

Transforming Leadership and the Obama Presidency*

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Objective. This study seeks to identify the political speech of President Obama to better understand the leadership techniques utilized. *Methods.* Political speech is coded using textual analysis and leadership frames are grouped into transactional and transforming categories. *Results.* The findings of this study suggest that President Obama does seek to use transformational leadership but that this transformational leadership is more often found in rational persuasion than inspirational appeals. *Conclusion.* The informal powers of the presidency do include the power to inspire but for President Obama this power secondary to appeals to reason.

A number of presidents in American history maintained a reputation for rhetorical leadership. The speeches of Presidents Roosevelt, Kennedy, and Reagan continue to inspire long after their policy achievements have lost public attention. While history has not yet reached a conclusion on the Obama administration's success, contemporary reports praise President Obama's public leadership as "eloquent" and "transforming" (New York Times Editorial, 2008; Meyerson, 2004). This study examines President Obama's public speeches during the initial months of the administration. It seeks to confirm whether President Obama truly is transformational in how he goes about using speech to exercise public leadership.

While a number of scholars have examined the president's use of speech (Neustadt, 1991; Smith and Smith, 1994; Kernell, 1997; Edwards, 2009), this study make a unique contribution by connecting the literature on political communication and framing to the management literature on leadership. President Obama's speech is coded for policy content and framing technique but also for the type of leadership, transforming or transactional, that the frame utilized. This is based on the leadership techniques identified by Burns (1978) and operationally defined by Bass and Avolio (2000).

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Presidential Leadership

As the only directly elected official on the federal level, the president possess a powerful arsenal of formal and informal powers with which to pursue his policy goals and objectives. Prior to Richard Neustadt's seminal work in the 1960s, presidential scholars focused on the use of formal powers, or those specified in the Constitution such as the use of the veto or appointment and removal powers, as the key mechanisms by which presidents attempted to move policy in line with their own preferences (Smith and Smith, 1994; Edwards, 2009). Neustadt's work challenges this perspective by focusing on the role of the president's informal powers, chief among them the use of persuasion, as the key mechanism by which desired policy outcomes can be obtained (Neustadt, 1991; Smith and Smith, 1994; Kernell, 1997; Edwards, 2009; Rottinghaus, 2010). Presidents can use persuasion directly with political elites to reduce resistance to their policy proposals, but also indirectly by moving mass public opinion in line with their policy preferences and using that popular support to compel other political actors (Neustadt, 1991). Neustadt terms this the "bully pulpit" to highlight the central role that presidential communication plays in the process of persuasion (1991).

Presidential scholars debate the effectiveness of the bully pulpit as a leadership strategy. The effectiveness of the bully pulpit is constrained by factors external to the president such as popularity or the strength of the economy (Neustadt, 1991; Edwards, 2009; Rottinghaus, 2010).¹ It is also constrained by the presence of competing political actors and changes to the media. Other political actors constrain the president's ability to move public opinion because they are also interested in leading public opinion and compete with the president to gain popular support for their own policy preferences (Edwards, 2009; Rottinghaus, 2010). Additionally, changes to the media may have weakened the president's ability to move public opinion. The advent of cable television, and the subsequent changes in news media exposure that have arisen as a result, appears to have weakened the president's ability to reach the public through televised addresses (Baum & Kernell, 1999; Prior, 2007; Edwards, 2009; Rottinghaus, 2010). Despite these constraints, presidents appear increasingly reliant on the use of presidential communication as a means of attaining their policy goals (Edwards, 2009). Given the emphasis presidents place on communication, it is important to understand how presidents use communication to lead regardless of its effectiveness.

That said, there is reason to believe that the type of leadership that is conducted through presidential communication has the potential to be impactful. An increasing amount of management literature has emphasized network leadership as a wide range of public and private goods come to be administered by a coalition of actors. In this way, leadership is no longer exclusively a function of command and control in the bureaucracy but rather a series of interactions

¹Though see Cohen (1995) for results that challenge the impact of popularity.

based on relationships and persuasion. Those who are most effective in leadership in this context are those who are a part of a large network and who are centrally located in this network (Bass, 1990). As such, a president who is a part of a wide range of political and social institutions and who is active in these networks has the potential to exercise a tremendous amount of network leadership.

