

Naming What Bothers Us: Measuring Moral Rhetoric in the 2016 Presidential Debates

by

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DEDICATION

To Annie, for helping me find my words.

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I know it is impossible to express my gratitude to everyone who encouraged and aided me throughout this project, but I still want to try.

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ABSTRACT

For centuries, Aristotle's *ethos* has been a crucial component of persuasive rhetoric, with flagrant violations of character extinguishing the credibility of speakers and rendering their messages ineffective. However, the 2016 US presidential election challenged the rhetorical value of good character and left voters unable to articulate feelings about perceived moral transgressions. In some ways, this inability to express what bothered many is tied to the various constraints of the first-year writing classroom, where instructors often oversimplify definitions of *ethos* in a way that removes a facet known as *aretê*—a concept defined as moral virtue and one especially beneficial for navigating morally complex and controversial conversations.

This study argues for a revival of *aretê* in our classrooms as a way of helping students engage in and explore their own questions of morality, character, and *ethos*. Utilizing revised conceptions of *ethos* and *aretê* that incorporate modern notions of moral virtue, this study analyzed transcripts of the three presidential debates to quantify how and when Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump employed morally loaded language. The results of the lexical analysis surfaced a reduced moral vocabulary, which illustrates the need for a more nuanced understanding of *ethos* and a larger aretiac lexicon in our classroom. What this research advocates for is not that we anchor every iteration of *ethos* in moral virtue, but rather that alternative conceptions are invited into the classroom as a way of helping students enact new identities and participate in new spheres.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

7 October 2016

Just two days before the second presidential debate, the *Washington Post* released a video of a 2005 conversation between Republican candidate Donald Trump and television host Billy Bush as they arrived on the set of *Days of Our Lives*, where Trump was making a cameo. The two men were speaking on an *Access Hollywood* bus when a hot microphone caught their conversation. In the audio, Trump discusses a failed attempt at seducing an unknown woman. “I moved on her, actually,” he tells Bush, “I moved on her, and I failed. I’ll admit it.” He continues:

I did try and fuck her.... I moved on her very heavily in fact I took her out furniture shopping. She wanted to get some furniture. I said I'll show you where they have some nice furniture. I moved on her like a bitch, but I couldn't get there. And she was married.

Later in the video, Trump and Bush see Arianne Zucker, the actress who was waiting to escort the pair into the soap opera set. Trump says:

I better use some Tic Tacs just in case I start kissing her. You know, I’m automatically attracted to beautiful—I just start kissing them. It’s like a magnet. Just kiss. I don’t even wait. And when you’re a star, they let you do it. You can do anything.... Grab ’em by the pussy. You can do anything. (qtd. in Fahrenthold)

The vulgar and unsettling contents of the video provoked strong reactions by media, politicians, and citizens throughout the country and across the political spectrum. On

Twitter, opponent Hillary Clinton wrote, “This is horrific. We cannot allow this man to become president” (@HillaryClinton). Her running mate, Sen. Tim Kaine said, “It makes me sick to my stomach” (Kaine). House Speaker Paul Ryan was also “sickened” by Trump’s comments, saying “women are to be championed and revered, not objectified” (qtd. in Sherman). Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus said, “No women should ever be described in these terms or talked about in this manner. Ever” (qtd. in Harrington). Two days after the video’s release, nearly three dozen Republican politicians called for Trump to withdraw from the ticket, including 10 senators, 16 representatives, 2 governors, 1 former Secretary of State, and two former Republican presidential candidates (Blake).

Prior to the video’s release, I had dedicated a year and half to the study of *ethos* and character, and I knew that I was looking at the nail in the coffin for Trump. He had survived calling Mexican immigrants criminals¹; insulting the appearance of a female opponent²; encouraging rally violence³; declining to disavow racists⁴; and

¹ Donald Trump addressed Mexican immigrants on 16 June 2015 when he first announced his presidential bid. He stated, “When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. . . . They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.”

