Student Work

5-1-1999

Partisan politics on talk radio: A critical analysis

Monica L. Olsen
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Recommended Citation

PARTISAN POLITICS ON TALK RADIO: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

A Thesis

Presented to the Department of Communication

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Monica L. Olsen

May 1999

UMI Number: EP73419

UMI

Dissertation Publishing

UMI EP73419

ProQuest

THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College, University of Nebraska,

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts, University of

Nebraska at Omaha

COMMITTEE

_____   _____
          Name   **Department**

_____   _____
          Name   **Department**

Chairperson_____

Date_____

Abstract

PARTISAN POLITICS ON TALK RADIO: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS.

Monica Olsen, MA

University of Nebraska at Omaha, 1999

Talk radio has become a very popular medium for political discourse. Using a perspective adapted from Burke's Cluster Criticism, the rhetoric of a liberal and a conservative talk radio host was examined. Results of this study show that Alan Colmes and Rush Limbaugh present a political reality based on the values of their own ideology. However, it was also discovered that both hosts use similar techniques to communicate their ideology. The "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" is examined.

Acknowledgements

I was dependent on many people for the completion of this thesis. First of all, I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Deborah Smith-Howell, the chairperson of my committee, for all of her knowledge, support, and encouragement. I would also like to show my appreciation to my committee members Dr. Chris Allen and Dr. James Johnson. Their expertise was incredibly valuable. I must also thank my family for putting up with me and helping me through very stressful and emotional times. Last but not least, I would like to thank Alan Colmes and Jonathan Costantino of WEVD Newstalk 1050 AM in New York City. They provided me with recordings of the Alan Colmes Show. Without that valuable data, this thesis could not have been completed.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

Talk radio is an important political phenomenon. Political talk show hosts are not only given an open forum in which they are able to espouse their views, they may also amass their own political power. In this thesis, I shall explore the rhetoric of talk radio in an attempt to discover the political reality constructed and presented by two talk radio hosts.

A democracy is dependant on free expression and an open exchange of ideas. Scholars realize the importance of political communication. Many agree this communication, especially through mass media, plays a crucial role in shaping political realities (Lauer, & Handel, 1977; Lippmann, 1965; Nimmo & Combs, 1990; Chanem, 1997).

The number of stations airing the talk radio format is second only to country music. Hosts such as Rush Limbaugh are heard by more than 18 million people daily (www.KMOX.com, 1998). A study conducted by the Annenberg School of Communication found that 18 percent of the adult population listens to talk radio at least twice a week. Talk radio listeners are more educated, more likely to vote, wealthier and more likely to consume C-SPAN, CNN and network news than the population in general (Harvard International Review of Press and Politics, 1997).

Given the nature of talk radio as an important element of political communication, it is important to critically examine what is being said on political talk radio. Through a critical analysis of the rhetoric of two radio talk show hosts, Rush Limbaugh and Alan

Colmes, a "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" is discovered. Both hosts use similar language techniques to create their worldview. Limbaugh presents a worldview based on conservative values, and Colmes presents a worldview based on liberal values. However, the methods used by both hosts to communicate these worldviews are similar. In order to illustrate how this conclusion was reached, I shall (1) examine the nature of political communication and talk radio, (2) describe the method of analysis and the artifacts that are to be examined, and (3) explain the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" and discuss the implications of this worldview.

Review of Literature

This study will provide a thorough and critical analysis of the language used in talk radio. The theoretical framework for this study will be the social construction of reality. This framework will explain the importance of political communication and its effect on political reality. I will begin with an overview of the construction of political reality. I will then examine the agenda-setting hypothesis to illustrate the relationship between mass media and political communication. From there, I will explore how the bi-partisan nature of American politics influences how people communicate about politics. Finally, a thorough review of research on talk radio is necessary to understand the nature of talk radio, its audience and its influence.

Construction of Political Reality

It is important to understand how political messages are constructed and the impact they have. The first step in accomplishing this is to look at how reality is constructed. Only part of what is considered reality is that which is encountered directly.

Much of what is considered reality is only known through the symbols or language assigned to describe it. All reality, whether directly experienced or otherwise constructed, is shaped by the language used to describe that reality or event (Burke, 1941). Burke extends this notion by stating that by selecting a topic for discussion in an attempt to reflect reality, we are selecting only a portion of that reality and thus not given an accurate reflection.

In merely speaking about what is "real," even if it has been directly experienced, abstract symbols are used to describe the concrete. The symbols used alter the true nature of the reality being discussed. However, much of what is considered to be reality is only accessible through the use of language. What is considered to be reality is that which is constructed through symbol use, not what is directly encountered (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 1991).

That which comes to be known as reality becomes further removed from direct experience with increased reliance on mediated communication. Mediated communication, as defined by McQuail (1994), is communication that has been filtered through a channel, usually electronic. Therefore, not only is reality separated from any direct experiences, it is further removed from its true nature when it is transmitted through an electronic channel. Mediated messages are at least twice removed from the reality they represent. With the introduction of mediated communication, environments become even more indirectly known (Lippmann, 1965). Rather than being experienced directly, reality is created by the images seen, heard and read through various channels of mass communication. This is especially true of political reality (Nimmo & Combs 1990).

As suggested by McQuail, the function of politics is dependent on the mass media. He claims, "there are few significant social issues which are addressed without some consideration of the role of mass media, whether for good or ill" (p.1). Most citizens do not have any direct experience with national politics. Therefore, the public's view is reliant on the mass media for political information. Combs (1984) suggests that popular culture is responsible for affecting perceptions and actions about politics. Popular culture provides a frame of reference through which to filter information. This creates an imagined environment that may have no basis in the real world. Further, these frames affect different individuals' interpretation of reality in quite different ways. Humans respond to reality in terms of the meanings they attribute to the world (Lauer, & Handel, 1977).

Lippmann (1965) introduced the term "pseudo-environment" to describe mediated experiences that occur between humans and the environment. These are human constructions of the environment. Lippmann goes on to suggest that humans are not able to distinguish between pseudo-environments and the objective environment. For Lippmann, this poses a threat to democracy, because "the pictures in people's heads" do not necessarily corresponding to the world outside. Some exploration into the American political system is necessary to understand the importance of mass communication in the creation of political reality.

How people speak about politics is a reflection of how they feel about the political reality they have created. Language influences the political options people perceive to be available (Nimmo, 1978). It is only possible to make political decisions about those

issues that are known. Nimmo also suggests that as a result of political transactions, meanings are developed and conflicts are created. During this process, "the ever-changing meanings citizens attribute to abstract ideas such as democracy" (Nimmo, 1978, p.7) are constantly being constructed. Abstract ideals are rooted in the examples and situations media use to illustrate these ideals. As these situations are altered, ideals shift to reflect changing perspectives.

For a democracy to be successful, it must rely on an informed and active electorate. The development of democracy in the United States is rooted in the notion that the public must be allowed to criticize political leaders and "petition the government for redress of grievances" (United States Constitution). Since the printing press arrived in the colonies, providing political information has been the main function of mass media. Citizens have become increasingly reliant on mass media for political information. McQuail suggests that mass media have the power to "connect scattered individuals in a shared national, city and local experience" (p. 34). This experience could lead to support for new democratic politics and social reform movements. McQuail also suggests that media have the power of "mass enlightenment." One key aspect of this study is to examine how the audience is involved with this particular medium.

Agenda-setting

One way of analyzing how the media communicate political reality is through the agenda-setting hypothesis. The agenda-setting hypothesis, as defined by McCombs and Shaw (1972) states that mass media set the agenda for political campaigns. Media decide what issues are discussed and how long issues remain on the public's agenda. McCombs

and Shaw discovered that, in political campaigns, more time was spent covering the campaign itself than was spent on the issues. Also, McCombs and Shaw suggest that the media must have an effect on the public impressions of political candidates because few people have any direct contact with presidential candidates.

Agenda-setting helps shape political reality. Takeshita (1997) suggests that the media accomplish this by determining what to give attention to, what to ignore, and what perspective to apply to the political world. In 1963, Cohen stated "The press may not be successful much of the time telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" (p. 13). Since that time, scholars have been examining the role of the media in agenda-setting.

Agenda-setting functions to enhance group consensus (Shaw & Martin, 1992). There is greater consistency between the media agenda and the public agenda when members of the public increase media exposure. The more reliant society is on the media for messages, as is the case for national political issues, the more power the media are given to dictate those issues. Wanta (1994) suggests agenda-setting is furthered by the audience's perceived credibility of the media source. People who perceive the media as credible have increased media usage. The agenda-setting function of mass media can be governed by political ideology. McLeod, Becker and Byrnes (1996) in one agenda-setting study found that ideologically differing newspapers covered different issues during a campaign. Zhu and Boroson (1996) looked at the differing effects of agenda-setting based on the homogeneity of the audience. They found that for certain issues the differences in the audience impacted the effects of agenda-setting. With some issues, the

agenda-setting effect is equally powerful for nearly all members of even a diverse audience. For other issues, the effects of agenda-setting vary based on personal characteristics of audience members. Some suggested reasons for this variance include predispositions for issues or previous personal contact with issues. In 1992, Zhu also suggested that the public has a limited capacity for issues in its agenda. He found a norm of zero-sum principle in the public's capacity. For the most part, as one issue enters the public agenda, another must exit. However, there are issues that lend themselves to different types of relationships with the media. For example, Zhu (1992) found that economic recessions are not pushed off the agenda by competing coverage. Instead, that particular issue actually benefits from competing coverage.

Many researchers have suggested a second-level or expansion of the agenda-setting hypothesis. This addition would take into consideration the attributes the media use to describe issues. Attributes are the words used to describe issues and the connotations those words carry with them. Ghanem (1997) suggests that these attributes have an effect on *how* the public perceives the issue. These words can have strong connotative meanings, and therefore, shape the coverage of an issue. The media not only tell us what to think about, they also attach attributes to the issues. Ghanem hypothesizes that the way an issue is covered can affect the way the public thinks about that issue, and that the way an issue is covered in the media affects how long that issue will remain on the public agenda. The second-level of agenda setting suggests there is a stronger link between the agenda-setting hypothesis and its ability to construct social reality beyond merely dictating the issues that are considered.

By calling attention to certain issues and ignoring others, the media influence the standards the public uses to judge the performance of governments, presidents, policies and candidates. Iyengar and Kinder (1987) introduce the theory of priming as an extension to the agenda-setting hypothesis. This theory is based on the idea that issues that are introduced as important may have more influence than public opinions in the decision-making process. For example, if the economy is repeatedly mentioned as an issue on the press' agenda, the economy then becomes an important standard by which the public judges the president's performance. A main reason for this effect is the public's reliance on readily and easily available information. To sort through the barrage of information they are presented with, people develop heuristics, or shortcuts that make the decision-making process easier. Reliance on available information is one example of a heuristic. The theory of priming addresses the importance of both the media agenda and the way media content influences political communication (Willnat, 1997).

The agenda-setting function allows media to tell the public what to think about. In doing so, the media shape the public's view of reality and influence the standards used to make judgements about people or issues.

Conservative and Liberal Ideology

Other heuristics that guide and shape how the media cover political events are party and ideology. By framing issues in terms as Republican or Democrat, the press sets up a dichotomy for voters. Issues are simplified in terms of right or left, Republican or Democrat, conservative or liberal. This dichotomy may allow voters to remain uninformed and still feel as if they are making a responsible political decision. By

focusing on the Republican and Democrat viewpoints, media are supporting the political agenda. Jamieson and Capella (1998) illustrate this type of coverage with an analysis of the debate over Clinton's proposed health care reform bill. A key reason for the defeat of all health care reform bills was the nature of the press coverage. To simplify the debate, the press focused on the sponsors of different bills rather than on the content. Also, the debate was framed as two-sided. The press focused on Clinton's reform plan and the Republican response to Clinton's plan. In fact, there were more than two proposals. By framing the issue in terms of a contest between Republicans and Democrats, the confusing issue of health care reform was side stepped, and the public was able to easily, though blindly, choose sides.

To further understand these differences, conservative and liberal ideology need to be examined. It is important to point out that the terms "liberal" and "conservative" are being used here very loosely as they often are in our current political system. The classical meanings of these words are very different from the meanings attributed to them in contemporary culture. Also, ideology is not synonymous with party affiliation. For this study, the ideological labels are used, because the hosts studied identify themselves with these ideological labels.

This tendency to dichotomize is reinforced by the broadcast media's guiding principle of social responsibility (McQuail, 1994). Social responsibility dictates that the press must allow equal time for both sides of a story. The underlying assumption here is that there are two sides, and only two sides, to every story. Although broadcast media is no longer guided by this principle, its effects are still found in the medium of talk radio.

For the sake of simplicity, these two sides are quite often defined by political ideology. Ideology, for the purposes of this study, is defined by Piper (1997) as a coherent system of ideals and values regarding how societies, economies and governments ought to be structured and how they ought to perform. These ideological sides have come to be labeled "liberal" and "conservative" even though these sides may not be consistent in their policy and institutional preferences (Piper, 1997).

