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Advances in Research Using the C-SPAN Archives

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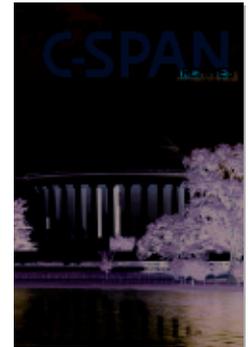
Published by Purdue University Press

Browning, Robert.

Advances in Research Using the C-SPAN Archives.

Purdue University Press, 2016.

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CONCLUSION

The chapters in this book clearly show the range and depth of the research that is possible using the C-SPAN Video Library. The approaches are cross-disciplinary, but collectively advance our knowledge of politics and communication. With such a diverse group of topics and approaches, it is difficult to strike a common theme and conclusion.

Morris and Joy, Castor, and Brown and Gershon examine Congress and congressional policymaking. Morris and Joy address a perplexing question about Congress. For years, political scientists have pondered why individual members of Congress are so popular, but the institution itself has the lowest rating of any of our branches of government. Members of Congress run against the institution—asserting that they are not like all the others. Underlying Morris and Joy's work is the unanswered question: What impact has television had on the institution's popularity? Stated another way, could television be responsible for the low popularity?

The legislative process is not pretty, and that is what Morris and Joy try to test. Some have argued that it is the partisanship that people do not like; while others suggest it is the complexity of the legislative process. Procedural aspects, that are difficult to understand, cause people to be turned off. This is the question that our authors address. Through experimental research, they find that procedural aspects, more than partisanship, is responsible for negative views about Congress. Partisanship suggests action and resolution of conflict. The results show that procedural aspects are less interesting to viewers.

In an era of polarization, perhaps one can take solace that partisanship does not turn off viewers. There is a bit of irony there in that while partisanship is not viewed negatively, gridlock is. Gridlock is the result of partisanship. It will take further research to sort out this difference. Partisan conflict in itself is not viewed negatively, but when the end result is no action, that can result in a negative view of Congress.

The Castor chapter and also the Brown and Gershon chapters look at specific policies enacted by Congress, but their approaches are very different. Castor takes a deconstructive approach, while Brown and Gershon use a more traditional content analysis method. One common theme in these two approaches is the emphasis on language. Castor describes vocabularies that are used to describe the Great Lakes water issues. A fear of diversion of the water dominates the debate. Proponents used an economic vocabulary and arguments, while the opponents used arguments about the public trust.

Both of these congressional chapters use the Video Library to account for all the speakers in the debate. The Great Lakes debate is dominated by regional representatives. The Violence against Women Act debate is dominated by women speakers from both parties. The Democrats tend to attack the bill for ignoring categories of women such as immigrants and Native Americans. Republican women are more defensive in their speeches. This descriptive representation of having women speakers and even women presiding over the session fail to substitute for substantive representation where the substance of the bill matters more. These two chapters are models for others who seek to analyze congressional policymaking. With all the bills debated each year, there is no shortage of congressional policy analysis that can follow either of these approaches.

The two conversational analyses should be of interest to communication scholars. These studies also suggest that the Video Library is full of examples that can be used for conversational analysis. One takes Clinton's grand jury

testimony in 1998. The other uses informal candidate meet-and-greet sessions. These are very different events, but the conversational approach relies on the informal communication styles. In the Clinton case, Garcia documents the evasive manner and techniques that he uses to answer and not answer questions. The Miller chapter demonstrates that the informal responses of candidates in this situation are very different from more formal interactions.

There are two chapters that look at debates. Both are ambitious. The Kropf and Grasset paper deals with a large number of campaign debates and continues a line of research represented well by Banwart. Do women and men use different language in these debates? With the large number of female candidates currently running for office and the Hillary Clinton senatorial and presidential candidacies, this is undoubtedly a very important topic. Kropf and Grasset do not find the results that they expect. Men are more inclusive in their debate language. The research method of using the software called Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count employed with computerized text analysis presents an approach that others will want to emulate with the C-SPAN Video Library collection.

In another debate analysis Stewart and Hall build on a long tradition of assessing nonverbal communication started by the Dartmouth Group in the 1980s. Each of the volumes in this series has a paper on facial traits in video analysis. The C-SPAN Video Library is a treasure trove for this type of analysis. With presidential debates there are also split-screen recordings that provide even more opportunities for coding nonverbal reactions. This approach is now well established and the chapters by Kowal (2014) and Bucy and Gong (2015) and now Stewart and Hall (2016) provide a corpus of guidance to future researchers.

The final chapter discussed here is very different in its approach. Kerr examines the Video Library to understand how liberals and conservatives present themselves. He calls this branding. This approach is one of using the search engine of the Video Library to examine video and textual references. It is a common method that we have seen in other papers that use the Video Library. Kerr's research is part of a larger question about whether the conservatives have been more successful in getting their message out and their message established than liberals have been.

This third volume in the research using the C-SPAN Archives series presents depth and diversity. These chapters are not meant to be the last word in research, but a starting point for those seeking to understand the possible. It

is hoped that they will encourage others to follow the path of these pioneering studies and advance both their technique and their substantive findings. It is only then that the full potential of the C-SPAN Video Library collection will be realized.