² Paul Solotaroff, writing for *Rolling Stones*, was invited to fly back with Trump from a rally in Hampton, New Hampshire on 14 August 2015. According to Solotaroff while watching the news, the camera pans to Carly Fiorina at which time Trump cries, “*Look at that face! . . . Would anyone vote for that? Can you imagine that, the face of our next president?!*” Trump continues, “I mean, she's a woman, and I'm not s'posedta say bad things, but really, folks, come on. Are we *serious?*” (Solotaroff)

³ At a Rally in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Trump described how security warned him there may be people in the audience with tomatoes. At the stand Trump instructed his audience “that if you see somebody getting ready to throw a tomato, knock the crap out of them, would you? Seriously. Okay? Just knock the hell—I promise you, I will pay the legal fees.”

⁴ In February 2016, Donald Trump declined to disavow notable white supremacists like David Duke (Kessler).

insinuating that an opponent's father was involved with the assassination of John F. Kennedy⁵. He had continually and surprisingly endured rhetorical choices that would have doomed any other candidate, but this tape was too egregious of a violation of character to survive. Given all that I had learned about rhetoric and importance of character, I knew it would only be a few weeks before Trump would rescind his candidacy.

* * *

1 November 2016

Leading up to the 2016 presidential election, I became fascinated with the website *FiveThirtyEight.com*, which famously called 48 out of 50 states correctly in the 2008 presidential race and 50 out of 50 states in the 2012 race. I had never visited the website before then, but I found myself checking the site every day to see the latest poll numbers and predictions. After both parties' conventions, the Democratic Party Presidential Candidate, Hillary R. Clinton and the Republican Party Presidential Candidate Donald J. Trump were given nearly identical odds of securing the presidency—as close as .2% dividing them. Two weeks later, Clinton surged to nearly a 90% chance. The odds would fluctuate here and there, but the polls consistently predicted a significant victory for the Democratic candidate. Just a few weeks before the election, it seemed like a forgone conclusion: Hillary Clinton would be the next president of the United States.

The fascination soon turned to an obsession as I started checking the site multiple times a day. Nate Silver, the site's editor-in-chief, gave Clinton a 71% chance, but also

⁵ Trump insinuated that Ted Cruz's father Rafael Cruz was involved in the assassination of John F. Kennedy during a phone interview with Fox News on 1 March 2016 (McCaskill).

listed 15 states to watch: Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Utah, Virginia, and Wisconsin. Looking at the map, New Hampshire was pale blue, representing a slim lead for Clinton. Florida, Nevada, and North Carolina were several shades lighter but blue nonetheless. Iowa and Ohio were pale red—she might be able to flip those states, but it'll take a big effort. The rest of the states are solidly blue or red, and I didn't anticipate them swinging too much either way.

2 November

Florida and North Carolina both go red—light red—and Nevada can't decide itself. It looks maybe red but also maybe blue. Clinton's probability drops five percentage points to 66.7%.

4 November

Florida and North Carolina swing back blue. An hour later, Utah and Arizona get a little redder.

5 November

Florida and North Carolina go back red. On the map, New Hampshire gets a thin black outline, which I learn means the state is being contested.

6 November, 10:47 a.m.

Nothing changes. Pennsylvania gets a little bluer, and Iowa gets a little redder.

6 November, 7:16 p.m.

South Dakota and Pennsylvania both get a little redder. Clinton sits at 64.2%.

7 November 10:39 a.m.

Clinton jumps a few points to a 66% chance of winning. New Hampshire turns a shade or two bluer, and the outline switches back to white.

7 November, 11:32 a.m.

No real change. Ohio goes dark red, and New Mexico and Pennsylvania turn a few shades redder.

7 November, 5:15 p.m.

Despite the recent rash of red states, Clinton sits at a 67.9% chance. Both Florida and North Carolina go blue—light blue, but still blue. Pennsylvania gets bluer. Maybe I'm just imagining it, but I think Ohio's red gets just a little bit lighter.

7 November, 6:00 p.m.

Clinton has a 68.5% chance.

7 November, 6:30 p.m.

68.1% chance for Clinton. New Mexico gets just a touch darker shade of blue. In its first real change in over a week, Minnesota gets a black outline.

7 November, 10:00 p.m.

69.5% chance. Colorado goes darker blue. Nevada is now a solid blue too. An hour or so later, Arizona gets a little lighter. She might not flip Iowa or Ohio, but if she takes Arizona, it's all over.

8 November, 10:00 a.m.

71.9%. North Carolina and Florida go darker blue. Iowa gets a little lighter. Arizona stays stubborn and won't turn blue.