According to Piper (1997), the conservative theory of governance tends to include state's rights, judicial restraint, decentralized federal government and adherence to the theory of original intent in constitutional matters. Schumaker, Keil and Heilke (1997) expand on Piper's overview. They describe conservatism and conservatives as those who believe that communists, Democratic socialists and contemporary liberals create unrealistic expectations and goals for what can be accomplished in political life. Conservatives believe the government cannot solve a variety of human problems. Instead, the government needs to provide national security and social order. For conservatives, increased governmental power is a threat to individual liberty and economic prosperity.

The liberal theory of governance as advanced by Piper (1997) includes positive freedom, corrective legislation, judicial activism and constitutional flexibility based in egalitarian moral philosophy devoted to protecting minority rights. Schumaker, Keil and Heilke (1997) state that contemporary liberalism is based on the notion that political, social and economic liberty are furthered by democratic governments. However, contemporary liberals feel it is the government's responsibility to regulate certain issues

of private property and redistribute wealth. Strong and active national governments that act within constitutional limitations are needed to regulate the economy and promote equality.

Talk radio has been criticized as presenting an overwhelmingly conservative point of view (Mitchell, 1996). Since broadcast news development was governed by the idea of social responsibility, which called for equal time to be given to both sides of any issue (McQuail, 1994), it is important to look at how conservative and liberal ideologies are communicated on talk radio, which is not guided but such restrictions. However, it is first necessary to review previous research on talk radio.

Talk Radio

Talk radio has become an important and powerful phenomenon. It has a captive audience, provides for an open exchange and can be a remarkably Democratic medium (Levin, 1987). Levin describes it as a human experience. It is confrontational and presents opinions in response to contradictions. Levin also suggests society can learn from talk radio because it is an outlet for political discontent and harbors political change. Political talk radio is a window through which access is gained to issues and events and how others perceive those issues and events

One of the main differences between talk radio and all other forms of mass communication is the interpersonal nature of talk radio. Talk radio allows for spontaneous interaction, and provides its listeners with the opportunity to become involved in the discourse. The listeners are able to do more than listen, interpret and react to others' views. Instead, there is at least an illusion that they can actively

participate in creating the reality that is presented in these programs. Callers are able to base comments on another caller's ideas. In a sense, listeners are allowed to converse with each other through the host.

Avery, Willis, and Glover (1978) discovered that the hosts serve a variety of interpersonal functions. They keep the conversation moving, introduce new information and interpret or synthesize the ideas presented. The type of interaction between host and caller varies depending on the host.

Talk radio differs from structured interview radio programs in format, organization and tone. Listeners to talk radio retain more information and learn more than listeners to structured interview format programs (Andreasen, 1985). Although Andreasen came to no concrete conclusions as to the cause of this difference, he did offer plausible suggestions. The format of the call-in program contained more verbal cues for the listener; the mere variance in vocal tones might have an impact on listener engagement.

While examining the effect of communication on the 1996 Republican Presidential primary, Pfau, Kendal, Reichert, Hellweg, Waipeng, Tnsing, and Prosis (1997) discovered the importance of talk radio on voters' perception of Bob Dole and Steve Forbes. They found that talk radio had the greatest influence of any communication medium on voters' perceptions of Bob Dole. They also discovered that talk radio was the first predictor of respondent perceptions of emotion, rational communication and competence. There was a positive relationship between talk radio and voter perceptions. Voters who were exposed extensively to talk radio had more

positive perceptions of the Republican candidates. Although a relationship was discovered, the authors made no suggestions as to a causal relationship.

Barker (1998) looked at the ability of talk radio, The Rush Limbaugh Show in particular, to persuade an audience. He cites past research that reveals important characteristics of talk radio listeners. They are more likely to be politically active and informed. Therefore, political influence from a radio personality could have an important effect on legislation such as Clinton's health care reform plan.

Barker suggests two factors that determine how Limbaugh may persuade his audience. The first is the perceived knowledge and trustworthiness of the host. If the people do not believe the host to be knowledgeable and trustworthy, they will not believe what he or she has to say. Also, Barker suggests callers who support the host's position reinforce this. By listening to others with the same opinion, the opinion is reinforced.

The second factor in determining persuasion is the use of traditional propaganda techniques. Barker focuses on two of these techniques to illustrate Limbaugh's persuasive methods. The first technique is the name-calling device, whereby the speaker appeals to emotions of hate and fear in the audience. The second propaganda device used by Limbaugh is card stacking. In using this device, a speaker organizes evidence in ways that may not make logical sense with the purpose of supporting his or her own agenda. Therefore, the agenda presented might seem to support the host's position, but it is neither logical nor reliable.

Owen (1997) asked if evaluations of Clinton differ between talk radio listeners and people who rely on more traditional media. Owen found that talk listeners were

more disapproving of Clinton than non-listeners were. However, the findings also indicate that political predispositions account for a majority of this difference. The present study is not concerned with the effects of the rhetoric on the audience. However, by examining the political reality created, it is possible to gain insight into the relationship between political talk radio hosts and their audiences.

One concern about talk radio is the impact it has on political action. Hofstetter and Gianos (1997) look at the political involvement of talk radio listeners. Their hypothesis asks if listeners that are highly involved with the medium are more affected by the political rhetoric. After controls were considered, the findings were not conclusive. The authors suggest the more involved listeners do not consume the host's viewpoints. Rather, they make critical judgments regardless of what the host advocates.

In fact, Armstrong and Rubin (1989) discovered that talk radio listeners are looking for more than the host's ideas. They discovered talk radio served different purposes for those who called than it served for those who did not call. For those listeners who called, talk radio provided them with non-threatening interpersonal communication. Callers tend to be captive (e.g., stuck in traffic or at work) and therefore limited in their choice of activity. Callers also felt talk radio was more important to them and listened to talk radio for more hours than listeners who did not call.

An interesting question is raised about why people listen to talk radio. Tramer and Jeffres (1983), in exploring the motivation of callers to talk radio, discovered that many callers were seeking companionship. Of 181 total callers surveyed, 61 said they called to give or receive information and 49 said they called just to chat. Continuous callers are

motivated not by a need for social reform, but by a need for social interaction (Turow, 1974). Similarly, Ratner (1997) says talk radio is a way to connect to others.

Regardless of why listeners tune in, they become exposed to a powerful rhetoric that warrants critical examination. Bolce (1996) focused on talk radio listeners as a voting block. He examined voting behaviors and political orientations. He found in the 1992 election that 64 percent of talk radio listeners voted Republican 64 percent in the House of Representatives elections and 60 percent in the Senate elections. The results reflect a significant difference between listeners and non-listeners. He also found that talk radio listeners were more opinionated, less apt to cast an issueless vote and more concerned with public policy than the personal qualities of candidates. Talk radio played an important role in both the 1992 and 1994 elections, according to Laufer (1995), and talk radio provides a sense of political consciousness in America. It is important to take a critical look at what this voice is conveying.

Statement of Purpose

It is clear that the media play a significant role in shaping political reality. As seen with the agenda-setting hypothesis, the media tell the public what to think about. Priming suggests that the public makes judgements on policies, politicians and political candidates based on which issues the media place on the public's agenda. These issues are framed as a debate between liberal and conservative interpretations. This effect has been shown to occur in so-called "objective" media. These media are trusted to present a fair and objective view of the world. Therefore, it is important to look at what is being communicated by alternative media, such as talk radio hosts, who are not expected to

present a fair and objective worldview. Hosts such as Alan Colmes and Rush Limbaugh openly express partisan political perspectives. If the mainstream media have been shown to have agenda-setting and priming effects, it can be assumed that a strictly partisan view would similarly effect an individual's interpretation of reality. However, the political reality communicated by partisan members of the press is likely very different from the reality communicated by the mainstream "objective" media.

In an age of electronically mediated political communication, talk radio provides an opportunity to analyze and understand this communication. The purpose of this study is to examine how partisan talk radio hosts communicate their interpretation of reality. I will look at differences between a conservative and a liberal host with regard to how they communicate ideology. To accomplish this, I will focus on the issues discussed and the language used by Rush Limbaugh and Alan Colmes to communicate their ideologies. Listeners of talk radio, unlike others in mass media, have an opportunity to become active participants in the rhetoric. Because of this interpersonal nature of talk radio, it is also necessary to look at the callers' role in shaping political reality. This study will be guided by three research questions:

RQ1:   How does a conservative talk show host communicate his political perspective?

RQ2:   How does a liberal talk show host communicate his political perspective?

RQ3:   How do listeners participate in the creation of political reality?

From this study, I hope to uncover more than the issues discussed by two talk radio hosts and the personalities associated with these issues. Instead, I want to go further and examine the techniques used to discuss issues and personalities. In doing a critical analysis, it is also possible to discover the meanings each host attaches to the issues and personalities. From this information, I will attempt to synthesize the attributes associated with personalities and issues. By analyzing these attributes, I hope to discover the attitudes and political perspectives presented by the hosts. After discovering attitudes and perspectives, it is possible to make judgements about the worldview or political reality depicted by these talk radio hosts.

Chapter 2

Methodology

A critical analysis of the rhetoric presented in these two programs will allow me to move beyond the words spoken to gain a deeper understanding of the rhetor's world view. Kenneth Burke provides insight into the importance of critical analysis. His writings stress the unity between human action and art. Both of these aspects of rhetoric "are necessarily involved in the use of language to describe and interpret human action" (Melia, 1989, p.29). Burke defines dramatism as a technique used to analyze language and thought, not only as a means of conveying information, but also as a mode to discover motives for human actions through an inquiry into words. Through words, orientations and attitudes are created. These orientations and attitudes shape views of reality and generate motives for action (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 1991). Therefore, it is crucial to find an appropriate way to discover these motives through a close analysis of rhetoric

An effective method must suit the artifact that is being examined. This method, sometimes referred to as a critical perspective, is based on what aspect of the artifact the critic is examining. Burke (1941) describes the critical perspective as a set of questions. These questions are developed by the critic based on what he or she deems important. There are two types of questions. The first type of question deals with what the critic is looking for and why. The second type of question focuses on how, when and where to look for what the critic has decided to examine.

In order to answer the research questions that guide this study, I must focus on several aspects of the rhetoric found in these two talk radio programs. First of all, according to the agenda-setting hypothesis, the issues presented help shape public opinion. Also, the personalities that are associated with these issues have an impact on how political reality is created. Therefore, I will look at what issues and personalities are presented and with what frequency those issues and personalities are presented. Secondly, both priming and the second level of agenda-setting suggest that how these issues or personalities are discussed can have an impact on how the public views those issues or personalities. Finally, because these hosts discuss the issues and personalities from the perspective of their individual political ideologies, I want to understand how that ideology is communicated through discussions about issues, and how that communication differs between the two ideologies examined.

Campbell and Burkholder (1997) state rhetorical acts are not always easily and completely explained by a single method or critical perspective. They suggest that critics often must invent a critical perspective to suit the particular needs of the rhetorical act being examined. This is the approach I will be taking in this study. They suggest four questions to guide selection or invention of a critical perspective. First of all, the critic should discern what characteristics of the rhetorical act should be emphasized or highlighted. Second, the critic should ask if the rhetoric suggests criteria for judgement. Next, the critic should consider which critical system allows the critic to focus on the most significant criteria. Finally, the critic should ask which perspective would be most sympathetic in its assessments and most antagonistic in its judgements of the rhetoric.

In order to answer the research questions posited, the critical method employed must allow for interpretation of the details of this rhetoric. Although the critical approach being used is based on cluster criticism, it has been modified to better fit the purpose of this study. It is important to be able to look at the richness of the discourse in analyzing how these rhetors shape issues. However, using the agenda-setting hypothesis as a base, a portion of the analysis will be straight-forward and quantifiable.

The first step in this critical method is rooted in agenda-setting. It is a crucial first step to identify the issues and personalities discussed and the frequency with which they are mentioned. This is crucial, first and foremost, because it is impossible to know how the issues are discussed if those issues have not been identified. Also, it is important to focus on issues because, as shown with a review of agenda-setting literature, the issues discussed by the media do have a direct, observable effect on the public's agenda. That relationship has already been established. However, by focusing only on the issues and personalities mentioned and the frequency with which they are mentioned, little would be discovered about the influence of the hosts, how they communicate ideology or the impact that communication has on the creation of political reality. Therefore, the rhetorical artifact must be examined in more detail.

Burke's cluster criticism is an existing critical method that, with a slight adaptation, would allow for the richness and detail that is necessary for this type of analysis. This method is based on Burke's belief that every work contains a set of equations that he calls "associational clusters." By analyzing these clusters, the critic is able to discover what imagery is attached to important or crucial terms. Burke suggests

that writers are aware of the imagery they choose, however, not until the work is completed can anyone be fully aware of the interrelationships between all of the equations presented by the rhetor. By statistically examining these associations, Burke claims the critic can discover the structure of motivation, the way events and values are put together.

For Burke (1941), the term "statistically" is a substitution for the term "symbolically." He feels that by speaking in "symbolic" terms, people associate with poetry or artists. Burke feels many people view symbolism as rooted in the abstract and therefore not useful in discovering reality. Burke uses the word "statistical" because he believes symbols are equated with the reality that they symbolize. For Burke, symbolic acts are "equations" between symbols and reality.

