

2010

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Recommended Citation

Stuckey, M. (2010). Rethinking the rhetorical Presidency and Presidential rhetoric. *Review of Communication*, 10(1), 38-52. DOI: 10.1080/15358590903248744

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“The Joshua Generation”: Rethinking the Rhetorical Presidency and Presidential Rhetoric¹

While the “rhetorical presidency,” has been both accepted as a heuristic justifying the study of presidential speech on one hand and disputed as to its accuracy and utility on the other, this model assumes a white male president who governs within a pre-cable, pre-internet political context. This essay will first briefly survey the history of the rhetorical presidency and then look closely at the factors (class, race, gender, and the mediated and even interactive nature of presidential rhetoric) that will need to be taken into account as scholarship on the rhetorical presidency—and on presidential rhetoric—moves forward.

¹ I'd like to thank Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, Brandon Inabinet, Cindy Koenig Richards, and David Zarefsky for their help on this essay.

“The Joshua Generation”: Rethinking the Rhetorical Presidency and Presidential Rhetoric

The concept of the rhetorical presidency is now roughly twenty years old. Its history is well-known. Several important reviews and reconsiderations of it have been published (Aune & Medhurst 2008; Dorsey 2002; Medhurst 1996; Stuckey & Antczak 1998); literature reviews are now a pro forma element in doctoral dissertations; and we teach graduate and undergraduate classes on the subject. The histories and reviews are standard, and much the same: the story begins with the publication of “The Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency” (Ceaser, Thurow, Tulis & Bessette 1981) and *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Tulis 1987), which are often discussed in tandem with Sam Kernell’s *Going Public* (2006). The narrative includes important work by scholars such as Roderick Hart (1987), Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1990, 2008), and is followed by an analysis of the burgeoning field in all its interdisciplinary glory. Mention is made of the challenges to rhetoric made by behavioralists such as George C. Edwards, III (1996, 2006), and replies are made to those challenges (Medhurst 2008; Zarefsky 2004). These reviews are helpful; many of them are important. A brief one following precisely these lines will be included here. But when a history becomes well-known and standard, it can also become stale, and can serve more to codify than to advance a field a study. In this essay, I want to suggest that those of us who work in the areas of presidential rhetoric and the rhetorical presidency are fast approaching the point where we need less codification and more new thinking; we need fewer case studies that illustrate principles we already acknowledge and more work that challenges our understanding. The election of Barack Obama may well provide an opportunity for many such challenges. It should be said at the outset, however, than in proposing this election as an opportunity for such scholarship, I am less interested in Barack Obama’s

actual campaign and administration than I am in the imaginative possibilities that his campaign and administration offer to us as a way of examining our assumptions about the rhetorical presidency and about presidential rhetoric.

The “rhetorical presidency” is above all an argument about the institution of the American presidency, and to my mind, the best work on both the rhetorical presidency and on presidential rhetoric has been profoundly institutional in its orientation. Even those who examine presidential rhetoric rather than seeking to extend the idea of the rhetorical presidency do so with an eye toward the requirements, limitations and opportunities provided by the executive as an institution. So to understand the rhetorical presidency and its rhetoric, we need to understand something of the institution.

There are many ways to do this, as have been amply illustrated in the literature. We understand a good deal about the genres of presidential discourse (Campbell & Jamieson 2008); we know quite a lot about how presidents can be expected to respond to crisis (Bostdorff 1994; Bostdorff et al 2008; Kiewe 1994); we know something about presidential relations with Congress (Edwards 1989; Stuckey et al 2008); as well as with their relationship with the American public (Edwards & Gallup 1990; Beasley et al 2008; Herbst 1993; Hogan 1997; Hogan et al 2008). The institutional aspects I want to focus on here are often overlooked, taken for granted, assumed. Until now, all of our presidents have been white males. The vast majority of them have been of the upper classes. All of them have conformed to heteronormative expectations. The American presidency is a site of political, social, and economic privilege. This fact is hardly remarkable but it is important, for it means that our understanding of power--what it means, how it is exercised, how it is understood--has been inflected by upper class, straight, white male expectations and practices. And this understanding

has been rarely, if ever, examined. One way to advance the study of the rhetorical presidency is to examine these implicit assumptions and what they mean for our understanding of the institution and its rhetorical practices.