8 November, 10:27 a.m.

71.4%.

8 November, 11:03 a.m.

No change.

8 November, 11:49 a.m.

No change.

8 November, 1:31p.m.

No change

8 November, 2:45 p.m.

No change. That's it.

Annie and I meet on campus to vote at the Student Union Building. I have an electric bill to prove our residency tucked into my jacket pocket and a sticky note attached to my index finger with reminders for the local elections. We stand in line holding hands. Annie says she loves voting, but she wishes we were at an elementary school. "Don't you think we should be at grade school?" she says, "I've only ever voted at grade schools." A woman with thick, black glasses looks over our electric bill, asks us to fill out a new voter registration, and then gives us our ballots. I share the sticky note with Annie, and she shares it with our friends June and Carson, who were voting in Idaho for the first time. After submitting my ballot, one of the volunteers asks for my full name. I tell him, and he replies, "Skyler James Meeks has voted." Then he hands me an "I Voted" sticker and offers a bowl a fun-sized candy bars. I wait for my wife, June, and Carson to turn in their ballots while I unwrap a Twix bar.

Annie and I head over to Mark's just after 6 p.m., and he already has MSNBC on. I set a red and blue layer cake with white frosting on the kitchen counter, while Annie slides four bottles of Martinelli's sparkling cider into the fridge. Ian and LaDonne come

through the door a few minutes later, carrying two cookie sheets of caramel popcorn. On one sheet, the popcorn has been dyed red and shaped into a donkey. On the other, is a blue elephant. By the time we get settled in, Trump is already projected to be leading 19 electoral votes to 3, with him anticipated to win South Carolina, West Virginia, and Alabama. It's unsettling, but not surprising. The southern states are the first to come in, and Clinton is expected to make up major ground when more of the northern states come in.

By 6:30 p.m., Clinton has pulled ahead in the projections, leading 75 to 66 electoral votes, with Florida and North Carolina "too close to call." The states are grayed out on MSNBC's enormous map of the nation, and they will stay that way for some time. For the next hour, we shove handfuls of sticky popcorn into our mouths as state after state after state is called for Trump. Ian sits closest to the TV, tapping and retapping his finger on an interactive map he's pulled up on his iPad. He switches states from red to blue and back to red again. The map lets him test hypothetical scenarios. What if Trump wins Ohio? What if Clinton wins Ohio. What if Trump wins Florida?

We don't have to wait long as just after 8 p.m., Ohio goes to Trump. It's the first big victory of the night for him. By 9 p.m., my home of Oregon goes to Clinton, which surprises no one. She's leading 209 to 172, and she only needs 61 more electoral votes to clinch the election. The problem is Maine, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania have joined Florida and North Carolina as states that are too close to call. *FiveThirtyEight* said these states were solid, and now we don't know.

The next five states are all called for Trump—North Carolina, Utah, Iowa, Georgia, and Florida. Suddenly, Trump's not putting up a good fight, he's leading—244

to 209. We've all stopped eating, and Ian has one hand on his forehead while the other taps the states on his iPad resting in his lap. It's strange, but the people on TV aren't even pretending to understand the results as they come in. There is a round table of experts, both Republican and Democrat, and neither group knows what to say. "I've never seen anything like it," one says. "None of the polls predicted this," says another.

The Clinton camp are now pinning their hopes of victory on Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin. We all watch as someone keeps zooming in on counties in Michigan, saying that votes in urban centers are still coming in. Clinton still has a chance. But then Pennsylvania falls—one of Clinton's firewall states. And now Trump is up to 264 votes. He only needs six votes, and with Wisconsin, Michigan, and Arizona still unaccounted for, any one of them could tip the scale. There is a sinking feeling in my chest. Like my lungs have turned to wet sand. It feels as though someone has stolen something from me. I feel betrayed in some way. I knew what the polls said, I knew what the rhetoric said, and now this. Ian has long put away his iPad. Annie, Mark, and LaDonne are talking about something, but their voices feel too far away to understand. I'm stuck inside my head, trying to reason through what is happening. Just after midnight, Trump captures Wisconsin and its 10 electoral votes, pushing him over the threshold needed to become the next president.

This is a man who called a large number of Mexican immigrants criminals and rapists, and he won.