This is a highly structured method, which allows the critic to discover the rhetor's world view and identify the motive for the rhetorical act being examined. Foss (1989) describes a structure for this method. The method is based on discovering the meanings of symbols by charting the words, or attributes, that cluster around key symbols in the rhetorical artifact. The critic looks at what subjects cluster around other subjects. Foss explains the procedure in four steps. The first step is to identify key terms or symbols within the artifact. The second step is to chart the terms that cluster around those key terms. Next, the critic discovers patterns in how terms cluster around the key terms to determine the meanings of the key terms. Finally, the critic is able to name the rhetor's motives based on the meanings of the key terms.

For this critical analysis, Burke's cluster criticism must be altered slightly. The first step, as discussed earlier, becomes identifying the issues and personalities discussed by the rhetors. The second step is to identify the words used in association with or to describe the issues and personalities. The third step, similar to Burke's, consists of examining and interpreting the descriptors that are used. At this step, it is necessary to look for patterns or associations that may suggest an issue's meaning. Foss suggests that by using opposing terms to describe an issue, the rhetor presents confusion or ambiguity while issues that are in opposition suggest conflict or tension in the rhetor's world view. The final step in this critical method is to examine the rhetor's motives.

In looking for the motives of the rhetor, the critic attempts to reveal the reality the rhetor is presenting. The critic does not attempt to delve into the psyche of the rhetor. By identifying the language used and analyzing that language, the critic makes judgments. These judgments do not deal with the rhetor's thoughts. Instead, the critic is interested in discovering what the rhetor reveals about himself or herself through the language that is chosen. By analyzing the associations and descriptions discovered in the previous step, I hope to discover a possible worldview for each rhetor. This worldview allows me to speculate on the reasons and motivations for the rhetoric.

For this study, two radio talk show programs will be examined. The Alan Colmes show, which airs in New York on WEVD from 11:00pm until 2:00 am and the Rush Limbaugh program which airs nation-wide from 11:00 am until 2:00pm, were taped for one week from September 28, 1998 to October 2, 1998. A total of 15 hours of each program was recorded for a total of 30 hours of programming. The broadcasts were then

transcribed. A total of 850 pages of transcripts were analyzed. These transcripts were then coded for issues, personalities and attributes using the method described above (see Appendix A for a copy of the coding sheet).

Now that the theoretical framework and previous research have been discussed and the method has been outlined, the focus shifts to the rhetorical artifacts and rhetors. Before the method can be applied, a general knowledge of the rhetors and artifacts must be supplied. Without this knowledge, any close analysis of the texts would be incomplete.

In the following chapters, the complete analysis of the artifacts will be presented. This analysis will begin in chapter 3 with a detailed description of how the study was conducted, the rhetors, and the artifacts being analyzed. Chapter 4 will outline the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology," and evaluate the worldview discovered in these programs. Finally, chapter 5 will explore the importance of the study, the limitations, and the areas for future study.

Chapter 3

Descriptive Analysis

The first step of any criticism is to examine the situation surrounding the rhetorical artifact. To fully understand the artifact, a critic must first understand the rhetor and the persuasive field to which the rhetoric is being added. This chapter will examine both rhetors and the persuasive field surrounding their broadcasts from September 28, 1998 to October 2, 1998.

The two hosts were selected based on their ideological affiliations and availability. There are many differences between the hosts and their shows. Therefore, it is necessary to take a look at each host, his show, and his audience.

Alan Colmes

Alan Colmes is a self-proclaimed liberal talk show host attempting to compete in the "conservative wilderness" (www.alan.com/show/index.html, 1998) of political talk radio. Now heard in New York City nightly from 11:00 p.m. until 2:00 a.m. In 1990 he was syndicated nationally. For a brief period he aired immediately following The Rush Limbaugh Program in many markets.

In addition to his radio program, Colmes also appears on the Fox News Channel's Hannity and Colmes. The program is billed as "Crossfire on amphetamines" (www.foxnews.com, 1998). It features Colmes as presenting the liberal point of view and Sean Hannity as his conservative counterpart. Hannity has said of Colmes, "Alan is a true-believing liberal. That's his strength and his weakness" (Ketchum, 1998).

Colmes has an interesting background for a political radio host. He grew up in New York. His family was very non-political (Ketchum, 1998). He got his start in show

business as a standup comic. He once opened up for Jay Leno (Ketchum, 1998). He claims that the comedy background helps him in his radio career. Colmes says, "dealing with hecklers and dealing with phone callers is sometimes very similar" (Brumley, 1998).

Colmes' program is aired on WEVD in New York. WEVD is a relatively small station. However, Colmes feels this is an advantage. "He feels WEVD affords him the creative freedom to build his show entirely from scratch, because people don't tune in with preconceived ideas of what the station should sound like" (Burke, 1998).

The radio program is aired in the New York area only. His audience and influence are much smaller in scope than that of Limbaugh's. However, the lack of liberal talk radio hosts may present insight into the nature of political talk radio. Colmes provides a good opportunity to analyze the rhetoric of a liberal talk radio host.

Rush Limbaugh

Rush Limbaugh's program can be heard 11:00 am to 2:00 p.m. (Central Time) on 620 radio stations nationwide. In St. Louis, Missouri, his home state, Limbaugh is ranked first in his time slot. It is estimated that his program is heard by 18 million people daily (www.KMOX.com, 1998). The show is now in its eleventh year of national syndication. Those Americans who listen to the Rush Limbaugh show are more likely to have college degrees, and while nine percent of the general public earns an income of $75,000 or greater per year, 19 percent of Limbaugh listeners do (www.kkar.com, 1998).

Although his core audience consists of loyal listeners, willing to call themselves "dittoheads" and once congregated in "Rush Rooms" at bars and airports to view his television show (www.chron.com, the Nation, 1998). Limbaugh's television show is no

longer on the air, and there seems to be a slight decline in his appeal. One reason for this may be that fewer stations are airing his radio program. In 1997, Limbaugh lost 40 stations after fees charged to the station to air the program rose. Four years ago, Limbaugh began charging stations to air his program (Business Week, 1997).

Others suggest Limbaugh himself may have undergone some significant changes. Randolph, in the Los Angeles Times, sees him becoming a "softer" member of the conservative political establishment (www.chron.com, 1998). Limbaugh, who in the past has been criticized for his weight and his negative attitude toward women, has seen many personal changes in the past few years. He was recently married for the third time. Soon after the marriage, Limbaugh was a self-proclaimed new man. Limbaugh said, "I loved myself too much to love anybody else, but now that's no longer operative" (www.celebsite.com, 1998). Limbaugh has also gained control of his weight problem.

Limbaugh not only has loyal fans, but he has loyal enemies as well. Al Franken attacked Limbaugh in his book, <u>Rush Limbaugh is a Big Fat Idiot and Other Observations</u>. Franken described his frustration and disgust as he completes his research for the book. He concluded that the point of Limbaugh's show is to punish listeners for knowledge (Franken, 1996). He credited Limbaugh as being the most powerful voice of conservatism, however he criticized Limbaugh for deliberately misleading his audience.

Another powerful critic of Limbaugh is the National Organization for Women (NOW). Limbaugh is often criticized for his "feminazi" label. Limbaugh defines a feminazi as "a feminist to whom the most important thing in life is ensuring that as many abortions as possible occur" (Limbaugh, p. 296, 1992). NOW describes Limbaugh's

views as racist, sexist, classist and homophobic. (now.org, 1998) NOW believes radio

stations should be required to provide equal time to organizations that oppose

Limbaugh's "hate-filled rhetoric."

His critics speculate about his beliefs and attitudes. His listeners are exposed to

his opinions and advice. In his book, The Way Things Ought to Be, Limbaugh

summarizes his beliefs:

> I believe in specific ideas, and I believe that those ideas have
> consequences. I believe in the individual, in less government so
> as to allow that individual maximum freedom to create and achieve;
> that societies which are founded on restraining the government rather
> than the individual are optimum; that the individual is smart enough
> to solve his own problems and does not need to depend on big
> government for resolution of all his problems (Limbaugh, p. 2, 1992).

Now that we have some insight into the rhetors, it is also necessary to look at the

persuasive field. The persuasive field consists of the arguments that are occurring in the

world around the texts that are being analyzed. In order to examine the persuasive field,

it is necessary to take a look at the news of the day from September 28, 1998 to October

2, 1998.

Persuasive Field

The main topics of the persuasive attempts for these two programs deal with

President Bill Clinton's affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky. An

independent counsel had investigated whether President Clinton asked Lewinsky to

perjure herself (New York Times, January 28, 1998). Earlier in 1998, the President

denied the perjury allegations on The News Hour in an interview with Jim Lehrer, stating

"that is not true. That is not true. I did not ask anyone to tell anything other than the

truth. There is no improper relationship. And I intend to cooperate with this inquiry"

(The New York Times, January 27, 1998). On the 28th of January, Matt Lauer on The

Today Show interviewed the First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton. She stated:

> I think the important thing now is to stand as firmly as I can... And
> we'll see how this plays out...This started out as an investigation
> of a failed land deal...We get a politically motivated prosecutor,
> who is allied with the right-wing opponents of my husband...I'm
> not only here because I love and believe my husband. I'm also
> here because I love and believe in my country...look at the very
> people who are involved in this. They have popped up in other
> settings...The great story here for anybody willing to find it and
> write about it and explain it, is this vast, right-wing conspiracy
> that has been conspiring against my husband (New York Times, January,
> 28, 1998).

News broadcasts began with what they called "The crisis in the White House"

(Vanderbilt archives, 1998). Others simply referred to it as "sex gate." Until Kenneth

Starr, the independent counsel, submitted his report to Congress on September 11, 1998,

very few details were known about President Clinton's relationship with Lewinsky.

However, the 445 page report claimed that Clinton did commit perjury, obstruction of

justice, and abuse of power (Allpolitics.com, October 2, 1998). Congress determined

what information and evidence from 50,000 pages of evidence supporting the Starr report

should be released to the public. 4,160 pages of evidence were released on October 2,

1998 (Allpolitics.com, October 2, 1998). Some of the evidence included in this release

were taped conversations between Monica Lewinsky and Linda Tripp regarding

Lewinsky's relationship with the president.

President Clinton voluntarily agreed to submit video taped testimony before the

grand jury on August 17, 1997, after Monica Lewinsky was granted full immunity in

exchange for her testimony (Allpolitics.com, 1998). Monica Lewinsky testified before

the grand jury on August 6. In that testimony, she admitted to having a sexual

relationship with the President. Media reports stated a blue dress, worn by Lewinsky,

was tested for the President's DNA (Allpolitics.com, 1998). News coverage focused on

what the President was going to say in his testimony and whether or not he would address

the nation afterward. The President's video-taped testimony was released to the public

and aired on all network news stations. Starr's report was also made public and readily

published in newspapers and available on the internet.

After Starr submitted his report to Congress, the House Judiciary Committee

began an impeachment inquiry into the President of the United States. The House of

Representatives voted on an impeachment inquiry October 5, 1998. According to CNN's

Allpolitics website, debate in the House of Representatives on September 30, 1998

focused on the rules that would govern an impeachment inquiry into Bill Clinton.

Finally in this chapter, I shall describe how these programs were examined and

take a closer look at the artifacts that were examined. Before a thorough analysis can be

conducted, a specific description of the radio programs examined is necessary. This

description includes the subject and goals of the rhetoric. This description will provide a

context for the results that were discovered.

Description of Study

The first step in the analysis of these artifacts was to identify issues and

personalities. This involved a thorough examination of each transcript. Each political

actor and issue was highlighted so it would be easily recognized. After all the issues and

personalities were identified, those issues and personalities that were mentioned with relative frequency in a show, a minimum of six times, were charted. I recorded the frequency that each key word identifying an issue or personality was used. For example, if Rush Limbaugh referred to Bill Clinton as 'the President,' 'Bill,' and 'President Clinton,' the number of times each reference was made would be recorded. Then, charts were made consisting of the words or phrases that appeared around each issue or personality (see Appendix B for an example of a cluster chart). When necessary, notes were made as to the relationship between the issues and personalities and the associated words.

After all the charts were completed, four key terms were selected from each program. For each program these included the host, Republican, Democrat, and Bill Clinton. These four terms were selected for a variety of reasons. First, they were all used with quite frequently. There was also a lot of intensity in the use of these terms. They are an integral and fundamental part of the rhetoric. Finally, these terms were used in connection with many of the issues and personalities found in the rhetoric. This suggests that they must be understood thoroughly to discover any meaning in the other issues and personalities discussed.

The focus of this study, as guided by the research questions posed, is how each host communicates his ideology. One way the hosts discuss ideology is through party affiliation. Therefore, for each host, I chose to examine his use and meaning of the party itself in his rhetoric. In order to uncover how the political ideology is communicated, it is

first necessary to uncover the meanings and importance associated with "Republican" and "Democrat."

One key personality present throughout the rhetoric is the host. As the creator of the rhetoric, how the host perceives himself and how he is perceived is crucial. Also, by looking at how the host is defined, it is possible to gain insight into the relationship between the host and his audience. This is fundamental in answering each of the research questions, especially question three which asks how callers participate.