The Rhetorical Presidency

In 1981, James Ceaser, Glenn Thurow, Jeffrey Tulis and Joseph M. Bessette published “The Rhetorical Presidency,” an article that was followed by Tulis’ (1987) single-authored book of the same name. The argument in both of these pieces is essentially the same: they present institutionally-based examinations of how presidential communication has changed the presidency and the political system in which it is embedded. These authors argue that because of a new doctrine of presidential power, the rise of the mass media, and changes in the presidential selection process, the constitutional balance between branches has been destabilized.

This is a conservative argument, in the sense that these authors would seem to prefer a world in which the president had less primacy, and in which rhetoric was more deliberative. This is indeed a hallmark of much of the work done on the increase of presidential rhetoric and the increased dominance of the executive branch (Hart, 1987; Jamieson 1988). There are fears that as presidential rhetoric became more common, it has also become more debased, more conversational, and less valuable (Lim 2002, 2008). There is in these arguments an implicit mistrust of arguments from pathos and ethos, and a preference for those based on logos. Certainly, such a preference would be consistent with the writings of the founders, who mistrusted the public—but these authors are not like the founders in that they do not mistrust the people per se—they mistrust the people when the information they get is couched in language that obfuscates, surrounded by visuals that distract, and intended to exclude rather than to include them in the processes of deliberation (see especially Beaseley et al 2008).

This understanding of the presidency is not without its critics, (some of whom accept part(s) of the model). There are those who argue that the presidency has always been rhetorical, and who thus argue that the model as laid out by Tulis and his coauthors has gotten its history wrong (Ellis 1998; Laracey 2002); there are those who argue that Tulis has misunderstood the constitutional history (Nichols 1994); and there are those who argue that there is simply no good evidence for the effectiveness of presidential rhetoric at all (Edwards, 2006).

Nonetheless, there is widespread agreement that whatever the specific history of the rhetorical presidency, presidents in the contemporary era are quite willing to go over the heads of Congress and to attempt to mobilize the public as a routine means of governance. This willingness is now an integral part of the institution, whether authors argue that this is destructive of the constitutional order (Tulis 1987), dangerous for democracy (Hart 1987; Jamieson 1988) or merely a waste of time (Edwards 2006). There is in this research a sense that presidential speech is, at least potentially, a potentially potent force and a significant political resource that needs to be understood and used wisely.

Rethinking the Presidency and its Rhetoric

If the Obama presidency gives us the opportunity to rethink what we know about the rhetorical presidency, it alone isn't enough. We cannot, for instance, rethink the norms of whiteness with reference to Obama's administration alone, because he may also enact those norms. He is, after all, well known for his "post-racial" presidential campaign (Schorr, 2008), and it is hardly to be expected that the nation's first African American president will be more concerned with being "African American" than with being "president." Similarly, had Hillary Rodham Clinton been elected, her triumph would not have been enough to disinter patriarchal norms from the White House. But these figures do give us the opportunity to reconsider what we

know in light of norms of privilege, and doing so may help us move conversations about the rhetorical presidency forward. For those of us who agree with David Zarefsky (2004) that presidents possess an enormously important power over our national definitions, all of these questions have the potential to develop the areas of presidential rhetoric and the rhetorical presidency in ways that have been previously underdeveloped. Chief among these ways are class, race, gender and sexuality, and the circulation of messages in mass culture.

“We Have an Empathy Deficit”: Class and the Rhetorical Presidency

While one of most often repeated bromides of American politics is that “anyone can grow up to be president,” like most bromides, this one is patently false. Legally, of course, all one needs is to have been born in the right place, avoid being caught in the commission of certain crimes, have attained a certain age, and be in possession of a bank account. But as a practical matter, the presidency is the most privileged position in American politics, and only those who have already attained a great deal of privilege can realistically aspire to it (Pessen 1986).