Persuasion Through Framing

Communication lies at the heart of a president's ability to persuade the public (Smith and Smith, 1994). While most approaches to analyzing presidential leadership focus on the strategy used to disseminate communication, this study focuses the content of the communication itself. Borrowing from the literature on political communication, this study focuses on how the president frames communication about policy issues in order to lead public opinion. Framing "is to *select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication test, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluations and/or treatment recommendation* for the item described" (Entman, 1993:52, italics in original). Cappella and Jamieson summarize the work of Entman and others by noting that "a frame provides a way to *understand* a set of events" (1997:46, italics in original). Frames are effective because they alert the listener to a set of relevant cognitive and affective considerations brought to the forefront during the process of attitude formation (Zaller, 1992; Nelson et al., 1997; Cappella and Jamieson, 1997; Jacoby, 2000; Chong and Druckman, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Gross, 2008). We expect that presidents will use frames that include considerations likely to bolster their own policy positions or preferences and that framing is successful if a frame (or frames) is able to move opinion toward his preferred position.

As Entman's (1993) definition suggests, many of the frames identified in this study do seek to raise the salience of particular problems, solutions, causes, and moral judgments, but not all. For example, when President Obama proclaims that "I want every American to know that each action we take and each policy we pursue is driven by a larger vision of America's future," he is not proposing a particular solution but rather attempting to draw attention to a perceived progressive vision for all of his policies. Consequently, frames may take a number of forms. First, they may be intentionally prepared frames designed to achieve a particular political objective such as when President Obama states "there's enormous opportunity when it comes to energy to create jobs." In this case, energy policy is linked to economic policy to build support for public investment.

Second, while intentional and politically relevant frames are at the core of most studies of framing (Nelson et al. 1997; Jacoby, 2000; Chong and Druckman, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Gross, 2008), it is important to note that

frames can be unintentional and the result of unconscious framing judgments made by the communicator or be expressions of common frames of reference as a result of social norms and values (Entman, 1993). Consider President Obama's comments during a town hall meeting when he suggested that "we should be promoting democracy everywhere we can." In the context of the speech, the comment served few political ends and was given in response to a question from the audience. As such, within a given policy area, we find a wide range of frames depending on the event, timing, and political needs of the president (Table 1).

Framing's impact on public opinion is well documented and influences both cognition and affect in the process of attitude formation. Framing influences cognition by highlighting one set of considerations or values among a set of potentially relevant considerations or values during attitude formation (Zaller, 1992; Entman, 1993). An example of cognitive framing effects is Nelson and colleagues' (1997) experimental study that showed that frames changed which core democratic values were given prominence when forming a politically relevant opinion. There is also Jacoby's (2000) analysis of American National Election Study (ANES) data that showed support for government activity varied with whether the activity was framed to focus on the role of government in general or whether it was framed as a response to underlying social and economic problems and the intended beneficiaries of the activity. Frames can also influence attitude formation by attempting to change how positively or negatively target groups are perceived by the general public (Gross, 2008). In this case, frames move the public to view target groups more or less sympathetically and which can change their willingness to support activities to benefit the target group (Gross, 2008; see also Schneider and Ingram, 1993).

While there is a robust body of research that demonstrates the occurrence of framing effects, it is important to note that these effects are conditional. At the individual level, framing effects are contingent upon the individual's cognitive limitations and the strength of his or her belief systems and values (Nelson et al. 1997; Chong and Druckman, 2007a, 2007b). Framing effects are also conditional because of competition between frames. Chong and Druckman (2007a, 2007b, 2007c) demonstrate that when a frame encounters competition, especially from a strong competitor, the effect of the competition is to induce ambivalence by making conflicting considerations salient during opinion formation (see also Zaller, 1992; Edwards, 2009). In short, framing can be an effective way to alter attitude formation, but framing alone does not guarantee success in leading public opinion given individual disposition to the frame and the presence of competing frames.