He insinuated that a debate moderator was treating him unfairly because she was menstruating, and he won.

He imitated the disabling condition of a reporter, and he won.

He stated that he could grab women by their genitals, and he won.

Soon after, Ian and LaDonne say their good byes and head home. Ian jokes that if he knew how the night would have gone, he wouldn't have made everyone get together. LaDonne says that knowing how the night went, she's glad that we got together. Annie and I collect our uneaten cake and the unopened bottles of sparkling cider before we head home. The three of us are still trying to make sense of the night. Annie asks me if I'm okay. "Yeah, I'm fine. I'm just a little confused," I say. "The thing is, I've been researching morality for months, and I was convinced it meant something. Turns out, it doesn't make a difference."

* * *

Throughout the rhetorical timeline, *ethos* has been a key element of the artistic appeals as it helps the speaker display authority and credibility to the audience (Farrell). Aristotle was one of the first to categorize *ethos* as an artistic appeal, and his *Rhetoric* provides a fundamental understanding for the notion of persuasion through character. In book 1, chapter 2, Aristotle presents three modes of technical proofs: those that "depend on the person character of the speaker," those that "put the audience in a certain frame of mind" in the auditor's disposition," and those that depend on "proof or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself" (1356a1-4). And while Aristotle encourages orators to consider each of the three modes, his concern is with the first, that which emphasizes the speaker's *ethos*. Offering a definition, Aristotle writes, "we believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided." An audience more readily believes a speaker who they feel they can trust, which is why

Aristotle declares *ethos* as “the most effective means of persuasion he possesses” (1356a5-13).

He attributes special weight to this technical proof when “opinions are divided” and “exact certainty is impossible” and even chastises those who assume that “personal goodness...contributes nothing to [the] power of persuasion.” Having *ethos* suggests that an orator possesses qualities that make listeners more inclined to believe a speaker. As Aristotle notes, “we believe good men more fully and more readily than others,” especially when *pathos* or *logos* fail to accurately describe the contributing factors. For Aristotle, effective rhetoricians are those who demonstrate the virtuousness required to journey through the rhetorical gray areas “only because character can go where logic [and emotion] cannot” (Garver 92).

Cicero continued to advocate for Aristotle’s good character as a means of persuasion in the study of rhetoric. In his *De Oratore*, Cicero states that failing to consider human conduct and a speaker’s *ethos* “shall leave the orator no sphere wherein to attain greatness” (1.15.68). Not only is character a component of rhetoric, it is a necessary element if we wish to establish great rhetoricians.

Quintilian furthers this idea, defining rhetoric as “a good man⁶ skilled in speaking” (12.11.9). For Quintilian, *who* speaking is just as important as *what* is being spoken, and he explores the idea of building a better speaker in his *Institutio Oratoria*. Specifically, in Book 12, Quintilian outlines why an immoral man cannot be a great rhetorician—“For it is impossible to regard those men as gifted with intelligence who on

⁶ This research interprets Quintilian’s use of “man” as a gender-neutral reference to all speakers regardless of gender identity.

being offered the choice between the two paths of virtue and of vice choose the latter.” He then justifies why a moral man can be—“But if the quality which is usually termed goodness is to be found even in quite ordinary advocates, why should not the orator...be no less perfect in character than in excellence of speech?” (12.1.24). Quintilian, extending the work of previous rhetoricians, includes morality in his elevation of the rhetorical practice and the rhetorician. Quintilian so clearly and closely ties the moral virtue of a speaker to his or her ability to practice effective rhetoric that the two are essentially mutually exclusive. One cannot be “skilled in speaking” without first being “good”—it goes against the very definition of what rhetoric is.

If good character is such a crucial component of persuasive rhetoric, then flagrant violations of it should extinguish the credibility of the speaker and render his or her message ineffective. And yet, Trump continued his campaign after the October 7th tape where he bragged about sexually assaulting women. On his website, Trump issued an apology that labelled his words as “locker room banter” and “a private conversation that took place many years ago.” When asked about the tape at the second presidential debate, Trump again reiterated that his statements were locker room talk, saying, “it’s just words, folks. It’s just words.” Given *ethos*’ deeply rooted presence and prominence in rhetoric, Trump’s ability to dismiss such violations of character demonstrates a worrying disregard for moral virtue when selecting the highest office in the land. His ability to not only continue his campaign and but also win the presidency signals something deeply troubling about the state of rhetoric today: *ethos*—the good man speaking well—is in crisis.