Another key personality that needs to be examined is Bill Clinton. In both programs, he was the personality mentioned most frequently. With the current political scene, Bill Clinton emerged as the focus of discussion. Political discourse has focused on his actions and their future consequences. Nearly all of the issues and personalities that were discussed were addressed in the context of President Clinton. Bill Clinton became a key focus of association or disassociation.

In order to more fully answer the third research question concerning the role of caller in the creation of political reality, it was necessary to look beyond the four key terms. Therefore, each call was coded in three areas. First of all, the caller was identified as either male or female. Next, the caller was determined to agree with the host, disagree with the host, or as being neutral. For the most part, these judgements were fairly straightforward. If a caller expressed explicit agreement with the host or with something the host said during the course of the program, that caller was coded in agreement with the host. If the caller disagreed with the host, or the host disagreed with the caller, the caller was said to be in disagreement with the host. In order to be classified as neutral,

the host made no judgement one way or the other about what the caller said. In addition, the caller did not judge comments made previously by the host. These calls typically only provide additional information or insight into a topic. Callers who merely asked questions of the host were also placed into the neutral category, as were most calls of a personal nature. The final category by which calls were coded was association with the host. This was relevant in the Rush Limbaugh Program. Many callers state their affiliation and agreement with Limbaugh with the use of the word ditto. This was noted.

These terms provided insight into the worldview of the rhetors. The argument will be outlined later in chapter 4. However, in order to understand the analysis, it is first necessary to take a closer look at each of these programs. Through a close analysis of each program, a general description of the programs can be offered.

The Alan Colmes Show

The topics discussed on the Alan Colmes program vary greatly. Colmes does voice a distinct political agenda, but the focus of his show is often not political. However, throughout every show, even when Colmes vows to stay away from political issues, his views and opinions on current political issues keeps surfacing. After one caller requests to keep from even mentioning Bill Clinton in a discussion about racism, Colmes brings up Clinton by name, discussing his dialogue on racism.

Colmes' audience consists of two types of listeners. His listeners share certain characteristics due to the time the program airs. Many listeners have a devotion to Colmes and the program. Callers exclaim, "I'm so glad I found you" One caller even states, "it's addictive. I had to listen up all night just to talk to you" (September 30,

1998).[1] However, some of Colmes' listeners want to be entertained, and other listeners are passionate about their political beliefs.

Although the specific topics of each show vary, a clear purpose for all the rhetoric can be determined. First of all, Colmes does promote his personal agenda. This show is a platform for him to, as one caller argued, "be an apologist for Clinton" (September 30, 1998). Although that one caller's feelings may be a bit extreme, the presence of Colmes' agenda in his rhetoric is unmistakable. He complains about how difficult it is to be a Clinton supporter among people of his profession. Colmes states that the other personalities at Fox News, where he co-hosts <u>Hannity and Colmes</u>, oppose him. He shows himself as an outsider. "It's funny to be called a moderate. I'm called anything but a moderate by those who disagree with me. I get called all kinds of names; radical, communist, socialist" (September 30, 1998). Colmes also suggests that talk radio is dominated by rightwing conservatives.

The tone of the rhetoric is very relaxed most of the time. Even though discussion often becomes heated and intense, there still appears to be a very informal relationship between Colmes and his audience. One reason for this is the topics that are discussed. The discussion between Colmes and his callers often turn personal. During one call, Colmes helps one distraught young man rid himself of an ex-girlfriend he believes is stalking him. Colmes listens as a woman tell him that she talks to her stuffed animals, and he discusses sex with an 18-year old virgin. A frequent caller named Steve calls to ask Alan to put to sleep Pokey, Steve's sick dog.

In addition to the informal topics, the interaction between Colmes and his audience are also informal. Colmes and the callers frequently interrupt one another. Also, callers freely criticize Colmes and call him names. One caller refers to Colmes as a "clown" (September 28, 1998). A frequent caller claims, "Alan is out of touch with his audience" (September 28, 1998). Another way Colmes shows familiarity with his audience is by referring to callers frequently by their first names.

Colmes begins each program with a guest. This is a fairly structured interview. Although callers are able to address the guests, the guests are on for a very limited time. Therefore, very few callers actually are able to directly question guests. Beyond the initial interview, the guests do not have a major impact on the topics discussed for the remainder of the program. The guests on the shows analyzed for this paper include New York mayor Rudy Guliani, Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrara, former Washington correspondent for Salon Magazine, Jonathan Broder, Susan Carpenter Macmillan, and author Dan Savage, a sex columnist from the Village Voice.

After the initial interview segment, most of the time is spent taking calls from audience members. Therefore, most of the program is very loosely structured. In fact, Elmo, a frequent caller to the program is kept on the air for long periods of time and able to interact with other callers. The callers are able to determine, to a large extent, the pace of the program.

Colmes does present a brief monologue at the beginning of each hour. This keeps his listeners abreast of current events. In doing so, Colmes moves beyond presenting information. He often interprets the information for his audience. For

example, he tells his audience that there are things going on in addition to the Clinton scandal. He claims, "What is Congress doing when they're not out to impeach the president? They're considering reinstating--are you ready for this--the draft" (September 29, 1998). He not only discusses the issues, but he adds his own interpretation. Colmes continues, "There are benefits to a draft, like having young people die in action" (September 29, 1998).

Other than the guests that begin the program, Colmes rarely supports his claims with evidence. Occasionally, he presents examples to support his position. He repeatedly states that the President Clinton is a great president. Occasionally, Colmes will support this with examples of what Clinton has accomplished. He states, "He (Clinton) brought peace to Northern Ireland. He reinstalled Aristeed in Haiti...He tried to bring health care to the American people" (September 30, 1998). However, these examples are presented as unquestioned facts, when, in fact, many times they are disputed heavily, or their value is disputed.

Colmes' role in the program is that of facilitator and antagonist. He attempts to draw out his callers. Many times this is accomplished by asking personal questions. He will also challenge or attack his callers. For example one caller said Clinton was a "man who claims to be president" (September 28, 1998). Without even listening to the rest of the callers comment, Colmes jumped in and asked, "What do you mean claims to be president? He doesn't claim to be anything. He is president." Another way Colmes draws out his callers is by making his own positions known. He presents very strong opinions. Colmes suggests, "It's absurd to be talking about impeachment for this level of

offense. It's silly. It's stupid. We're the laughing stock of the world" (September 29, 1998). Colmes enjoys the arguments. One caller claims, "I don't enjoy engaging in debates." To which Colmes replies, "Well I do." After the caller states, "I would just like to make my point," Colmes continues, "We're going to debate. We are debating right now. We will continue to debate" (September 30, 1998).

The Rush Limbaugh Program

The purpose of the Rush Limbaugh show exists at two levels. The underlying ideological purpose is to disseminate the "truth" according to Limbaugh. Limbaugh claims to be the "all knowing, all caring, all concerned Maharushi serving humanity" (September 28, 1998).[2] By expressing his ideology, Limbaugh hopes to create and lead an informed group subscribing to his specific platform or ideology.

Limbaugh presents himself as the truth-bearer. He assumes the role of leader, and that becomes his persona. It is his duty to inform the audience about the world. Limbaugh believes his listeners depend on his insight. He states, "When the program begins it signals…that all potentially will be right with America" (September 29, 1998). Limbaugh suggests that listeners view his role as to "keep us up…keep us inspired…keep us motivated." Limbaugh responds to this by saying, "I don't mind being the leader" (September 28, 1998).

Limbaugh caters to a specific audience of conservative Republicans. This audience contains two distinct groups. One of these groups consists of Limbaugh fans. They are loyal listeners, and Limbaugh's ideals are ingrained in their minds. They repeat what they have heard on the program and use key phases as used by Limbaugh. The other

group consists of occasional and first time listeners. Limbaugh provides these listeners with an agenda consistent with their own ideology. The audience is invited to join Limbaugh as a member of his followers. In doing so, there is a sense that they will become one of the select and enlightened group.

Limbaugh's tone is one of superiority and sarcasm. Limbaugh takes a role of superiority over the liberals and, to a certain extent, his more loyal listeners. He uses phrases such as, "let me tell you what this means," or "This says to me." Limbaugh creates an importance for this subject beyond its political implications. He generalizes from political to ideological or moral. He speaks in terms of right, wrong and truth.

Limbaugh moves back and forth between segments with many strategies. The most obvious transition is the commercial break. Between discussions, Limbaugh uses the phone number as an invitation for listeners to call. He also uses teasers to tell the listener what will be coming up next. These include phrases like, "serving humanity, the excellence in broadcasting network," "on the cutting edge of societal evolution," or "the most listened to talk show in America."

Limbaugh uses different types of supporting material to support his claims. Many times he uses information gained through other media sources. He often comments on newspaper articles or columns that are published that day. He reads extensively from a column by Shelby Steele. He also plays selected pieces of a speech made by Ross Perot at the Reform Party's national convention. In addition, Limbaugh draws from television programs. In particular, he relies heavily on "those cable shows at night."

The language used by Limbaugh is prescriptive and idealistic. This abstraction is more difficult to refute than specifics that are more easily understood. He offers advice to his listeners on how to deal with those who disagree. He also tells his listeners what they "ought" to do or what will happen.

This language illustrates the loyalty and dependence of the audience. Limbaugh acts as an interpreter for his audience. It is his role to explain to them what is going on in the world. This is illustrated with his interpretation of what it means to be a liberal. He warns, "they are all liars...Don't believe a word they say" (September 29, 1998). He can also predict what the Democrats will do in the future. He predicts, "Democrats are going to run around and claim a huge victory" (September 29, 1998). This allows the audience to understand difficult concepts and competing ideals. However, this understanding is based not on proof, but mostly on a blind faith of Limbaugh. Limbaugh tells his audience, "I'll tell you." Limbaugh creates a cohesive group that can fulfill a need to belong. He creates a "right" way to live and a "truth" to follow by employing refutation of opposing claims and by basing all arguments on shared ideologies of conservative Republicans.

Limbaugh interprets the world for his audience. He states, "I don't see a lot of contentment out there, I see anger" (October 2, 1998). He suggests the goal of his rhetoric is to "educate and inform the American people. That's what this program is all about." However, Limbaugh goes one step further. It is not enough to merely interpret the world. He expects more from his listeners. In return, listeners will be rewarded.

Limbaugh asks his audience to have "the courage to believe what your host says. It's amazing how much better your life will be if you do this" (September 29, 1998).

There are many differences between these two programs. There are also many similarities in the topics and format of the two programs being analyzed. In addition to the general description provided, these shows were critiqued from the cluster criticism perspective outlined earlier. From this critique, the following argument was formed.

Chapter 4

Rhetoric of Talk Radio Ideology

The results of this study show that Rush Limbaugh and Alan Colmes present a

"rhetoric of talk radio ideology." This chapter will outline the shared worldview

presented by these talk radio hosts and evaluate the implications of this worldview. First,

however, it is necessary to define the shared worldview. Then, it is necessary to examine

how each host effectively communicates his ideologically different worldview.

Before discussing the ideology presented by each host, it is necessary to note how

these hosts talk about ideology. As stated earlier, the definitions provided for

conservative and liberal were based on everyday usage in the current American political

system. In the previous discussion of ideology, I stated that a distinction would be made

between conservative and liberal and Republican and Democrat. In the current political

system, conservative is most often associated with the Republican Party and liberal is

most often associated with the Democratic Party. In the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology,"

the distinction between party and ideology is clouded. Therefore, in this discussion of the

"rhetoric of talk radio ideology," these terms are used as they are by the hosts. They

become labels used loosely and interchangeably to distinguish between the two political

groups currently in power. The "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" uses these terms to

describe the political reality that is communicated by Alan Colmes and Rush Limbaugh.

Alan Colmes and Rush Limbaugh are, in fact, spokesmen for the ideology they

support. However, the methods they use to create their partisan reality are similar. This

suggests a similarity in the way ideology is discussed on talk radio. Whether

conservative or liberal, there are certain techniques these ideologues use to present their worldview.

The "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" functions as a heuristic based solely on values with an empty agenda. That is, while this worldview does present the highest values of each ideology, the way in which these values can be transferred to the current political agenda remains vague. These ideologues present their positions without much discussion of issues or policies. Therefore, the agenda they present is empty. Ideology, then, is left to function as a heuristic. It becomes a way for citizens to simplify complex issues in order to make uneducated political decisions. These decisions are based not on knowledge about issues, but rather on the values presented in the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology."

A thorough analysis of the way each host uses the four key terms will illustrate the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology." Through this analysis, it is clear that both rhetors use similar techniques to present ideologies rooted in opposing values. The techniques used to present this rhetoric can be found in the importance structure plays in the way each host presents his values, how they define the political parties, and how they position themselves in regard to political actors, particularly Bill Clinton.

The first technique used by both hosts to communicate their ideology is the structure of the program itself. Each program has a distinct structure that supports the political reality created by the host. By using the program's structure, the hosts are able to communicate two distinctly different ideologies. This is accomplish with the role callers are allowed to have, the role of the host, and how the host defines himself.