Presidential candidates go to great length to display their commonality. Yale educated, they nevertheless speak in regional vernaculars (Bill Clinton) sometimes painful ones (George W. Bush). They may make displays out of their ability to work with their hands (Ronald Reagan), but they are careful to do so in ways that do not demean their status as presidents—they may clear brush, but they do this manual labor while on vacation and on ranches that they own—they work for no one but themselves.

There is a connection between presidential independence and presidential wealth that is worth exploring, for we rarely examine either the presidency or presidential speech as it relates to class (for a limited exception see Huckfeldt & Huckfeldt 1989). The field could use more analyses of presidential audiences as governing coalitions. We study presidential coalitions but

do not bring rhetorical expertise to the study of who presidents are speaking to, and what interests these audiences represent. We assume that Republican presidents are more likely to court the wealthy, and much was made of this regarding certain aspects of the recent Bush presidency (Stiglitz 2007), but we do not know to what extent all presidents speak to or for monied interests. Presidents, as I have noted elsewhere (2004), are conservatives, not radicals; they speak for the status quo. When presidents speak for “forgotten Americans,” they tend to be also speaking for the middle class, not the truly impoverished among us.

And while we all know this, we do not study it, so we don’t, generally speaking, know what it means for our politics or for our understanding of rhetoric. We could be asking what it might mean to have a president who did not speak the language of power. Such a president is not likely to be elected, to be sure. But what exactly does the language of power sound like? Does it use certain metaphors and exclude others? Is it the language of purification, or of affirmation? What does it mean that certain of our citizens are sometimes props for presidential speech, sometimes even the subject of it, but are rarely the actual audience for it? On the most basic level, of course, it means that these people continue to be excluded. Just as once slaves and women were neither the audiences for presidential discourse nor included in the actual polity, there remain those who are neither audience nor full members of our contemporary polity. But we know very little about the processes motivating the changes and inclusions or the continuities and continued exclusions. What factors enable presidents to reach out to new audiences, and what factors inhibit such reaching out?

We know that the Obama campaign mobilized a number of new voters, and that these voters have the potential to change the ways in which campaigns are conducted (Grinberg 2008). But we don’t know how the inclusion of such audiences might impact the rhetoric of presidential

candidates or presidential speech. We don't know if the inclusion of such audiences will mean talking about different things, or whether it will mean talking about the same things in different ways.

What does seem apparent in much of the work done on the rhetorical presidency (as distinct in this case from presidential rhetoric) is the assumption that the language of power ought to be deliberative. It ought to address policy, and to do so in specific terms. There are fears that the more popular rhetoric becomes, the more conversational it tends to be, the less it actually says (Lim 2008). There are deeply rooted fears of the public here; just as the founders worried that the people would be too easily swayed by demagogues, and thus removed those people and their passions from the operations of government, there is also a tendency in this work to worry that the people are too easily manipulated, that empty presidential rhetoric, while appealing, is also bad for the system and for the nation (Tulis 1987).

It may say a good deal about class biases in America that very few scholars have examined, in any systematic way, the rhetoric of class as it pertains to the American presidency. The underlying assumption, I would guess, is that as an elite institution, that language is deeply embedded and obvious. But class remains a productive element of potential study, especially for those interested in issues of coalition building and maintenance.

“A Mutt Like Me”: Race and the Rhetorical Presidency

Barack Obama is not the first man of African and American descent to run for the presidency, but he was widely considered to be the first “credible African American candidate,” (Harris 2007) and commentary lauded his ability to run a “post-racial” campaign (Schorr, 2008), one that can be considered “mainstream” (Sinclair-Chapman & Price 2008, 739). His success was often linked to his ability to run a campaign in which race did not figure prominently, and

during which he avoided any semblance of the “angry black man” stereotype (Hannaham 2008). Indeed, during the primaries, the media wondered if he was “really” Black, and if he was “Black enough” (Coates 2007).