Framing and Transformational Leadership

This study is unable to determine the success of framing but rather contributes to our understanding of presidential leadership by examining the types

TABLE 1
Sample Frames and Text for Healthcare

Date	Speech	Frame	Supporting Text
3/5/2009	White House Forum on Health Reform—Closing Session	Agreement on problem: healthcare	... a clear consensus that the need for health care reform is now ...
3/5/2009	Remarks to White House Forum on Health Reform	Need for compromise	There should be no sacred cows. Each of us must accept that none of us will get everything that we want, and that no proposal for reform will be perfect.
3/9/2009	Remarks on overturning ban on funding for stem cell research	Benefits of action (medical research)	But that potential will not reveal itself on its own. Medical miracles do not happen simply by accident. They result from painstaking and costly research, from years of lonely trial and error, much of which never bears fruit, and from a Government willing to support that work.
3/12/2009	Remarks w/business roundtable	Agreement on problem: healthcare	... the one thing on which everyone agreed was that the greatest threat to America's fiscal health is ... the skyrocketing costs of our health care system.
3/12/2009	Remarks w/business roundtable	H.C. is moral issue	So I think there's a powerful moral element to health care.
3/24/2009	Presidential news conference	Agreement on problem: healthcare costs key to deficit	What we have to do is bend the curve on these deficit projections. And the best way for us to do that is to reduce health care costs. That's not just my opinion; that's the opinion of almost every single person who has looked at our long-term fiscal situation.

TABLE 1—continued

Date	Speech	Frame	Supporting Text
3/24/2009	Presidential news conference	Biggest problem (Medicare and Medicaid)	The biggest problem we have long term is Medicare and Medicaid
3/26/2009	Virtual Town Hall meeting and Q&A	H.C. reform instrumentalism	And so what evolved in America was an employer-based system. It may not be the best system if we were designing it from scratch, but that's what everybody is accustomed to; that's what everybody is used to. It works for a lot of Americans. And so I don't think the best way to fix our health care system is to suddenly completely scrap what everybody is accustomed to and the vast majority of people already have. Rather, what I think we should do is to build on the system that we have and fill some of these gaps.
4/27/2009	Remarks to the National Academy of Science	Benefits of electronic medical records	These [electronic] records also hold the potential of offering patients the chance to be more active participants in the prevention and treatment of their diseases. . . . At the same time, we have the opportunity to offer billions and billions of anonymous data points to medical researchers who may find in this information evidence that can help us better understand disease.
5/1/2009	Cabinet installations	H.C. reform key to prosperity	If we want to make companies more competitive and reduce our budget deficits in the future, we need to tackle health care reform right now.

of leadership techniques that manifest themselves through framing. Among the theories of leadership to receive the most attention over the past several decades has been Burns's (1978, 1995) theory of transforming leadership. Burns argues that "one of the most universal cravings of our time is a hunger for compelling and creative leadership" (Burns, 1995:8). It is this craving for leadership political leaders attempt to tap into in order to lead policymakers, bureaucrats, and citizens in enacting political change. The use of frames provides a mechanism to stimulate a desire for leadership that motivates those who attend to them.

Burns (1978) suggests that leadership is not a unitary phenomena but rather two different forms of leadership with different goals and activities. The first of these, transactional leadership is based on mutual but independent benefit. One person interacts with another for the purpose of an exchange. This transaction can be based on material or nonmaterial needs, but in either case, leadership focuses on personal gain associated with the transaction. Transactional leadership does not have a moral component, but is based only on the needs of those engaging in the exchange.

On the contrary, transforming leadership is tied to higher ideals and moral values for all those involved. "Such leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Their purposes, which might have started out as separate but related, as in the case of transactional leadership, become fused" (Burns, 1978:20). With transforming leadership, leadership is "inseparable from followers needs and goals" (Burns, 1978:19). Transforming leaders focus followers on long-term ideas or strategic objectives and are generally more inspiring. Not only are they more forward looking and big picture oriented, but also the content of their vision is more likely to be strong and motivational. Their visions are optimistic, confident, connected to needs of those involved, connected to core values of the group, and place emphasis on positive future challenges and opportunities.