Alan Colmes

The way in which Alan Colmes presents himself is in accord with the ultimate values of a liberal ideology. Above all else, liberal Democrats, as defined earlier, value equality (Janda, Berry, & Goldman, 1993). This value can be seen in how Colmes runs his show, and how he defines himself.

The manner in which Alan Colmes structures the radio program illustrates this emphasis on equality. Colmes encourages disagreement from his audience. Colmes states, "my job is to entertain people, and whether you agree with me or disagree with me is not relevant" (October 1, 1998). He continues to suggest that "it is more fun to argue and debate than it is to have people call you up and tell you how wonderful you are all the time" (October 1, 1998).

Colmes allows more of his listeners to speak than does Rush Limbaugh. The Alan Colmes Show averages slightly more than 40 callers per show. The average number of callers were those who spoke during the regular portion of the show. It does not include those callers who participate in the "radio graffiti" portion of the show, in which callers state one sentence and one sentence only. The Rush Limbaugh program averages only slightly over 12 callers per show (see Figure 1). This statistic is even more alarming when the difference in audience size is taken into consideration. Alan Colmes has a New York audience between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 2:00 am (Eastern Time) while Limbaugh has the largest nation-wide radio audience from 11:00-2:00 (Central Time) in the afternoon.

The callers that Colmes allows on the program are allowed to comment more than Limbaugh's callers do. On an average, the callers to the Colmes show speak approximately 18 times. In contrast, the average number of exchanges allowed for Limbaugh's callers are just over six (see Figure 2). This means that Colmes' listeners are given more of an opportunity to reply to comments by the host. Also, the callers play a larger role on the Colmes program than they do on Limbaugh's.

Figure 1

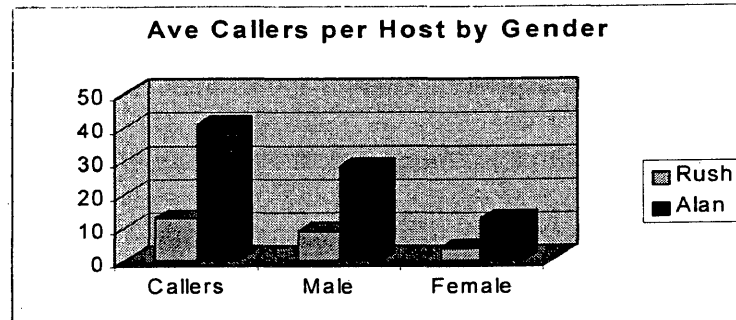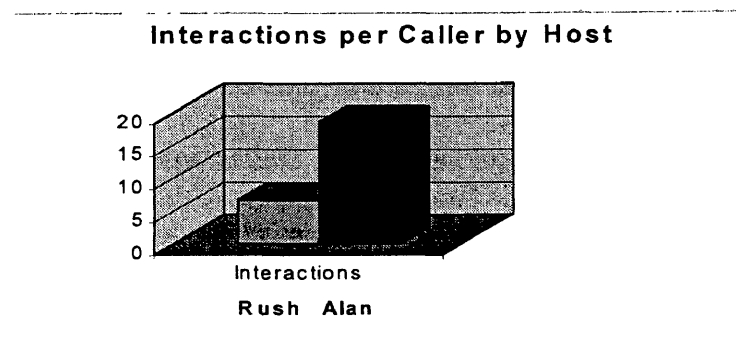Ave Callers per Host by Gender

Figure 2

Interactions per Caller by Host

The topics discussed by callers to the Colmes program vary greatly. He spends more than an hour discussing which way the toilet paper should be placed on the roll. Colmes challenges callers to bring up non-political issues. In addition, callers are asked

about their personal life. Frequently, Colmes will question guests about their occupation or their personal relationships. "Your child is sleeping, and what do you do for a living Delores?" Colmes asked one caller. After her reply, he continued with the same line of questioning. "And what does your husband do?" (September 30, 1998). This type of questioning is typical with nearly every call at one point in the conversation.

Another topic discussed between Colmes and his callers is the program itself. For example, many callers attempt to convince Colmes that they deserve their own "number" when they call the program. Colmes rarely gives out a number without asking callers to explain why they deserve it. One caller replied, "Because I'm a fan." The answer fell short. Colmes continued to quiz the listener about his knowledge of the show. "How long have you been a fan?" After another insufficient answer, Colmes asked, "Who was my first guest?" (September 28, 1998). Many callers then have to pass tests about their knowledge of the program in order to be announced as a regular caller with an official number.

During two of the programs analyzed in this study, Colmes challenges his listeners not to discuss political issues. In the final hour of the October 1, 1998, show, Colmes asks his listeners to answer the question, "Over or under?" This question referred to whether the callers felt the toilet paper should be rolled over or under. Colmes went on to say "and you must give sufficient reasons for your answers." Explaining the importance of this topic, Colmes stated, "Long after Clinton and Lewinsky this will still be an issue." During the September 30, 1998, show, Alan challenges callers not to

discuss the Clinton Lewinsky scandal. He instead asks them to "tell me something

personally important to you."

In addition to the equal treatment of vairous topic, the way Colmes presents

himself in relation to his listeners also supports the ideal of equality. This can be seen in

the way Colmes defines himself and the way in which he comments on his role as host.

Several times Colmes states his disagreement with callers. However, this is not a

chastisement of callers. Instead, Colmes finds a certain pride in this disagreement.

Colmes states, "we can agree to disagree and disagree without being disagreeable"

(September 30, 1998). This is stated twice in response to different opinions expressed by

guests or callers. Colmes accepts and embraces disagreement.

In fact, it often seems as though Colmes tries to get his audience to disagree with

him. He argues in a very aggressive way, questioning each word a caller says, and

frequently interrupting. Calls have escalated into shouting matches where words are

unintelligible because both parties speak at once. At one point, one of Colmes' callers

picks up on this, suggesting he uses an "interrogation" (September 30, 1998) style of

dealing with callers.

By claiming himself as a liberal, Colmes defines liberalism in the way in which

he defines himself. The terms Colmes most frequently associates with himself are

"invites challenge," "needs everybody," "thinks," and "doesn't agree." Each one of these

terms helps Colmes illustrates the liberal ideology for his audience.

Colmes frequently speaks of "challenging" his audience. His goal is not to

convince or dictate to his audience. Rather, Colmes aims merely to get his message

through. He challenges his audience to "talk about something new" (October 1, 1998), "to get personal" (September 30, 1998), and he invites his listeners to challenge him.

By "needing everyone" and "not agreeing," Colmes presents acceptance. The frequency with which callers disagree with the host functions to limit the negative impact of that disagreement. Colmes and his callers often disagree. With an expectation toward disagreement, healthy disagreement becomes the norm rather than an exception. However, Colmes does not always feel as if the disagreement is healthy. Colmes treats these instances as personal failures. After one such disagreement during the September 29, 1999 show, he states "I'm trying to have a reasonable (conversation)…I'm a bad host. I'd like to admit I don't know what to do. I am a dismal failure…I tried to do the right thing and reason with him and have a conversation." Alan also states, "I love to have dialogue with people who disagree with me." Another interesting example of this occurred on September 28, 1999 between Alan and Norman, a regular caller to the show. Alan commented about this conversation. "I really do want to have a dialogue on this program. I welcome different points of view, but we can't both talk on top of each other." Again, Colmes takes personal responsibility for the problem. He continues, "I was trying to be polite, and if I failed at being polite, I apologize." After a second call from Norman, Colmes again restates, "I welcome disagreement on this program." Later in the program, a caller suggests that Colmes does not need Norman. Colmes replies, "Oh, I need everybody I can get" (September 28, 1998).

In contrast to Limbaugh, Colmes paints himself as a thinker, instead of someone who knows the truth. Colmes is shown to be on an equal level with callers. One of the

most frequently used words in relation to Colmes is "think." In fact, many of Colmes

sentences begin with the phrase "I think." This is a way of qualifying and limiting the

generalization of his claims. Also, Colmes often speaks negatively about himself and his

abilities. After heated disagreements with callers, Colmes will refer to himself as a "bad

host." He will ask, "what could I have done?" Colmes emphasizes his own limitations.

Finally, the way Colmes views his role as a host and defines himself shows the

importance of freedom, especially freedom of expression. Colmes argues for certain

truths. However, in doing so, he also admits the possibility that others hold opposing

truths. This is seen with his attitude of "welcoming disagreement." Colmes also lets

callers know he "respects their opinion." Finally, Colmes shows he values freedom of

expression. At one point Colmes asks his guest, Jonathan Broder, on the September 30,

1999 program, "what do liberals stand for, if not the first amendment and the right of free

expression?" Although Colmes claims to value those who disagree with him, those who

disagree with him, namely conservative Republicans are chastised. This will be

discussed shortly.

Rush Limbaugh

Rush Limbaugh also uses self-definition and his role as host to portray

conservative ideology. In contrast to the Liberal value of freedom, the ultimate value for

conservatives is order. Along with order comes the idea of imposed morality (Corbett,

1991). In Limbaugh's program, these two values can be found in the way the show is

structured, the way Limbaugh defines himself, and the way Limbaugh sees his role as

host.

The way Limbaugh runs his program promotes order. First of all, Limbaugh allows fewer callers to speak on the program (see Figure 1). Instead more time is spent bringing up issues to be discussed by those who are allowed onto the program. Limbaugh spends the majority of his show updating his audience about the news of the day. He also uses several sources from which information is presented. For example, he reads a lengthy column by Shelby Steele that was in the New York Times that day. Also, he uses sound bites from Larry King Live, Geraldo Live and Ross Perot's speech at the Reform Party National Convention. This is one way Limbaugh presents himself as having access to information, and the information provided includes a great deal of speculation and interpretation.

Callers are expected to comment on the issues discussed by Limbaugh during his monologue. Limbaugh states, "why I do talk about this stuff? I throw stuff out. In the business, ladies and gentlemen, they're called topic starters." Limbaugh also further restricts the areas to which callers are allowed to add insight. "If somebody has a reaction to either the subject itself or my take on it, that is precisely what is desired. What is not desired is somebody who's going to say exactly what I said" (September 29, 1998).

Limbaugh also structures the orderliness of discourse by redefining or asking for clarification of callers' comments. He attempts to clarify the definitions of words used by callers. In response to one female caller on September 29, 1998, Limbaugh asks, "by co-dependant, do you mean enabler?" This clarification is the basis for Limbaugh to offer his own insight on the situation. He continues by stating (in regards to Hillary

Clinton), "She's really enabled now, because she's flown off to South Africa. Did you know that?" (September 29, 1998). He also redefines callers' comments in order to relate them to topics discussed earlier in the program. For example, when answering Limbaugh's request for predictions as to how the Republicans would do in the midterm elections, one male caller states, "I believe this is a little bit of spin from the White House on the November elections." To which Limbaugh replies, "Wait a minute are you saying that… the Democrats are predicting the Republicans are going to do way better than they are … to suppress the Republican turnout…" After the caller offers clarification, Limbaugh ties it in with his earlier monologue, stating, "That's right, that's exactly what happened with the video taped testimony of the president's grand jury appearance. They put out the expectation he was going to crack. He didn't crack. Then, they were able to say he was really good…" (September 29, 1998). This redefinition functions to support the conservative ideal of order in another way. Through this redefinition and clarification of the callers' comments, Limbaugh is presented as an interpreter. He is responsible for clarifying and discovering meaning in the thoughts of others.

The way Limbaugh refers to himself illustrates hierarchical order for the audience. This language shows Limbaugh as being near the top of the social order. Thus, he is responsible for imposing morality and knowledge on others. Limbaugh paints himself as having knowledge of what is true and right. He states, "the views and opinions and thought ruminations the mullings of the host on this program are right. Documented to be so" (September 29, 1998).

The words he most frequently associates with himself illustrate his role in society. He uses phrases such as "all knowing," "serving humanity" to show himself as a savior or guru. At one point Limbaugh warns his audience not to believe anyone who tries to predict the future. He then qualifies this statement to exclude himself, claiming that he is the only one with that ability.

The way in which Limbaugh discusses his role also supports these conservative ideals. Equality is not valued as highly as it is in the Liberal ideology. In fact, Limbaugh states, "This (show) has always been a benevolent dictatorship, not a democracy." He explains this further. "When I say it, it can't be improved upon. When I have said my say about something, there is nothing really left to be said" (September 28, 1998). Freedom is forfeited for a hierarchical order and access to what is "right."

Republican and Democrat

Both hosts use the same techniques to present definitions of the political parties. They present a division between Republican and Democrat, liberal and conservative, right and left. In doing so, they define themselves by generalizing about the other. They do not define themselves by stating their own beliefs and values as much as by defining the opposing party's beliefs and values. Also, this definition is based on the assumption that Republicans and Democrats are, in fact, opposites. By relying on that assumption, the hosts never define themselves based on issues and positions. Instead, the audience is left to conclude the definitions on their own.

Limbaugh and Colmes frequently refer to both political parties. Limbaugh referred to the Democratic Party 441 times and the Republican Party 240 times. Colmes

referred to the Republican Party 72 times and the Democratic Party 56 times. Therefore, each of these hosts discusses the opposing party more often than their own. The opposing party is defined more clearly than the hosts' party because generalizations are made. It appears to be easier for both of these hosts to present their ideology, not by defining what it is, but by defining what it is not.