To some degree, there's validity in Trump's argument. As Saussure would argue, his words were just signifiers connected to concepts, and the words themselves do nothing. They sit in the air as empty strings of sounds until we assign meaning to them. But even then, that meaning can't physically do anything on its own. In theory, there's validity to that argument. However, words can never be *just* words, and we've known this for quite some time. Words shape our perceptions and change the way we interact with one another. Words can be soft, and they can be dangerous, and sometimes they are both. They console us after loss, and they amuse us in rhymes. They get stuck in our head, and we find ourselves singing Lady Gaga lyrics until we fall asleep. Language and words are tools that we have used for centuries, and regardless of their immateriality, they have very real power. And so when someone uses abhorrent or marginalizing language, whether in a locker room or at a podium, it crushes the air out of my lungs and makes my blood go muddy, cold, and heavy. I'm left staring into the eyes of my students, my friends, my wife, while I shrug my shoulders without the words to navigate these deeply rhetorical waters.

In some ways, this inability to express what bothers us is tied to the first-year writing classroom and the way instructors introduce rhetoric. So often, the artistic appeals are an entry point for instructors, as students readily grapple with simplified versions of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. However, given the various constraints of the classroom, these profound elements of rhetoric are often oversimplified. The working definition of *ethos* in particular is often condensed to credibility of sources, which removes, among other things, a facet of moral virtue that Aristotle originally included in his conception of *ethos*.

This facet, known as *aretê*, can aid students as they participate in increasingly more morally complex and controversial conversations.

And given the way that speakers like Trump currently challenge the rhetorical value of character, there is no more urgent a time to familiarize students with moral virtue. To guard against emotional manipulation, we help students identify the ways in which speakers invoke and affect their feelings. Shouldn't we similarly help them recognize how and when their morality is being influenced, given that the stakes are equally significant, if not more so. What we need now more than ever is a revival of *aretê* in our classroom conversations as a way of helping students engage in and explore their own questions of morality, character, and *ethos*. This thesis is an attempt to begin this revival.

The second chapter tracks conversations and conceptions of *ethos* to show both what has led to the devaluing of character in contemporary discourse and what attempts have been made to restore it. The chapter also provides a theoretical tracing of *aretê* that demonstrates how first-year writing instructors might update the appeal to consider current notions of morality. Ultimately, this chapter advocates for revising current conceptions *ethos* and *aretê* by incorporating principles of Johnathan Haidt and Craig Joseph's Moral Foundations Theory, which establishes for five distinct categories of morality. This updating develops a more robust vocabulary and sophisticated tool to use when engaging students in aretiac discussions.

The third chapter utilizes this new conceptualization of *ethos* to analyze the 2016 presidential debates between Clinton and Trump. The chapter first outlines the methodology for the lexical analysis that incorporates both the Linguistic Inquiry and

Word Count and the Moral Foundations Dictionary to quantify how and when speakers employ morally loaded language. The chapter then explores three findings from this study that include moral concentration versus moral volume, peaking moral loading, and specific versus general morality. The chapter shows that morally loaded language was present in the debates and that both Clinton and Trump used morally loaded language to discuss America's most pressing problems, signaling not just the potential of aretiac proficiency but also the necessity of it.

The final chapter begins with a rhetorical analysis of the debates that demonstrates how both candidates employ complex techniques to build their own character while also diminishing the perceived moral virtue of his or her opponent. The chapter then revisits the previous findings to surface a reduced moral vocabulary that suggests the presence of a moral-immoral binary. This binary illustrates the need to provide students with a more nuanced understanding of *ethos* and a larger aretiac vocabulary. Ultimately, what this research advocates for is not that every iteration of *ethos* is anchored in moral virtue, but rather that alternative conceptions are invited into the classroom as a way to enrich our understanding of *aretê* and help students enact new identities and participate in new spheres.