One advantage of using Burns's theory of transforming leadership is that it has been operationally defined and that an extensive body of literature exists on its use. The most significant of this work has been conducted by Bass and Avolio (2000). Their work classifies transforming and transactional leadership into a set of concrete behaviors that correspond with many of the frames used by President Obama (Table 2). Transforming leadership consists of charisma (later known as idealized influence), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Likewise, transactional leadership consists of contingent reward, active management by exception (MBE), and passive management by exception (MBEP). Additionally, they include a third type of leadership, *laissez-faire* leadership.

Charisma or idealizing influence includes those actions and frames undertaken by the leader to build trust. They include those frames that serve to set Obama above politics such as "depoliticalization frames" and frames such as "ending business as usual." Additionally, they include frames that

TABLE 2
Sample Text of Leadership Subtypes

Leadership Type	Definition	Frame Example	Text
Idealized influence: above politics	To build trust	Ending business as usual	Now, if we had continued on—had we applied the same gimmicks and tricks to our budget as folks have been putting up with for the last 8 years, including Members of Congress, we could make our numbers look really pretty.
Idealized influence: showing success	To build trust	Making progress	The team has worked to restore confidence in the credit markets . . . We're still seeing some problems, although we think that we've begun to make progress.
Inspiration: U.S. ID	Motivation	America the leader	America has always led the world in producing and harnessing new forms of energy
Inspiration: negative	Motivation	Regaining first place	I am very confident that we're going to be able to make once again the U.S. auto industry the best auto industry in the world
Intellectual stimulation: solutions	Look at problems in new ways	False-choice	the choice we face is not between saving our environment and saving our economy
Intellectual stimulation: who's to blame	Look at problems in new ways	Who's to blame	Now, some of you have probably seen how this proposal was greeted by the special interests. The banks and the lenders who have reaped a windfall from these subsidies have mobilized an army of lobbyists to try to keep things the way they are.
Individual consideration	Focus on individual action	The need for sacrifice	In retrospect, America's march forward seems inevitable. But time and again, it's only made possible by generations that are willing to work and sacrifice and invest in plans to make tomorrow better than today.

TABLE 2—continued

Leadership Type	Definition	Frame Example	Text
Contingent rewards	Connect to individual well-being	Benefits of action	We began by passing a Recovery Act that has already saved or created over 150,000 jobs and provided a tax cut to 95 percent of all working families.
MBEA	Demonstrates capacity to respond	Problems	Now, there's a second problem, though, and it's one that money alone cannot solve, and that is that we have a school system that was designed for the agricultural era.
MBEP	Create urgency around long neglected problems	Economy in crisis	We are addressing the greatest economic crises we have seen in decades . . .

elevate Obama’s stature by demonstrating success. Frames such as “making progress” and “measures of success” help to define what accomplishments are reasonable in the political context and to elevate Obama above these expectations.

Inspirational activities are those actions and frames that are undertaken by the leader that represent symbols of success and that serve a motivational role. The frames in this study can be grouped into two distinct categories of inspirational activity. The first attempts to connect listeners with a broad American identity. Common frames such as “America the leader,” “American dream,” “American ideals,” “American exceptionalism,” and “land of opportunity” motivate followers to action by instilling them with pride of accomplishment. These positive frames represent the classic view of inspirational leadership. However, Obama also utilizes a number of negative frames such as “not easy,” “regaining first place,” “time to act,” “more to do,” and “triumph over adversity” that serve to inspire listeners to action by juxtaposing the current state of political affairs against an idealized past.