Racial issues are, of course, also inflected with class; but for the moment at least, I want to treat these things as distinct. There are at least two ways to treat race and the presidency—policy and the presidential body, and while we have done significant work in one area, there is little in the other. In terms of policy, there is a rich and thriving body of literature on presidents and the politics of race, especially on presidents and civil rights policy.

What does it mean that the presidency is no longer an entirely white institution? It will be hard to separate Obama as a Black president from Obama as a president—indeed, while we have never discussed other presidents as exclusively white presidents, it is not clear how we will deal analytically with the rhetoric of a president who is not white. Neither is it clear what “whiteness” means in regards to our understanding of American power. The presidency is notoriously the province of white men, and this has been an important, if unstated, element of the office. There are other ways to construct power, and we do little to understand the potential of those ways (Stuckey & Morris 1998).

It will be interesting to note, for instance, when Obama will be allowed to be the nation’s president, and when that appellation will be modified by “first African American.” That is, it may be useful to study under what conditions in which situations he is referred to and treated as the president, and when is he a “Black president.” It may tell us a great deal about the racial construction of the presidency and the norms of whiteness it has so far invisibly enacted if we can determine the limits of that construction and those norms. Students of visual rhetoric may be able to discern whether the depictions of this president differ from those of previous presidents,

and if so, to what those differences may be attributed, and how they might be better understood. Scholars of verbal rhetoric may find the question of Obama's style and content a rich area: it will be fascinating to determine if he relies on different sources, evokes different views of the nation's history, than did his predecessors. It is wonderfully possible to study the stories that figure so prominently in most presidents' repertoires--the American Dream, the frontier myth; the stories that rely on any number of iterations of American exceptionalism—figure differently in the corpus of this president's speech.

In all of these ways and more, the idea that the presidency is implicated in racialized understandings of American politics is now something that scholars of presidential rhetoric and the rhetorical presidency can no longer afford to ignore.

“We are our Sister's Keeper”: Gender, Sexuality and the Rhetorical Presidency

The presidency is a paternalistic office, and has been so ever since George Washington became the “Father of Our Country,” sometimes accompanied by others among the “Founding Fathers,” now of course referred to merely as “the Founders” (Kann 1998). It is probably not a coincidence that so many of our presidents have been military men; or that even in contemporary times, they take pains to be seen exercising the “manly pursuits” of hunting and fishing; presidents who are not doing well politically are often seen as “small,” they can be feminized, they are understood as failing to fulfill the “heroic” and undoubtedly masculine understanding of the presidency (Duerst-Lahti 2008, 733).

Despite the possibilities seemingly opened up in this last election, given the harshness of the various criticisms leveled at Hillary Rodham Clinton and Sarah Palin—two women who otherwise have little in common—it is not hard to make the argument that the role of women in our political life remains problematic at best. Women traditionally have to demonstrate their

“toughness,” and prove that they can be as determined and strong, perhaps as aggressive as their male counterparts (Sykes 2008, 761). Both Clinton and Palin are undoubtedly “tough” enough; but that toughness created dissonances that neither could overcome.

We know that political processes institutions can be gendered in important ways (Carroll & Fox 2006; Chappell 2006) just as we know that all presidents have been men, and that this necessarily had an effect on the office. But when women and the executive branch get studied, more often than not, it is because of the role of First Lady, not because women exercise executive power in their own right (see, however, Martin & Borelli, 2000). Because of Hillary Rodham Clinton, the treatment of the president as inevitably male may be difficult to maintain.

The presidential body does matter, even though it matters in ways that too often go unacknowledged: “Rendered largely invisible until the late twentieth century, the raced and sexed control of political and social power and institutions by white men has rested upon naturalized hegemonic gender and race ideologies that make disparate and denigrating treatment seem ordinary and acceptable to those with entrenched power advantages” (Hawkesworth 2003). Certainly, it is true that power plays out through people’s bodies, and there is very little work grounded in the rhetorical presidency that brings bodies to the forefront (for at least one exception to this rule, see Houck & Kiewe 2003). We don’t seem to think of the rhetorical presidency or even of presidential rhetoric as embodying leadership; it is a potentially important and productive site of study.