CHAPTER 2: *ETHOS*, *ARETÊ*, AND MORALITY

To develop the foundation for our work, this chapter provides a theoretical overview of three concepts: *ethos*, *aretê*, and morality. The review of *ethos* provides both the post-modern philosophies that lead to this crisis of character and the current conversations that exist in that void, namely scholars who advocate for either a complete reconceptualization of *ethos* or for a revival of individual components. The review *aretê* shows us that, contrary to arguments against it, presented character, in the form of *aretê*, has always been a crucial component of *ethos* and that a updated conception of *aretê* gives us a more sophisticated tool to use when analyzing the complex rhetoric of current public discourse. And finally, this chapter connects *aretê* to modern conceptions of moral virtue as a way of refining the component with current models of morality, specifically Haidt and Joseph's Moral Foundations Theory. Linking *ethos* to the MFT provides rhetoric and composition instructors with a more nuanced and robust language to use when describing rhetorical performances of character—a framework that students can then use in their own inquiries into morality and rhetoric.

Exigence of the Crisis

While rhetoric has often included character as a part of its study, there are a number of scholars who argue against its presence as an appeal. The main objection is that character and moral virtue will always be accompanied by moral relativism, a concept that emphasizes the unstable and fluid nature of truth and in turn morality. These voices argue that the complications arising from the impermanence of character will

always outweigh any sort of benefit that an inclusion of character might add. These conversations have prompted an aversion to morality, where nearly no conception of *ethos* includes facets of moral virtue that were once a crucial element of the appeal.

One of the earliest examples of rhetoric and moral relativism is *Dissoi Logoi*. And though little is known about the author of this text, *Dissoi Logoi* explores a series of nine pairings, which compare and contrast various characteristics of thought and conduct. Some of the initial pairings include, “On Good and Bad”; “On Seemly and Shameful”; and “On Just and Unjust.” Each make the argument that, essentially, any event can be viewed as one thing for one person and the opposite thing for another person. For example, “On Good and Bad” illustrates how death is bad for a family, but good for the undertaker (155). This work seems firmly anchored in the sophist belief that there is no absolute truth, but rather a relative truth based on circumstances. This sophist school of thought is at the origin of rhetoric, and almost directly contradicts Plato’s ideas on absolute truth, and in turn, the inclusion of morality.

Later, Renaissance rhetorician Peter Ramus also takes issue with the inclusion of moral virtue in rhetoric. Ramus specifically argues that Quintilian cannot say that rhetoric is the good man speaking well when being good or moral is outside of the rules of Quintilian’s art (86). Ramus shapes his argument, saying:

Quintilian decrees that there are five parts to the art of rhetoric...invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. He thinks there are no more and no less. Yet in no one of these parts does he fit in the moral philosophy which he now attributes to rhetoric.

Just as a mathematician must abide by the rules of his art, so too must orators, thus leaving character outside of the discourse. And because Ramus feels it is impossible to include morality in rhetoric, he focuses instead on the use of dialectic, a discipline he prizes above moral virtue because of its concern with the mind and reason.

This view of rhetoric as not having moral characteristics is reiterated by Nietzsche, who argues that morality is not a reality but rather a metaphor. In *The Gay Science*, the philosopher defines morality as, “merely a sign language” and moral evaluations as “symptoms...which betray the process of physiological prosperity” (qtd. in Knobe and Leiter 89). In *Twilight of the Idols*, he states morality is merely an interpretation of certain phenomena—more precisely a misinterpretation” (qtd. in Hussain 159). For Nietzsche, morality and the pursuit of it do not belong in rhetoric because there is no such thing (Nietzsche 1174). And while the philosopher takes issue with morality’s reality, he does not question its influence:

Truth are illusions we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force.... Thus, to express it morally, this is the duty to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie with the herd and in a manner binding upon everyone. Now man of course forgets that this is the way things stand for him. Thus he lies in the manner indicated, unconsciously and in accordance with habits which are centuries old; and precisely by means of this unconsciousness and forgetfulness he arrives at his sense of truth. From that sense...there arises a moral impulse in regard to truth. (1174)

For Nietzsche, the goal of rhetoric is not to discover truth, but to understand moral impulse and harness the power that has driven it through time. Michel Foucault extends

Nietzsche's work, calling into question humanity's "will to truth," saying that this tendency has created several mistaken beliefs (22). The philosophies of Nietzsche mark a significant decrease in morality's prominence in rhetoric, and other postmodern philosophers accept this idea and continuously downplay the presence of morality.