Both hosts present a confusing picture of their own party. This is done mainly with the existence of several contradicting terms. In addition to using the party name or ideological term, Democrat, liberal, Republican, conservative, Colmes and Limbaugh also refer to the members of their own party as "we" and "they." Also, both hosts use "they," disassociating themselves with the party, more often than including themselves in the party by using "we." Limbaugh labels Republicans as "they" 26 times and "we" 16 times. Colmes refers to Democrats as "we" 5 times and "they" 10 times. This shows confusion and division in both hosts' presentation of their own political party.

In order to illustrate why this separation presents confusion, it is necessary to show how each of these hosts affiliates himself with his political party. First of all, Colmes refers to himself as a liberal. In fact he states, "I like that word (liberal). Some people don't" (September 30, 1998). Limbaugh's affiliation with the Republican Party is not stated explicitly as often as Colmes states his liberal affiliation. However, he does associate himself with a conservative agenda. Rush claims, "I have nothing against the conservative agenda, as you rightly know" (September 29, 1998). During the September 29,1998 program he does state, "I am a Republican." Most often, these associations go unstated and must be assumed.

Along with frequent disassociation with their own party, these hosts also use negative terms to describe their party. First of all, both Colmes and Limbaugh frequently use the word "wimp" to describe the members of their own party. Colmes uses the word wimp 5 times. He states, "Liberals are wusses. They love to roll around and be all warm and fuzzy. They're not willing to stand up and take strong stands...Liberals are a bunch of wimps" (September 29, 1998). Limbaugh speaks of Republicans in a similar manner. Limbaugh says Republicans are "eager to please." Limbaugh also suggests that Republicans' actions are motivated by "an effort to be fair and balanced and liked and loved" (October 1, 1998). Limbaugh only uses the term "wimp" once, but he often refers to Republicans as "scared," and suggests they will "blow it."

However, positive terms were also used by both hosts to describe their own party. Some of the most frequently used terms in association with their own party were positive. For Limbaugh, in addition to being scared and in the process of blowing it, Republicans were also associated with leadership and a definite agenda. For Colmes, Democrats were not only wimps and afraid, but they also were associated with friendship and morality. For both hosts, "vote" was one of the most frequently used terms in association with their political party. This is probably a result of the persuasive field and issues being discussed. The programs analyzed took place around two votes, the November elections, and the impeachment inquiry.

There are several contradicting terms used by Colmes and Limbaugh in reference to their own political party. Limbaugh associates words such as "partisan inquiry" and "partisan vendetta" with the Republican Party. He also refers to Republicans as "beaten

up" and "not showing any inclination." However, they are also described as "attacking," "encouraging," and able to "find a way." Colmes also uses confusing terms that are associated with Democrats. He portrays them as "opposed to Republicans" and "going after Republicans," but also says they are "not willing to take strong stands." He contradicts himself when he calls Democrats "wimps" and "wusses" by saying they are "fighting the establishment," "standing up," and they "went after Packwood."

Some of this contradiction can be attributed to the hosts' attempts to comment on others' views of their own party. For example, Colmes talks about what the Republicans say about the Democrats. "The Republicans say, let the Democrats go up to the White House and tell Clinton it's time to go" (September 30, 1998). Therefore, some of the words that are associated with the political parties are not from the host's ideology, but rather from the host's interpretation of the other side's argument. This contradiction also illustrates a division in the party between the people in leadership and the ideals of the party (that is also seen with the use of "we" and "they"). This division can be seen in how Limbaugh criticizes the party leadership. "Republicans ought to be saying this kind of stuff forcefully…The Republican leadership just sweeps it all under the rug and doesn't go anywhere near it" (September 28, 1998).

Whatever the reason for the contradiction, it has a very distinctive result. By showing a confusing definition of their own party, the hosts avoid damaging the image of their own party. While they present criticism of their own party, they also present praise. The confusion prohibits the host from presenting any clear conclusions or judgements

regarding the party. The conclusions and generalizations must be based on the way the hosts define the opposing party.

Both hosts discuss the other party more than they discuss their own. In this way, they present their beliefs by showing their audience what they don't believe in or what they disagree with. For both hosts, their definition of the other party is more clearly stated than their definition of their own party. There is less contradiction. The most frequently used words to describe the other party for both hosts were negative. Limbaugh associated "not fair," "partisan," "spin," "don't care," "expect," and "hypocrisy" with the Democratic party. The words Colmes associated most frequently with the Republican Party include "partisan," "talking points," "conspiracy," "evil," and "wackos."

Also, the words associated with the other party provide much more generalization. Both hosts show this with the words chosen to refer to the other party. Colmes and Limbaugh both use party identification as the primary label, but the word "they" is used quite frequently. While Colmes uses "Republican" 42 times, he uses the label "they" 22 times. Limbaugh refers to "Democrats" 264 times and "they" 119 times.

Both hosts build on those initial generalizations. In fact, Limbaugh suggests that he knows more about liberals than they do. He suggests, "I think some of the libs out there would be pretty offended at this if they actually heard themselves described accurately" (September 28, 1998). Limbaugh also groups liberals together. "The Democratic Party are (sic) a team. They are all huge ultra liberals" (September 28, 1998). Limbaugh also suggests that the Democrats are aware of their actions. He says,

"Democratic consultants knowingfully, purposefully spread that lie" (September 29,

1998). For this reason, Limbaugh suggests that no Democrat should be believed. He

warns his listeners, "Don't believe a thing anybody on the Democratic side tells you

about anything."

Colmes similarly uses unkind labels to generalize about the Republican Party. He

speaks of a "vast, right wing, politically motivated conspiracy" (September 28, 1998).

He also presents all Republicans as working together. This is illustrated with his

comments about Ken Starr and Paula Jones. "Ken Starr was a Republican

operative…who has had political ambitions (and) supported Republican causes"

(September 30, 1998). He also suggests that "Paula Jones' choices have made this seem

like defacto, if not the dejure, a politically inspired witch hunt" (September 29, 1998).

Colmes also presents the position of Republicans very narrowly. He presents

conservatives as low lifes who want nothing but to impeach the president. Colmes

suggests their agenda is "to get Clinton out of office." He describes "right wing thugs

that are out to get him" (September 29, 1998). He continues, "conservatives, the Clinton

haters, are much more passionate. They're much better at calling talk shows. They're

much better at getting their message (out)" (September 29, 1998).

Bill Clinton

Bill Clinton is the focus of much of the rhetoric of the programs I examined. In

fact, almost all of the issues discussed were related in some way to Bill Clinton, or at

least to the impeachment proceedings. Bill Clinton was mentioned by Rush Limbaugh

637 times and by Alan Colmes 302 times. He is clearly the most talked about issue and personality in both programs.

Bill Clinton was the only "issue" discussed with great frequency in these programs. However, Clinton was not addressed as an issue. The focus of the rhetoric about Bill Clinton was not on actions, events, or issues. Instead, the rhetoric used to discuss Bill Clinton was based on values. Bill Clinton is a God/Devil term for both hosts. The hosts' positions are defined by their relationship to Bill Clinton, and they speak about Clinton in fairly absolute and judgmental terms.

For Limbaugh, Bill Clinton is a devil term. Limbaugh paints Clinton as the enemy. He is referred to as "evil," "most powerful," "a dark genius," "threat to democracy," "Hitler," and "Nixon." To further illustrate this, Limbaugh refers to Clinton's "cultist type followers."

A definition of Bill Clinton can be derived from the words that are most often associated with his name. This definition includes, "sex," "liar," "knowingly," "mentally unstable," "Democrat," and "impeached." By defining Clinton negatively, and presenting himself as the antithesis to Clinton, Limbaugh also defines himself. An agon analysis was completed to help present a clear definition of the term being examined. An agon analysis considers not only those words associated with a key term, but an analysis of the opposites of the frequently associated words is also considered. Through an agon analysis, we can see that Bill Clinton is not defined as "truthful," "mentally fit," "Republican," "chaste," and "vindicated." (see Chart 1).

Chart 1

Bill Clinton/(Rush Limbaugh)	Agon analysis:
Liar	Truthful
Knowingly	Unknowingly
Mentally unstable	Mentally strong
Democrat	Republican
Sex	Chaste
Impeached	Vindicated

There is more confusion and contradiction present in the words used by Colmes to describe Clinton. This is not surprising when the context of the conversation is taken into consideration. For Colmes, in order to present Clinton as a God term, a separation is made between political actions and private character. The contradictory terms don't seem to cause confusions as much as they qualify each other. He is a liar, but he apologized. The sex is only a problem because he got caught. In fact, Colmes suggests, "If Reagan would have had sex during the eight years he was president, he would have been a better president" (September 30, 1998). For Colmes, sex and affairs do not carry the negative connotations they do with Limbaugh.

For Colmes' description of Clinton, an agon analysis is not beneficial. In fact, with already contradictory terms, the opposite terms would further cloud the meaning. Instead with Colmes it is more important to considered the context of the language used. In doing so we must consider the persuasive field.

For Colmes, Clinton tends to be a God term although not as clearly as Clitnon is a Devil term to Limbaugh. He uses terms such as "brilliant" and "greatest president." He refers to Clinton as the "greatest president in the second half of the 20th century" (September 29, 1998) and composed a song about Clinton. To the tune of "The Greatest Love" Colmes sings, "he is the greatest president...the leader of the world...you might as well love him...and if you're a Republican who works up on the hill, get a grip and know you're place. Find you're strength in Bill" (September 29, 1998). Through the words that are associated with Bill Clinton, Colmes defines Clinton most frequently as "liar," "apologized," "got caught," "sex," "greatest president," and "elected." (see Chart 2).

Chart 2

Bill Clinton (Alan Colmes)
Liar
Apologized
Got caught
Sex
Greatest President
Elected

Colmes associates himself with Clinton. However, unlike with Limbaugh, the terms Colmes uses in reference are not as absolute. Instead, Colmes qualifies his association with Clinton. For example, Colmes suggests, "President Clinton is not the pope. He's the president. We have a civilian government" (September 29, 1998). In fact, Colmes criticizes Clinton: "his behavior stinks, it's immoral, it's deplorable, it's

wrong" (September 30, 1998). However, in spite of these qualifications, it is clear that

Clinton is an ideal with which Colmes chooses to be associated. Colmes dismisses

Clinton's problems by saying, "Bill Clinton has so many court cases because he has these

organized haters" (September 29, 1998). He suggests they are "bitter at his success." In

doing so, Colmes paints Clinton as a martyr who "has a vision and wanted to be a force

for change in our culture" (September 28, 1998). He separates Bill Clinton's actions

from his presidency, "I think that what he did was deplorable, and that's horrible that he

lied. It's immoral and it's sickening, but I don't think that he should be impeached for it"

(September 30, 1998).

Callers' Role

As outlined above, callers are an integral part of the structure of each program.

The hosts use this structure to present the values of their ideology. However, the role of

the callers in the creation of political reality can be addressed separately as well. In doing

so, it becomes clear that both hosts use callers to support the "rhetoric of talk radio

ideology."

The level of agreement callers express toward the host supports the role the host

defines for himself. Colmes presents his program as a forum of free exchange of ideas.