The excess of manliness in the presidency, of course, often extends to sexuality. Presidents are allowed to be assertively if not aggressively heterosexual. Americans seem to dismiss or even applaud presidential sexuality, despite the puritanical streak that became obvious during the Lewinsky scandal (Stuckey & Wabshall 2000). But that sexuality is assumed to be

heterosexual. Many citizens were willing to assert that what Bill Clinton did “privately” didn’t affect his presidential duties; but it would be interesting to know if that attitude would have prevailed had the intern in question been male.

Charles E. Morris, III has contributed important work on queering public address (2007), but as difficult as that project is in general, it may be much more difficult to queer the presidency, and this may well be at least partly attributable to the fact that it is such an aggressively masculine office. There has been some work done in the area of the area of presidential sexuality (Morris 2007; Morris 2009; Schwartz, 2008), but the consequences of that sexuality for presidential public address remain unclear and underexplored.

Because of this dearth of work in the areas of gender, sexuality and the presidency, it may be one of the richest sites for future work. We could use significantly more research on how the practices of the rhetorical presidency and presidential rhetoric work to privilege heterosexual men.

From the State of the Union to “Yes We Can”: Circulation and the Rhetorical Presidency

At first glance, the issue of circulation has little to do with characteristics like race, gender, sexuality, and class. But the original conception of the rhetorical presidency was based on three important changes in the structures and processes of American politics: mass media technology, campaigns, and what the authors called a “modern doctrine of presidential leadership.” All of these involve the circulation of mediated messages.

Once upon a time, so the story of the rhetorical presidency goes, presidents conveyed their messages to the public directly through the vehicles of major public addresses and indirectly through the partisan press. In time, they took increasing advantage of directing more and more of their talk to the mass public. Technological changes brought more and more of the

president to the public, through news reels, radio, television, and the internet, until we became achingly familiar with the person of the president.

Presidents used to communicate with an undifferentiated audience. If they wanted to speak to a local audience, or an audience based on a narrowly understood interest (women, steel workers), they appeared before that audience. As the media developed, narrow audiences became increasingly difficult—what a president said in Biloxi would be heard in Bangor. But with the advent of first cable and then the internet, it is now increasingly possible to speak to increasingly differentiated and narrow audiences.

At the same time, presidential speech has been increasingly accessible. First, we read presidential words, or read about them. Then we could see presidents in occasional news reels, hear presidents on radio, see presidents more consistently on the televised nightly news, and now we have what often seems like constant access to presidents. But another change has taken place as well, for in addition to being an audience for presidential rhetoric, we can now also produce presidential rhetoric. Presidential words are no longer something apart from us.

Following the New Hampshire primary in January, 2008, then-Senator Barack Obama gave a speech that featured an English translation of the old Cesar Chavez slogan, “Si, se puede.” That speech, in turn, became widely circulated, first as clips on the nightly news and various other outlets, then and most famously, as a video on the internet site YouTube. Political speeches can often be found on YouTube, either as clips or in their entirety, but this clip was different, because an enterprising musician, will.i.am, of the Black-Eyed Peas, had taken Obama’s words and instantiated them into rhetorical action; as a medley of famous people recited his speech along with him, his speech became our speech; the “we” of his speech was broadened, became more inclusive. The new version of “Yes We Can,” became an instant

internet phenomenon: it is in the top 100 of all videos viewed on YouTube, was linked to blogs such as the Huffingtonpost and politico.com, and may be part of the reason for the adoption of “Yes We Can” as the slogan for the Obama campaign.