Intellectual stimulation involves those actions undertaken by the leader that help followers look at problems in new ways. These include “false-choice” frames, “who’s to blame” frames, and most significantly “solution frames.” Solution frames, in particular, help followers understand problems in new ways by providing a solution and a path to rectifying the challenges faced by the American people. Because of their volume, “solution” frames represent a dominant mechanism of exercising leadership through frames.

Last among the transforming leadership mechanism is individual consideration. Individual consideration involves those actions undertaken by the leader that foster a sense that followers are individuals and that their actions matter. Given the nature of frames as a tool of mass communication, the use of individual consideration is limited. Where it is seen, it takes the form of a call to action on the behalf of individuals. Frames such as “the need for sacrifice” or “responsibility to act” call on listeners to engage in change at the individual level in order to be a part of a larger societal movement.

While the majority of frames are categorized as transforming, Obama also uses frames for transactional purposes. Contingent reward frames such as “benefits of action” and “liability of inaction” serve to help followers understand the personal benefits from their behavior. While these frames may have social implications, the emphasis is on building support for policy issues by connecting them to measures of individual well-being.

Active and passive MBE refers to the judgment of followers about the leader’s capacity to respond to problems. Active MBE suggests that leaders are actively pursuing a solution before they arise. “Problem” frames and “long-term problem” frames seek to set Obama as an active leader by identifying problems in need of a solution. By clearly identifying the problems facing the nation and generally providing a solution, Obama wards off critiques that he is unengaged. Alternatively, he uses passive MBE frames such as “economy in crisis” to create a sense of urgency around problems that have been long neglected and to foster action to solve them.

Laissez-faire leadership refers to the judgment of followers that leaders avoid making difficult decisions. Laissez-faire frames were rare during the study period. The closest that were found were “incrementalism” frames that served to lower expectations about actions and their impact.

Hypotheses

This study tests four specific hypotheses about President Obama’s leadership as manifested in his framing of domestic policy issues during the beginning of his term in office in 2009. The first hypothesis is that President Obama exhibits the characteristics of a transformational leader by using frames with transformational rhetoric more frequently than frames with transactional rhetoric. This hypothesis provides a way to assess the popular representation of this president as a charismatic leader. The second hypothesis concerns the effects of constraint on presidential leadership. Given the constraints on presidential leadership discussed above, hypothesis two is that President Obama will be more likely to attempt to lead public opinion, regardless of the specific type of leadership, on issues that are salient to the public. The third hypothesis, which complements the second, is that President Obama is more likely to use frames with transformational rhetoric on issues highly salient to the public. Finally, hypothesis four is about President Obama’s use of transformational

and transactional leadership frames given characteristics of the event itself. While a great deal of presidential communication is prepared in advance by a president and his speechwriters, presidents occasionally field questions from reporters and citizens during some media appearances and must respond to them in an impromptu manner. Hypothesis four is that President Obama is more likely to use transformational leadership frames in prepared remarks rather than in impromptu or ad hoc remarks to specific questions.

Methods

This study utilizes narrative content analysis to identify frames used in presidential communication. All 144 presidential speeches that met the inclusion criteria from February 21, 2009 until June 2, 2009 were read and coded by two researchers. Speeches were coded at the sentence level to identify the presence of a frame, the date, speech type (e.g., news conference), document title, policy domain, an indication as to whether it was a prepared remark or a response to a question, frame name, and example text. Frames were then later coded based on their applicability to a leadership domain (i.e., inspirational leadership, laissez-faire leadership).

In order to be included in the study, the frame must fit within five criteria. First, the frame must be spoken by the president. Letters to the editor and issued statements such as press releases, signing statements, executive orders, and other similar documents were excluded from the study. Thus, the study included messages, statements, news conferences, town hall meetings, and other oral communication published in the *Federal Register*. The documents were drawn from the Public Papers of the President collected by the American Presidency Project at the University of California Santa Barbara.²

Second, it needed to be recognized by both coders. The documents were coded using manual techniques given the challenges with using electronic coding techniques to identify emergent frames. Each presidential document was coded independently by two coders and then coders met to compare frames (Grimmer and King, 2009). Only those frames that received unanimous agreement were included in the study. Using a sample outside of the study frame, an intercoder reliability factor of 81 percent was calculated suggesting that there were strong levels of agreement among what constituted a frame. Traditionally, intercoder values between 67 and 79 percent are considered acceptable, with those over 80 percent considered good (Krippendorff, 1980). Frames that were agreed upon by both coders were entered into a database that served as a codebook. A subset of the identified frames were then entered into electronic text searchers of the study documents to ensure that frames were not systematically missed during the coding process.

