselves by using their names whereas the other eight candidates tended not to. Furthermore, the pattern of Hillary Clinton's exchanges was rather different than the other candidates. Miller reasonably suggests that this might be due to societal expectations of how female candidates should act as well as the fact that Clinton travels with a security detail.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A few weeks before the 2016 New Hampshire primary, I spent some time in that state to observe presidential campaign politics up close. As an audience member at many campaign events, I couldn't help but notice that some candidates were much better at interacting with the crowd than others. At one extreme was the candidate who engaged well with voters not only after his formal town-hall event, but also throughout. While taking questions from the audience, he queried his questioners, seeming genuinely interested in trying to get to know them and their concerns better. At the other extreme was the candidate who took very few questions after a long speech. When working the crowd, he came to me and I asked whether I could take a picture of him with two 18-year-old women who would be voting for the first time in 2016. His response was essentially, "Make it quick, I need to move on to my next engagement."

As a political scientist, I couldn't help but wonder whether any of this matters. Some candidates are more personable and more like "one of us" than other candidates are, but do these interpersonal traits have broader consequences? Miller's chapter demonstrates the potential of using videos from the C-SPAN library to analyze candidates working the crowd. Building from this, further research could explore if candidates who interact with voters most effectively are viewed more favorably overall and perhaps even are more successful at the ballot box. Furthermore, Miller's analysis of introduction sequences could be expanded, such as by trying to account for individual differences in candidates' interactions. Communication scholars might wish to examine other features of interpersonal communication, whereas psychologists could explore topics such as the candidates' self-presentation styles. As mentioned

previously, C-SPAN videos are well suited for this type of scholarship. They present unedited interactions between candidates and voters, in unscripted encounters, and in an easily accessible manner for researchers.

C-SPAN's collection of congressional videos also offers many opportunities to advance scholarship on representation. Building on Brown and Gershon's analyses, scholars could test whether their findings regarding the representation of women apply to other types of bills, such as those less explicitly focused on women than is domestic violence legislation. Representational style in other congressional venues, including committee hearings or investigations, could also be easily explored using material from the C-SPAN Video Library. Finally, C-SPAN video footage could be used to analyze another feature of congressional activity: interpersonal interaction among representatives. During the give-and-take of hearings and floor debates, do lawmakers treat each other with respect and deference equally? Are interruptions and hostile body language more likely to be directed toward certain representatives versus others? Videos of hearings and debates capture real-time interactions, allowing for questions such as these to be analyzed. If some representatives (those in the minority party, women, racial and ethnic minorities, etc.) are indeed more likely to be treated less well than their peers, successfully representing their constituents and the substantive interests of specific groups could be ever more challenging tasks.

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