The inclusiveness of “Yes We Can,” was, of course, limited. Famous people, recognizable people, celebrities, were reciting alongside and sometimes with Obama, not ordinary people. And the millions of viewers were spectators to, not participants in, the speech. But given current electronic technologies, it is conceivable that people around the country could have created their own versions of that speech—or any speech—and that the words of a presidential candidate or even a president are no longer a thing apart, but are another element of a individualized cyber world. We can all participate in the creation of presidential speeches—we can participate in the creation of a president. All we need is a computer and a very limited knowledge of how to work it.

I was not in Virginia on November 1, 2008 when Barack Obama gave his speech there; I didn’t know he was either, nor did I know he was speaking. But I did see the video of that speech, as I had seen most of the speeches of this long campaign. I saw it on YouTube. In its entirety, with no mediation, no punditry, no one to tell me what it meant. Millions of other people experienced the campaign precisely this way. And many of them will experience the Obama presidency this way as well.

I have never met Barack Obama. Nor have I met his wife, Michelle. Like millions of my fellow citizens, I did get emails from them however. I continue to get daily emails from David Pouffe. There is some indication that he, or someone like him, will continue to email me, and that I have the opportunity to experience the Obama presidency from a front seat; I won’t have to

wait for the media to tell me what the president did; he seems quite ready to tell me before they have a chance.

It is not clear whether this kind of communication creates an illusion of intimacy with the person of the president, and if so, whether that intimacy somehow differs in important ways from the relationship someone like FDR, for instance, established with the nation. It is this illusion of intimacy, however, that worried the earliest authors of the rhetorical presidency. Twenty years ago, Tulis and his coauthors told us that the rhetorical presidency was in part a creation of media technology; that with technological changes had come the capacity for and thus the expectation of greater and more regular contact between leaders and the led.

Bruce Gronbeck (1996) refers to the environment created by these changes as “the age of secondary orality,” which is characterized by “the electrification of the twentieth-century presidency” (31). For Gronbeck, as for others, this has meant an increased focus on public opinion, the visual elements of politics as spectacle that involves the audience as citizens in particular ways, and a reduction in the perceived distance between leaders and the led. This means that rhetoric is now inevitably mediated, rhetorical processes are accelerated, ethos has become central, and more and more kinds of discourse now “count” as presidential rhetoric. That is, nearly all presidential behavior and activity can be—and perhaps ought to be—understood as rhetorical.

This does not mean, however, that the presidency has degenerated into little more than spectacle, an office that in terms of its relationship with the public has become a caricature of itself. It does mean that we have to be both careful and precise in detailing any given president’s relationship to and with the mass public. There is some work that offers analyses of the relationship between the fictional and factual presidency (Parry-Giles & Parry Giles 2006) as

well as research that details concerns with the image of the president in “an era that has largely lost faith in politics” (Miroff 1998). And while there is some evidence that the Obama campaign brought more new voters and an increase in enthusiasm among other voters (Sargent 2008), it remains to be seen whether an Obama presidency can revitalize the image of the presidency in a meaningful or a lasting way. Such revitalization cannot depend entirely upon Obama and his administration anyway.

The Obama team has made it clear that they hope to turn his electoral coalition into a governing coalition. And that campaign coalition was remarkable not least for its discipline and for its de-centered character. Citizens formed their own local groups, comprised of people in their own local neighborhoods, who got together with cell phones and cheesecake and made campaign calls. No one from the national campaign monitored these groups, which were often ephemeral, sometimes lasting only for one evening. The message was national, the action was profoundly local. The success of that campaign means that this pattern is likely to be emulated in the future.

The circulation of public address is no longer controlled or controllable. If the American system is based in class- and race-based patriarchal understandings of power, that system is besieged on all sides. The president may be the national parent, but parenting may no longer be strictly patriarchal. Obama’s messages are not top-down, but are also bottom-up.

Make no mistake, in many ways, power has not changed. President Obama still signs Executive Orders that free both the prisoners at Guantanamo and presidential documents; he still gives the orders that send missiles to Pakistan. As president, he still wields enormous political, social, rhetorical and military power. But the ways in which that power is circulated are

changing. And those changes will have consequences for how that power is enacted. They should also have consequences for how that power is understood.