This liberal value of equality is represented in the variety of callers to the program. The

callers to Colmes' program are well balanced between those that agree and those that

disagree (see Figure 3). Limbaugh, in keeping with his role of leader and bearer of truth,

presents fewer calls that disagree with his statements and positions (see Figure 4).
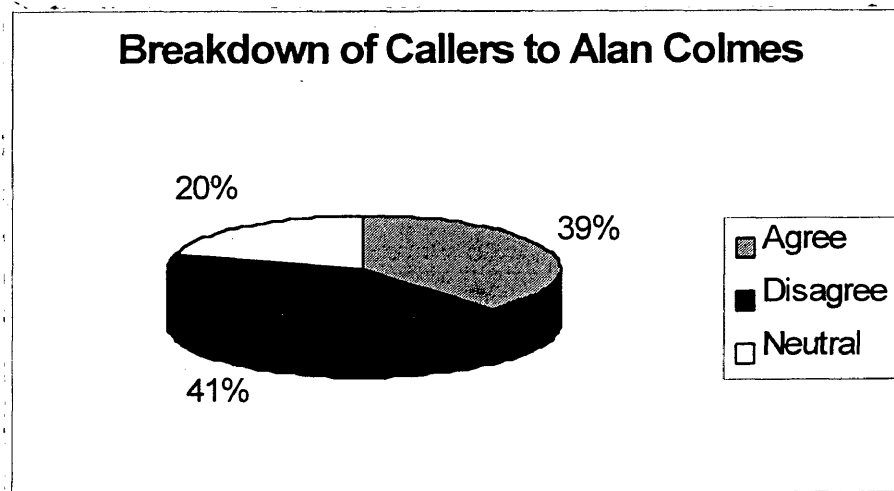
Figure 3

Breakdown of Callers to Alan Colmes

20%

39%

41%

- ▨ Agree
- ■ Disagree
- □ Neutral

Figure 4

Breakdown of Callers to Rush Limbaugh

26%

54%

20%

- ▨ Agree
- ■ Disagree
- □ Neutral

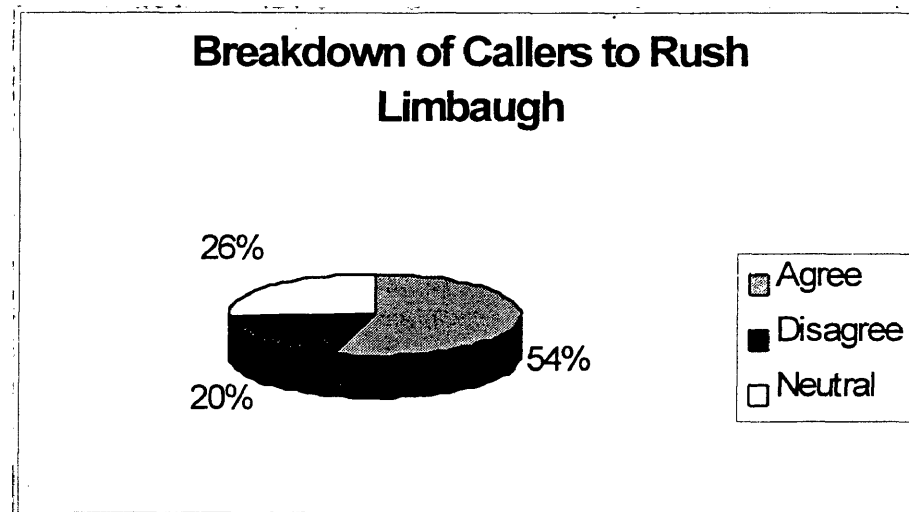Both hosts provide a way for callers to become personally connected with the

program. However, the meaning attached to this connection varies greatly. For

Limbaugh this connection comes not from merely listening to the program. Rather,

callers connect themselves with Limbaugh through the use of the word "ditto." It

becomes an elaborate ritual. Callers seem to compete to see who can say the most in

their greeting. One caller states, "Passing judgement, intolerance, outrage, and I do care dittos from Montana, the thinking man's state" (September 29, 1998). For Colmes, the association is much more subtle. Colmes keeps a record of his regular listeners and they are issued a number. They then receive a WEVD official listener card. From then on, regular callers are announced by name and by their WEVD listener number. The competition for callers stems from trying to convince Colmes they are worthy of a listener number.

In fitting with the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology," the impact callers have on the creation of political reality is not found in what they say as much as in how they are used. As shown earlier how often callers are allowed to speak and how much they are allowed to say enables the hosts to structure the program to express their political values. From this data, it is impossible to infer anything about the screening processes callers go through. However, it is possible that the amount of disagreement and the topics discussed by callers could also be planned to support their worldview.

The "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" presents a picture of how two ideologically opposed talk radio hosts, Rush Limbaugh ad Alan Colmes, create political reality. Each host presents a rhetoric rooted in the highest values of his ideology. However, the way in which the hosts communicate those values are very similar. Both hosts communicate value in how they structure the program and define themselves, how they define political parties, and how they define Bill Clinton. With an analysis of the four key terms used in this rhetoric, it is possible to discover a worldview that transcends ideological differences and provides an insight into the similar communication techniques each of these hosts use

to discuss ideology. After discovering the worldview of these rhetors, it is necessary to evaluate it and discuss its implications.

Evaluation

The "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" needs to be examined closely. In addition to discovering this worldview, an evaluation allows insight into the implications presented by such a worldview. Campbell and Burkeholder state, "good criticism and good critics aspire to add to our understanding of how humans use symbols to influence each other" (1997, p.109). Between these two hosts, the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" is presented to a very large and diverse audience. For this reason, it is important to fully understand the impact this worldview may have on the political reality of those exposed. To do so, I will look at the way the rhetoric presents partisanship to its audience, the effects of this worldview on callers, the implications for agenda-setting and priming, and finally look at what this world view discloses about ideologues and talk radio hosts.

View of Partisanship

By effectively communicating the value of an ideology, the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" presents competing and mutually exclusive ideologies. This is a result of both hosts defining their party through generalizations about the opposing party. In doing so, they incompletely define themselves, but clearly define the other. This focus on negative rhetoric functions not as a defense of the host's own party, but rather as an attack on the opposing party.

All issues are thus reduced to a clear-cut decision between Republican and Democrat. The rhetoric of this vision is very exclusive. Those who hold different views

and ideals are often chastised as wrong or evil. This raises ethical questions about these two programs. The stringent categories and expectations they present can encourage distrust, anger or even violence against those who do not subscribe to the host's worldview. The competitive nature of this vision and its exclusiveness perpetuates a division in society.

By reducing issues to a choice between political parties, this worldview functions as a heuristic. Based on the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" political decisions are simplified, and choices become easy to make. This is similar to the effect described by Jamieson and Capella (1998) in the health care debate. Choices are simplified and information is presented as a clear-cut decision between Republican and Democrat alternatives.

The role of partisanship as a heuristic has many problematic consequences. These problems arise when decisions are based solely on the simplicity of the heuristic and blind faith of the political leadership. Both of these hosts show strong affiliation with their political party. They are passionate spokesmen for the values that are upheld in their ideologies. The "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" presents the importance of party affiliation. That overshadows the disagreement hosts sometimes voice with the actions of their party's leaders. Listeners are left with only this view of passion and loyalty, a view based on values, not action. Decisions made based on the reality created by the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" are uninformed. The political reality presented by these hosts is a simplification, a heuristic that makes political decisions easier.

This outlook has many implications for a democratic government. A democratic government is rooted in the ideal of an informed electorate. Although the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" promotes participation, it is participation based on ideal values, not reality. Exposure to this worldview does not increase political knowledge, but listeners are shown to participate more than non-listeners (Bolce, 1996).

Effects on Callers

It is important to look at the effect of callers who participate in the creation of the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology." The callers are willing participants in the program. As suggested earlier, researchers have identified many reasons why people call into talk radio programs. In fact, many callers are motivated by a need for interpersonal interaction. However, regardless of the reason they chose to participate, it is important to look at the effects the callers have in the formation of this worldview.

Both shows present the illusion that callers play a significant role in the daily discussion. In fact, as suggested by Avery, Willis, and Glover (1978), the role of the callers is dependent on the host. However, the callers are mistaken to believe that their input has any effect on the overall message that is presented. Callers are misled, whether through conscious effort or by an unconscious result of an honest effort. Even callers who disagree with the host's values are used to promote the ideology presented. This is accomplished through callers' support of the host, the way the host handles callers who disagree, and the relationship between host and caller.

Agenda-Setting and Priming

Although the goals of each program include informing the audience about current events, the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" presented by each host spends little time relating specific information about issues and policies. What these programs do say about ideology supports the theory of priming. Listeners are provided with a clear picture of the host's values. In doing this, the issues and policies are primed through the host's ideology. Therefore, the public's knowledge of the issues on the agenda is not increased, but those issues are framed by the host's values.

In regards to the agenda-setting function of the media, it is clear that the agenda is present, to a lesser extent, in these programs. The discussion does revolve around the Clinton/Lewinsky sex scandal and the midterm elections. Agenda-setting research has not focused on media coverage of an event that dominates the media, such as the impeachment of a president. Therefore, it is difficult to speculate if this treatment of such an issue is typical. In any case, the way these issues were discussed changed the focus from issues to values. The priming of the issues presented had a great impact on the way both hosts created political reality. The meaning was not found in the presentation of issues. Instead, the meaning was found in the attributes associated with those issues.

The focus of this rhetoric is on the attributes not the issues. Issues are the frame for a discussion of values. The "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" is effective at communicating value, but ineffective at communicating detail. This worldview takes the focus of the rhetoric off issues and personalities and places that focus onto ideals. This shift in focus could easily cause listeners difficulty when attempting to translate the

values heard to their everyday life. Strong emotional and personal involvement often accompany deep-seated values. By communicating issues in terms of value, the message that is communicated becomes more powerful.

Although the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" does present the values of each host, because the value as presented is inherently vague it is difficult to translate into real life events. The values can been found in the rhetoric; however, they are not explicitly stated by either host. In presenting these values, the hosts create confusion about how these values are to be applied in our political system. In order to present the value as purely as possible, it must be separated from the actions of the party. This can be seen with the disaffiliation each host creates with his own political party.

Due to the lack of detailed information communicated, listeners are not assisted in making informed decisions. They are not given additional knowledge regarding policy. However, they may indeed feel more knowledgeable about current issues and policies. Because of the strong value that is attached to the issues, the listeners may be more passionate about the information gained. However, the information presented is based solely on value, and listeners are left to translate the ideals presented into their own political reality.

Ideology

Through the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology," it is possible to more clearly understand the worldview of ideologues. In addition to identifying the value differences between liberals and conservatives, it is also possible to identify some similarities. These similarities can be found in the way each host communicates his ideology. Not only does

this create a similar worldview for each host, but it also creates a similar view of the hosts.

The focus of ideology for Colmes and Limbaugh is on value. For these hosts, communicating their values is the ultimate goal of their rhetoric. They are also very passionate in the way they communicate their values. There are many implications for the similarities between conservative and liberal ideologues. The level of passion with which these hosts communicate and the emphasis they place on values suggests that those who hold strong liberal beliefs and those who hold strong conservative beliefs may think about and talk about those beliefs in a similar manner.

Talk Radio Hosts

The "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" also has many implications for talk radio. As seen earlier, the people that listen to talk radio are politically active. Whether listeners' activity is caused by talk radio, or talk radio simply attracts politically active listeners is not known. However, in order to evaluate the worldview being presented, it is important to look at the political reality communicated and some possible effects this reality might have.

A goal shared by both of the hosts examined is to entertain their audience. By presenting strong values, these host accomplish this goal, but in doing so, they also affect how ideology is viewed. In preserving the entertainment value of the program, the host presents a view of political reality that, if accurate, would have a negative effect on the functioning of our political system. This negative effect would occur when politically active citizens base political decisions solely on heuristics and remain uninformed on the

issues. For the sake of entertainment, both hosts state that they prefer disagreement. Arguments and competition are entertaining for the talk radio audience. This may be one reason for the generalizations and exclusive "either/or" presentation of partisanship. Both of these programs present a view of political reality that sees issues in terms of devisive and exclusive partisan politics. However, for most Americans, this is not the case. Many Americans are not strong liberals or strong conservatives, but identify themselves as ideologically moderate (Corbett, 1991). This competitive nature of partisanship could inhibit compromise that is necessary for the functioning of a democracy.

In order to maintain a loyal audience, the listeners must become involved. By presenting strong values, agreement or disagreement is elicited from audience members. As the values expressed become stronger and more fundamental, it becomes increasingly more difficult for audience members to remain uninvolved. By evoking strong emotions in the audience, these programs demand participation. This phenomenon is illustrated when Colmes' callers comment that they are addicted to the show or they cannot stop listening. However, one can only speculate on the effect of this involvement. Barker (1998) suggests that listeners are more likely to believe a host they perceive as knowledgeable and trustworthy. As illustrated in the role each host defines for himself, the public would be more likely to believe Limbaugh than to believe Colmes. Limbaugh presents himself as "all knowing" and trustworthy. Conversely, Colmes presents himself as a "bad host" who "thinks" and holds "opinions" but does not posses "knowledge."

Each of these hosts is able to express his ideas and opinions to a large audience. With this ability, Rush Limbaugh and Alan Colmes have incredible power. Each host is able to effect the lives of those who listen to his program, if just for three hours each day. Both programs fall short of increasing the listener's political knowledge, and present a dichotomous, competitive, and issueless picture of ideology. These programs do not help their audience to become better citizens. In fact, if based on the political reality presented in these programs, political decisions would be based on highly charged yet vaguely articulated values.

After evaluating the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" in relation to partisanship, agenda-setting and priming effects, callers, ideologues, and talk radio hosts, some of the effects and potential problems of this rhetoric have been discussed. It is clear that this study provides insight into the political reality created by Alan Colmes and Rush Limbaugh. However, this study is also very limited. I have uncovered some interesting insights into these two hosts, but, more importantly, I have discovered many avenues for future discoveries.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Rush Limbaugh and Alan Colmes successfully communicate the highest values of their ideologies. In doing so, they employ certain techniques, described as the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology." By uncovering a worldview shared by these hosts, it is possible to understand how Alan Colmes and Rush Limbaugh communicate that ideology and create a political reality consumed by 18 million people every day. The "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" is an important force in defining the current political scene, and this worldview impacts a large and active portion of the electorate. In this chapter, I will examine the overall impact of this worldview, the limitations of the current study, and offer some suggestions for future research.

The participation that is demanded by the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" involves listeners in the host's political reality. Because of the competitive nature of the partisan reality presented, this involvement is passionate. Regardless of whether listeners agree or disagree with the host, they make decisions or judgements about the values presented.