²John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters (2010), *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA.

Third, this analysis was drawn from a larger study of domestic public policy frames. As such, all frames featured in this study focus on domestic issues. Most notably, this excluded frames that serve an inspirational role in defining America as a global leader and a wide range frames focused on military leadership in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Fourth, the text must represent a frame. As suggested above, frames provide a way of understanding some phenomena (Entman, 1993). Consequently, presidential communication that points to leadership behavior such as policy initiatives designed to reduce the global spread of Avian Flu in spring of 2009 but lacked a clear lens by which to understand the policy debate were not coded as leadership frames. The statement "I worked to secure \$35 million in funding to fight the avian flu" reflects a tremendous effort but is a factual statement and not a frame. Conversely, presidential communication with little policy content might be coded if it meets the other study criteria.

Fifth, the frame must directly demonstrate an established leadership behavior. The leadership constructs were drawn from Bass and Avolio's (2000) factors designed to reflect the notion of transforming and transaction leadership as developed by Burns (1978). Each factor and its survey items were read and translated into coding criteria. For example, the coding criteria for active MBE led the coders to look for frames that (1) identify problems, (2) demonstrate an active disposition, or (3) demonstrate capacity to respond to problems. Similar criteria were developed for each of Bass and Avolio's factors for a total of nine potential leadership frames: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, contingent reward, active MBE, passive MBE, and laissez-faire leadership.

The study uses an intact time frame of all presidential communication as opposed to selecting speeches from throughout a presidency. This method allows the study to explain how the president uses frames as a leadership tool within a set context. Focusing on an intact time period allows for greater understanding of how contextual factors influence the choice of leadership frames. This time frame has some particular advantages in that it reflects a period of governance with less campaign influence relative to later in an administration. It also overlaps with legislative and Supreme Court activity, thus connecting presidential leadership to a larger context of political institutions.

Results

Hypothesis one that President Obama will primarily utilize transformational leadership is confirmed by the descriptive data. Almost two-thirds of leadership frames used during the study period exhibit transformational dynamics (Table 4). Given public attention that has been focused on President Obama as an inspirational candidate, this is not unexpected. However, the numbers that underlie the simple breakdown between transforming and transactional leadership present a more complex story (Table 3). The high degree of

TABLE 3
Percent of Frames by Policy Technique

Leadership Behavior	<i>N</i>	Percentage	Subtype (%)
Transforming	481	63.21	
Idealized influence: all	77		
Above politics	37		4.86
Showing success	40		5.26
Inspiration: all	121		
U.S. ID	26		3.42
Negative	95		12.48
Intellectual stimulation: all	255		
Solutions	235		30.88
Who's to blame	20		2.63
Individual consideration	28		3.68
Transactional	280	36.78	
Contingent rewards	50		6.57
MBE: active	163		21.42
MBE: passive	167		8.80

TABLE 4
Two Group Means Comparison Test for the Weekly Mean of Leadership Frames

	Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation
Transactional leadership	25.45	3.59	11.93
Transforming leadership	43.72	5.96	19.77
<i>t</i>		-2.62	
<i>p</i>		.008	

transformational leadership speech exhibited by President Obama arises not from inspirational rhetoric but rather from intellectual stimulation. In other words, President Obama’s speech is transforming not from charismatic appeals but rather from an ability to define policy debates in new and interesting ways. Over half of transforming frames fit the intellectual stimulation typology, more than idealized influence, inspiration, and individual consideration combined.