A key post-modern critique of *ethos* stems from the nature of the self. Marshall Alcorn outlines two main two traditions regarding the self: a stable, essential self and a fluid, shifting self. In the tradition of the stable self, also known as the Cartesian self, discourse is seen as a way to uncover one's essential character. And by extension, speeches, essays, and other forms of communication are a way to uncover an intrinsic set of moral values. Conversely, tradition of the fluid or postmodern self views discourse as a way to construct the self. If we compose our character through a collection of social roles, habits, and conventions, there is no essential character—only a series of "component systems, deprived of its status as source and master of meaning" (Culler 33). In the postmodern thought, the self is contingent on construction, making it nearly impossible to have any conversation about stable or unified *ethos*.

This is a conversation that reaches back to Plato and the sophists, who had similar dividing lines in ancient Greece. At the beginning of the rhetorical tradition, Plato establishes the pursuit of absolute truth as a key component of a speaker's character. This drastically contrasts the beliefs of the sophists and their interest in conditional—sometimes paradoxical—truth (Wardy 6). Plato's ideas, it seems, would align more closely with the Cartesian self and the pursuit of absolute ideals as a way to judge one's character. Conversely, the sophists align more closely with a postmodern school of

thought, with many exploring how conditional arguments can destabilize conventional truths (Jarratt 59).

These critiques have complicated discussions of *ethos* for many centuries, and rightly so. Foucault, Derrida, and others have diminished the value of character, while other scholars have emphasized the impossibility of consensus in explorations of moral virtue. However, this post-modern turn has created a void in the classroom. The complexity of *ethos*-centered conversations often require resources that instructors simply don't have, leading many to forgo morality completely and opt instead for notions of source credibility that are more readily packaged for the first-year writing classroom. Our students' abilities to engage in examinations of character are suffering because of convenience. Classrooms should be ideal environments where students can engage in difficult conversations, and yet they are not. Given the void created, we have an opportunity to reintroduce character into the classroom and restore *aretê* as a foundational element of *ethos*. Doing so does sacrifice time, topics, and other resources of the first-year classroom, but the compensation is students who can more confidently and accurately articulate the morally complex and controversial conversations they find themselves in.

Revitalizing *Ethos*

Incorporating *ethos* into the classroom begins with an understanding of its lineage since its history allows us to see how other scholars have argued for character's place in rhetorical discussions. This review of *ethos* is divided into two sections. One begins with Aristotle's original conception of *ethos* that allows us to see character's value at the beginning of rhetorical study itself, and the other reviews attempts by contemporary

scholars to fill the void created by the post-modern aversion to morality. Considering the classroom's familiarity with Aristotle's conception of *ethos* as well as the ability to update *ethos* with current notions of moral virtue, this research emphasizes current scholarship that advocates for a revival of aretê in *ethos*,

In reviewing the origin of *ethos* we see how Aristotle intended appeals to character to be used in rhetoric. The Greek rhetorician emphasized *ethos*'s ability to persuade "where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided" (1356a5-13). In book 1, chapter 2 of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, *ethos* is defined broadly as appeals that "depend on the personal character of the speaker" (1356a1-4). Offering a full definition, Aristotle writes:

Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true. This kind of persuasion, like the others, should be achieved by what the speaker says, not by what people think of his character before he begins to speak. It is not true, as some writers assume in their treatise on rhetoric, that the personal goodness revealed by the speaker contributes nothing to his power of persuasion; on the contrary, his character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses. (1356a5-13)

In book 2, Aristotle addresses the specific components of *ethos*, saying:

There are three things which inspire confidence in the orator's own character—the three, namely, that induce us to believe a thing apart from any proof of it: good sense, good moral character, and goodwill. False statements and bad advice

are due to one or more of the following three causes. Men either form a false opinion through want of good sense; or they for a true opinion, but because of their moral badness do not say what they really think; or finally, they are both sensible and upright, but not well disposed to their hearers, and may fail in consequence to recommend what they know to be the best course. These are the only possible cases. It follows that any one who is thought to have all three of these good qualities will inspire trust in his audience. (1378a6-20)

The basic thought has not changed: when a speaker appears to have “good sense, good moral character, and goodwill,” an audience is more likely to believe his or her words. In the above passage, Aristotle is clarifying what makes *ethos* persuasive, and he further establishes the tripartite components of character and a credible orator. Additionally, one component by itself is not persuasive, but rather all three working components used in combination. And if just one of the components is lacking, orators are inclined to give erroneous advice.