Conclusion

There are some important on-going debates and conversations among and between scholars of the rhetorical presidency and presidential rhetoric. We wonder whether rhetoric matters, and what it might mean for rhetoric to “matter.” We ponder what counts as evidence, and how to gather and understand that evidence. These conversations are interesting and significant. I hope they will continue. But I also hope that we will push more deeply into the rhetorical presidency and what it means. As an institution, the presidency is at the heart of American politics and of American political ideology. Barack Obama’s election was, as the media tirelessly claimed, historic. And it gives us a chance to examine history in new ways. We can now look at the presidency as an institution inflected by issues of class, race, gender and sexuality. We can examine the circulation of presidential address as inflected by all of these things.

A rhetorical presidency isn’t necessarily a responsive presidency (Beasley et al 2008). Nor is it necessarily a persuasive one. But there is no getting around the centrality of the presidency in our popular culture, and rather than just observing that centrality, we need to do more work that helps us understand it and how it may be translated into presidential power.

There are several possibilities as we move conversations about both presidential rhetoric and the rhetorical presidency forward. The first is to work toward more theorizing. There are vibrant debates in the field, and there is much to be learned about the mechanism of the development of the rhetorical presidency and presidential rhetoric. Let’s codify less and challenge more of what we think we know, and let’s do it with reference to more theory.

The second is a clear and consistent understanding of the presidency as an institution. Rhetoricians need to read deeply in the political science literature on the presidency and presidential elections. The institutional history, development of bureaucratic mores, uses of public opinion, and the political processes of the overall federal system have profound effects on presidential rhetoric. Much of the best work in our field is informed by work in this area.

Third, we can examine the influences of class on the presidency and the practices of presidential rhetoric. Presidents are not generally chosen from among the poor, nor do they often speak for the poor, for the poor as a constituency can bring little to a presidential coalition. But as scholars of the rhetorical presidency we have not addressed the meaning and implications of this systematic exclusion. There is considerable work to be done here.

Fourth, there is the issue of the presidential body as a vehicle for our national understanding of race, gender, and sexuality. We generally assume that to be “president” means being white, male, and heterosexual. There are too few studies of the embodied presidency and there are productive possibilities in melding the study of the rhetorical presidency with other areas in the field where embodiment is both theorized and analyzed.

Fifth, we can further explore the president in popular culture, both as presidential messages are circulated through that culture and as a focus of cultural attention. It may well be the case that presidential communication is about to undergo one of those sea changes associated with technological change. As presidential speech is circulated differently, it will have to interpolate different audiences and perhaps will have to do so in different ways. We need studies that will allow us to anticipate and to understand those changes.

The president is an icon; and this president is resonating throughout popular culture in ways that may be unprecedented. Certainly, the idea of a presidential brand is one that would

bear further analyses. Obama could become a particularly useful site for studies of the intersection between presidential power and popular culture. Presidents appear with great regularity on covers of major magazines, certainly that has been the case with Barack Obama, who may be the first president to appear on the cover of *Entertainment Weekly*. The question is not whether the president can exercise cultural power, but what that cultural power may mean for presidential power and under circumstances the former can be parlayed into the latter.

This observation brings me to my final point: the question of presidential power and how it intersects with presidential rhetoric. The presidency may have always been rhetorical, but it has certainly not always been as powerful vis-à-vis other political institutions as it is now. We may debate the question of whether there is a modern presidency or not, and we may argue over what precise changes may be inherent in making such distinctions, but we do not do nearly enough work that analyzes the connections between the exercise of presidential power and the exercise of presidential rhetoric.

Clearly, both the areas of the rhetorical presidency and the study of presidential rhetoric are vibrant, growing, and rich areas of research. In connecting them, however, we have much to do and there are many neglected areas that ripe with possibilities awaiting scholarly endeavor.

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