By comparing and contrasting liberal and conservative political talk radio hosts, the current study provides valuable insight into often-overlooked similarities between these opposing groups. By using similar arguments and techniques to communicate ideology, the worldview of Colmes and Limbaugh presents insight into how ideology, in general, is expressed on talk radio. Ideology, as presented by these talk radio hosts, is value laden and inherently vague in regards to issues.

Previous research into the increasingly popular phenomenon of talk radio has been limited. Scholars have focused their attempts on the effect talk radio has on its audience. Th current study provides valuable and detailed information into the content of talk radio. With this information, scholars have a stronger base from which to examine the possible effects. In addition, research has provided insight into the motivations of callers. However, the current study offers further explanation into the role callers play in the rhetoric, the relationship between host and caller, and the way callers function in the creation of political reality.

Limitations

While the results of this study provide valuable insight into the worldview of Alan Colmes and Rush Limbaugh, the results cannot be generalized beyond Alan Colmes and Rush Limbaugh. The worldview described is not generalizeable to all ideologues or all talk radio hosts. Aspects of the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" may be the result of discussing ideology through the medium of talk radio, or certain aspects may be a result of ideology in general. Although these results do not transfer to all talk radio hosts or all ideologues, these results are crucial to an increased understanding of the worldview presented in a very powerful medium.

It is also important to note the differences between these two programs. The Rush Limbaugh Program is a nationally syndicated, highly ranked political talk show. The Alan Colmes show does not have the audience, resources, or goals of the Rush Limbaugh Program. If the programs analyzed were comparable, the study would have been more valid.

Finally, the research would have benefited from a wider range of data. Ideally, the programs analyzed would have covered a greater time span. This would have allowed for a greater variety of issues and information. Due to constraints, this was not possible.

Future Research

The limitations of the current study provide a basis for future research considerations. The differences in programs were due to availability. There are very few liberal political talk radio hosts. Although Colmes did have a nationally syndicated show, and other liberals have had them in the past, these programs have not amassed the audience and support of the <u>Rush Limbaugh Program</u>. Many of them were cancelled quickly. Future research should ask why there are fewer liberal talk radio hosts. Is the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" better suited for conservative ideology? Or, is this phenomenon a result of a predominantly conservative talk radio audience?

As a direct result of the current study, future research should focus on the relationship between the host and the audience. Although it is difficult to speculate on effects, the rhetoric examined has the potential to influence a large audience. One factor that may allow us to further understand this relationship is the predisposition of the audience toward the rhetor's ideological beliefs. Are those who are politically active predisposed to listen to political radio talk shows, or is that involvement a direct result of the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology"? Furthermore, future research should examine whether the worldview presented has an effect on the party affiliation or voting decision of listeners.

The similarities in the way political reality is communicated by each of these hosts also warrants further examination. The "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" could be compared to ideologues that express their political reality through a different medium. Although the current study only provides support for this worldview in these two talk show hosts, the rhetoric of other ideologues could be examined for these techniques. This worldview could be shared by other ideologues, but the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" may also be shared by other talk radio hosts. Instead of being a function of political ideology, it is possible that this worldview is a result of talk radio as a medium.

The scope of this study was determined by the research questions posited and the methodology chosen to answer the research questions. This study presents a thorough analysis of how Alan Colmes and Rush Limbaugh present their ideology. However, there are many other areas available for further research. By taking a different perspective and employing a different methodology, this data could provide further insight into other areas of the political reality created by each of these hosts. Future research should focus on examining other aspects of the hosts' message.

This study provides a starting point to understand the phenomenon of political talk radio. As alternative forms of media gain acceptance and credibility, they will continue to impact political discourse. This study has examined one aspect of the political reality created by a liberal talk radio host, Alan Colmes, and a conservative talk radio host, Rush Limbaugh. The "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" describes the way these talk radio hosts communicate their ideology. In doing so, the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology" provides insight into the worldview of these very powerful rhetors.

Our democracy is rooted in free expression and an open exchange of ideas. In addition, an informed electorate is paramount for a successful democracy. The reality created by these hosts fails to add substantial content to the "market place of ideas." Instead, the focus is shifted to the attributes and values used to frame the issues.

The value-laden rhetoric does not inform the audience but does demand their participation. The listeners become involved in the political reality presented. However, if the participation is based solely on the "rhetoric of talk radio ideology," decisions are made based upon a heuristic of partisan politics or ideology that is overly simplified. The political reality that is constructed by each host gives listeners the illusion that information is being presented. Instead, the rhetoric functions as a discussion about a political discussion, which further removes the audience from the reality of national politics.

References

Andreasen, M. (1985). Listener recall for call-in versus structured interview radio formats. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 29, pp.421-430.

Armstrong, C.B. & Rubin, A.M. (1989). Talk radio as interpersonal communication. Journal of Communication, 39, pp. 84-94.

Avery, R.K., Ellis, D.G. & Glover, T.W. (1978). Patterns of communication on talk radio. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 22, pp. 5-17.

Barker, D.C. (1998). Rush to action: Political talk radio and health care reform. Political Communication, 15, pp. 83-97.

Bolce, L. (1996). Dial in democracy: Talk radio and the 1994 election. Political Science Quarterly, [xx], online. Available: Ebscohost.net.

Brumley, A. (1998). Fox's political talk show is quietly entertaining. The Dallas Morning News, March 25. p. 1C.

Burke, C. (1998). Sleepy station may be ready to wake up rivals. The New York Post, April 13. p. O71.

Burke, K. (1941). The Philosophy of Literary Form. LA: Louisiana State University Press.

---------- (1966). Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on life, literature and method. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Campbell, K.K. & Burkholder, T.R. (1997). Critiques of Contemporary Rhetoric. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Clinton committed to testify. www.allpolitics.com/1998/08/10. Sponsored by CNN. August 10, 1998.

Cohen, B.C. (1963). The Press and Foreign Policy. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Colford, P. (1997). Talk radio, the new MOR. Media Week, 7, pp. 60-62.

Colmes, A. (Speaker). (1998). The Alan Colmes Show (September 28 – October 2). New York, NY: WEVD 1050 AM.

Combs, J. (1984). Polpop: Politics and popular culture in America. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press.

Corbett, M. (1991). American Public Opinion: Trends, processes, and patterns. White Plains, NY: Longman.

Dearing, J.W. & Rogers, E.M. (1996). Communication Concepts 6: Agenda-setting. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Foss, S.K. (1989). Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration & practice. IL: Waveland Press.

Foss, S.K., Foss, K.A. & Trapp, R. (1991). Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric (2nd Edition). IL: Waveland Press.

Franken, B. (1998). Democrats push for alternative 'Watergate' model. CNN Interactive, September 30. Online, available: cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/ stories/1998/09/30.

Ghanem, S. (1997). Filling in the Tapestry: The second level of agenda-setting. In Communication and Democracy: Exploring the intellectual frontiers in agenda-setting theory. (McCombs, M., Shaw, D.L. & Weaver, D. Eds.). Mahweh, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Assoc. Inc.

Hofstetter, R. & Gianos, C. (1997). Political talk radio: Actions speak louder than words. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media

Iyengar, S. & Kinder, D.R. (1987). News that Matters: TV and American opinion. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Jamieson, K.H. & Capella, J.N. (1998). The role of the press in the health care reform debate of 1993-1994. In The Politics of News The News of Politics. (Graber, D., McQuail, D., & Norris, P., Eds.). Washington D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Ketcham, D. (1998). About Long Island; liberal or conservative, both are from L.I. The New York Times, March 1. Section 14LI, p. 3.

Knox, G. (1957). Critical Moments: Kenneth Burke's categories and critiques. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

Latest mountain of Starr material provides new details. Cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/stories/ 1998/10/02/star report/. Sponsored by CNN. October 2, 1998.

Laufer, P. (1995). Inside talk radio: America's voice, or just hot air? New York, NY: Birch Lane Press.

Lauer, R. & Handel, W. (1977). The theory and appreciation of symbolic interaction. Bostin, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Lewinsky's little blue dress. www.allpolitics.com/1998/08/02. Sponsored by CNN. August 2, 1998.

Levin, M.B. (1987). Talk radio and the American Dream. Lexington, MA: DC Heath.

Limbaugh, R. (Speaker). (1998). The Rush Limbaugh Program. (September 28 – October 2). Personal recording as aired on KKAR, 1290 AM, Omaha, NE.

Lippman, W. (1965). Public Opinion. New York, NY: Free Press.

McCombs, M., & Shaw, D. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. In Agenda-setting: Readings on media, public opinion and policy making. (Protess, D.L. & McCombs, M.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Assoc.

McLeod, J., Becker, L.B., & Byrnes, J.E. (1974). Another look at the agenda-setting function of the press. In Agenda-setting: Readings on media, public opinion and policy making. (Protess, D.L. & McCombs, M.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Assoc.

McQuail, D. (1994). Mass Communication Theory: An introduction. London: Sage Publications.

Melia, T., & Simons, H.W. (1989). The Legacy of Kenneth Burke. WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Mitchell, A. (1996). Clinton takes aim at critics on right wing talk radio. The New York Times, December 16.

Nimmo, D.D. (1978). Political Communication and Public Opinion. Santa Monica, CA: Goodyear Publishing Company, Inc.

Nimmo, D., & Combs, J.E. (1990). Mediated Political Realities. White Plains, NY: Longman.

Owen, D. (1997). Talk radio and evaluations of President Clinton. Political Communication, 14, pp. 333-353.

Palmgreen, P. & Clarke, P. (1991). Agenda-setting with local and national issues. In Agenda-setting: Readings on media, public opinion and policy making. (Protess, D.L. & McCombs, M.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Assoc.

Pfau, M., Kendall, K.E., Reichert, T., Hellweg, S. A., Waipeng, L., Tusing, J. & Prosise, T.O. (1997). Influence of communication during the distant phase of the 1996 Republican Presidential Primary campaign. Journal of Communication, 47(4).

Piper, J.R. (1997). Ideologies and Institutions: American conservative and liberal governance prescriptions since 1933. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Ratner, E. (1997). Get on the radio. Campaigns & Elections. Online [xx]. Available: //gw3.epnet.com/ehost.asp?key=XiBP2WE.

Schumaker, P., Keil, D.C., & Heilke, T. (1997). Great Ideas, Grand Schemes: Political ideologies in the 19th and 20th century. NY: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

Shaw, D.L. & Maritn, S.E. (1992). The function of mass media agenda-setting. Journalism Quarterly, 69(4), pp. 902-920.

Sources: Lewinsky testifies she had a dozen sexual encounters with Clinton. www.allpolitics.com/1998/08/06. Sponsored by CNN. August 6, 1998.

Takeshita, T. (1997). Exploring the media's roles in defining reality from issue agenda-setting to attribute agenda-setting. In Communication and Democracy: Exploring the intellectual frontiers in agenda-setting theory. (McCombs, M., Shaw, D.L. & Weaver, D. Eds.). Mahweh, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Assoc. Inc.

Talk show democracy '96. Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics, Winter 1997, Online. [xx]. Available://gw4.epnet.com/ehost.asp?key=GLbwgYe.

Tramer, H., & Jeffers, L.W. (1983). Talk radio: Forum and companion. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 27, pp. 297-300.

Turow, J. (1974). Talk show radio as interpersonal communication. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 18, pp. 171-179.

Wanta, W. (1994). The effects of credibility, reliance and exposure on media agenda-setting. A path analysis model. Journalism Quarterly, 71(1), pp. 90-99.

Willnat, L. (1997). Agenda-setting and priming: Conceptual links and differences. In Communication and Democracy: Exploring the intellectual frontiers in agenda-setting theory. (McCombs, M., Shaw, D.L. & Weaver, D. Eds.). Mahweh, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Assoc. Inc.

Zhu, J.H. (1992). Issue competition and attention distraction: A zero –sum theory of agenda-setting. Journalism Quarterly, 69(4), pp. 825-829.

Zhu, J. & Boroson, W. (1997). Susceptibility to agenda-setting: A cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis of individual differences. In Communication and Democracy: Exploring the intellectual frontiers in agenda-setting theory. (McCombs, M., Shaw, D.L. & Weaver, D. Eds.). Mahweh, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Assoc. Inc.

Appendix A:
Cover Sheet

Program: _____ Date: _____Topics: _____

Callers: _____ M: _____ F: _____ _____

Issues   Personalities

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

Appendix B:
Cluster Chart

greed

huge
ultra

Spinners

Impolite

leadership

haven't accomplished anything

Jumpship

fire up

Centrist'   triangulate

faithful

abject failure'

not a battle of right + wrong

forego chocolate mousse

Calls

Liberals ‖‖‖‖‖‖
oooooooo

democrate party"

they've

democrats ‖‖‖
ooooo

left'.

democratic'

libs

attack

tried

raving press

Says

I'm.

Bill Clinton

team

God

help

die hard.

disengenuous in action
passionate

offended

reffering to him as
holding up

tradihonal.

those.

fence sitters.

defending perjury
defending adulter
defending lying

evil person

turns off.'

accused

brilliant

obligation

talk to

Footnotes

[1]All quotes from <u>The Alan Colmes Show</u> are taken from transcripts made from WEVD recordings.

[2]All Quotes from <u>The Rush Limbaugh Program</u> are taken from transcripts made from personal recordings.