An alternative way to consider this result is in terms of average leadership techniques per construct. Given that the transforming leadership construct includes a larger number of leadership behaviors, one would expect more transformational leadership regardless of the propensity to engage in each behavior. If one controls for the number of underlying constructs, the average percent per subtype is 15.75 percent (63/4) for transforming frames and 12 percent (36/3) for transactional frames. This further supports hypothesis one

TABLE 5
Most Important Problem by Policy Domain

Policy Domain	Average Percent Identifying as Most Important Problem
Economy	87.06
Healthcare	8.79
Education	2.4
Defense	11.84

by demonstrating a propensity toward transforming leadership regardless of the number of underlying leadership behaviors.

Given that the demands of the political environment dictate that the president only attempts to lead the public in a select set of policy domains, hypothesis two suggests that he will focus his leadership on those public policies with the most public concern (Rottinghaus, 2010). We examine the response to the Gallup poll question on the most important problem for four problems that receive significant rhetorical attention: the economy, healthcare, education, and defense. The results suggest mixed support for hypothesis two. The pattern holds for the economy (Table 5 and 6). On average, approximately 87 percent of the public consider the economy to be the nation's most important problem. Accordingly, President Obama dedicates 17 and 31 percent of leadership frames to commerce and macroeconomic policies, respectively. Alternatively, on average education is identified as the nation's most important problem by only around 2.5 percent of respondents but the president dedicates a whopping 10 percent of leadership frames to this area. Healthcare and defense exhibit a different pattern. Larger portions of the population consider healthcare (8.79 percent) and defense (13.58 percent) to be America's most important problem, but these policy domains make up only 4 and 2 percent of leadership frames. Thus, public demand for policy leadership does not necessarily drive presidential leadership.

While there appears to be little direct relationship between the public importance of a policy domain and the leadership attention that it receives from President Obama, there may still be differences in the type of leadership exhibited depending on the public importance of the issue. Hypothesis three suggests that transforming leadership will be more dominant on those policy issues of public concern. Table 7 compares the prominence of transforming and transactional leadership frames across high public priority policy frames. The initial descriptive statistics seem to suggest that there are differences in leadership technique by policy area. However, two group means comparison testing suggests no statistically significant difference between transforming and transactional leadership across policy domains with the exception of education, which is close to statistical significance at conventional levels of alpha (Table 8). This difference in the education policy domain comes from the wide range of

TABLE 6
Percent of Total Leadership Frames Dedicated to Policy Area

Policy Agenda Areas	N	Percent of Total Leadership Frames Dedicated to Policy Area
Agriculture	31	4.1
Banking, finance, and domestic commerce	128	16.8
Civil rights, minority issues, and civil liberties	7	0.9
Community development and housing issues	5	0.7
Defense	17	2.2
Education	77	10.1
Energy	51	6.7
Environment	21	2.8
Govt. operations	88	11.6
Health	30	3.9
International affairs and foreign aid	21	2.8
Labor, employment, and immigration	3	0.4
Macroeconomic	238	31.3
No policy code	20	2.6
Social welfare	9	1.2
Space, science, technology, and communications	12	1.6
Transportation	3	0.4
Total	761	

TABLE 7
Transforming and Transaction Frames by Policy Area

Policy Domain	Average Percept Identifying as Most Important Problem	Transforming Leadership (%)	Transactional Leadership (%)
Economy	87.06	23.7	25.77
Healthcare	8.79	1.07	4.36
Education	2.4	12.68	3.32
Defense	11.84	2.49	1.03

solutions that the president advances to solve America’s educational dilemma. The inclusion of solution frames among transforming frames and the number of solutions relative to the number of problems produces a pronounced shift in the transforming direction.

TABLE 8

Test Statistics for Differences in Leadership Techniques by Policy Domain

	Transforming Mean (SE)	Transactional Mean (SE)	<i>t</i> Statistic	<i>p</i> Value
Economy	10.363 (1.55)	11.272 (1.52)	.4178	.6597
Health	2 (1)	2.2 (.46)	.2083	.5808
Education	6.77 (2.17)	2.66 (.76)	-1.488	.0802
Defense	1.71 (.56)	1.25 (.25)	-.5902	.2848

TABLE 9

Descriptive and Test Statistics for Leadership Techniques Base on Remark Type

	No. of Prepared	Percentage of Prepared	No. of Ad Hoc	Percentage of Ad Hoc
Transforming	379	61	102	68
Transactional	230	39	50	32
Transforming <i>t</i> statistic			4.026	
Transforming <i>p</i> value			.0004	

Lastly, hypothesis four suggested that transforming leadership is more common in prepared remarks than in ad hoc responses to public questions. The rhetorical difficulty of transformational language would be expected when the president has time to craft transformational language or to work with speech writers well versed in rhetorical flair. This is disconfirmed by the findings of this study (Table 9). A two-group *t*-test comparing transforming and transactional language across prepared and ad hoc remarks finds that transformational language is actually more common during responses to public questions than during prepared remarks. It is not immediately clear why this is true. One hypothesis is that President Obama is particularly adept at transforming language even relative to his speech writers. Alternatively, the desire to address specific public concerns leads to transforming language. The reasoning behind this finding is difficult to infer.

Discussion

This study has important implications for our understanding of political leadership. While past studies have attempted to understand how the president exercises leadership, they have tended to focus on the formal and informal powers of the office and not the type of leadership exercised. This gap in the literature stems from the tendency of many scholars to remain in disciplinary silos. This study bridges the disciplines of management and political science

to apply management leadership techniques to a particular type of public executive, the President of the United States. Bridging these bodies of literature allow us to better analyze leadership strategy independent of the wide bodies of powers inherent in the presidential office.

So, is President Obama a true charismatic as portrayed by the popular press and political followers? President Obama is much more likely to use transforming leadership language than transactional. Yet this language is not always about the charisma and inspiration that is considered to be the core of transformation leadership. Rather, President Obama tends to emphasize rational persuasion as a means of motivating action. One interpretation of this is that this study examines the early days of the Obama presidency. This honeymoon period is a time for introducing new ideas. Just as a new CEO may use his or her first days in office to set a new direction and introduce new ideas, a new president likewise attempts to set an agenda by introducing new and creative ideas.

The use of rhetoric for leadership is among the president's informal powers. As such, one might expect more transforming leadership. Leadership without formal authority tends to allow leaders to "push us to clarify our values, face hard realities, and seize new possibilities, however frightening they may be" (Heifetz, 1994:184). As presidents increase their use of the bully pulpit for governing, more transforming leadership should be expected. What is surprising is that while there were differences in leadership technique based on policy domain and speech type, these differences failed to adhere to clear patterns or be consistent with hypothesized expectations. As such, it appears that some other factors such as audience or timing in the electoral cycle appear to be more influential in explaining the type of leadership used.

This study focuses on one politician and as such is not able to provide comparison between presidents of different leadership styles nor does it enable us to examine the causal effect of different presidential strategies. Likewise, the inductive discovery of frames always retains some inherent charge of subjectivity associated with the fact that reasonable scholars could come to different conclusions regarding the type of leadership exerted. Nonetheless, this study provides an important contribution by introducing a framework by which individual presidential leadership can be judged and different presidential leadership can be compared. It also provides at least an initial evaluation of President Obama's early leadership.

Given these limitations, there are a number of important areas for future research. President Obama's tendency to utilize transforming leadership is well cited, but little is known about its effect. Future research should examine the degree to which this leadership influences public opinion. In particular, the impact of different types of transforming leadership such as inspiration or rational persuasion should be compared. Likewise, this study's focus on the early days of the Obama presidency limit our ability to make wider inferences about President Obama's leadership. The first few months of a new administration are a unique political period and, as such, it would be

useful to test if similar leadership patterns manifest themselves later in the Obama administration. Likewise, scholars should test to see if this pattern of leadership is unique to President Obama or common among presidents with different personalities and political concerns. Only then will we have a full understanding of President Obama's leadership techniques and strengths.

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