Aristotle’s *ethos* was not his own original conception; ideas of good character trace back to the very beginning of Greek literature. Elements of the Aristotelian triad are present in Homer’s *Iliad*, and later Plato’s *Gorgias* also recognizes the rhetorical power of a speaker’s wisdom, virtue, and goodwill (Fortenbaugh 211). Yet Aristotle presents the most detailed conceptualization of persuasion through character, a character that makes one “worthy of belief” (226).

When Aristotle introduces *ethos*, he develops a notion of persuasion through character that, “aims at giving the unemotional and impartial auditor good reason for paying attentions and possibly deciding in favor of the speaker” (Fortenbaugh 228). And

despite being “one of the most enigmatic concepts in the entire lexicon,” it is *ethos* that inspires confidence in an orator’s own character and helps us navigate morally delicate situations, “where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided” (Farrell; Aristotle 1356a8). Ultimately, it is *ethos* that speaks to the humanness of the individual, reaching places that even the most rigorous logic cannot go.

Contemporary Conversations Surrounding Character

As of late, three movements have directed the discourse: one where scholars challenge the existence of *ethos* (Alcorn; Culler); a second where scholars redefine the attributes of *ethos* (Hart; Hovland, Janis, and Kelly); and a third where scholars restore the attributes of *ethos* (Corder; Yoos). While there is merit to each discussion, ultimately this section will expound on the third movement—where scholars seek to restore the characteristics of *ethos*—showing how current scholarship can update our understanding of *ethos* and provide a lexis to use when analyzing the presence and employment of moral appeals within a text.

Previous conversations surrounding *ethos* concentrate on authenticity of character, asking whether or not it was possible to distinguish the speaker’s presented character from his or her actual character (Aristotle; Yoos). Since most oratorical occasions allow speakers to obscure their real character, these examinations of *ethos* lead us to a complex conversation of the nature of the self. Alcorn’s work posits that any theory of *ethos* “needs to be grounded in a relatively clear, but also relatively complex understanding of the self” (4). Partly because of the complicated nature of the self, the discourse pivoted and replaced the main definition of *ethos* with that of source credibility. In 1953, the early work of Carl Hovland, Irving Janis, and Harold Kelly proposes an

ethos similar to Aristotle's but emphasized a speaker's intentions, expertness, and trustworthiness. Roderick Hart broadens the list of *ethos*' attributes, proposing power, competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, idealism, and identification as key factors. Recent work by Eugene Garver, Hannah Arendt, and others return to the problem of dissimulation, or the divide between the real and apparent character of a speaker. Garver attempts to dissolve the divide, arguing that when the public emphasizes the appearance-reality gap, they risk becoming suspicious of *ethos* by any definition.

For some scholars, the weight given to source credibility muddied the concept of *ethos*. George E. Yoos contends that the "measuring procedures used in... experimental investigations" of *ethos* focus so heavily of credibility that they limited a scholar's understanding of *ethos* (47). Furthermore, while the definitions used by Hovland, Janis, and Kelly and Hart do have elements that can be considered somewhat moral, neither present attributes that match the fullness of *aretê* as a moral appeal. In response, Yoos and other scholars encourage a revisiting of *ethos*, working to put "ethics back in to 'ethical appeal'" (54; Corder). Attempting to identify central attributes of an ethical appeal, Yoos reveals four factors—mutual agreement, rational autonomy, equality, and value—with the last being to most closely associated with morality (50-53). And while this work has attracted considerable attention, not all of it has been positive. Susan C. Jarratt and Nedra Reynolds express concern, saying, "Yoos seems to want to bracket off the embodied speaker, with all the confusing emotions and desires that he or she arouses, from judgements about the speaker" (41). Their critique, however, is not with the revival of ethics, but rather with the understanding of the nature of the self.

While there are many nutrients in conversations that reconceptualize, there is the inevitable risk of rehashing the same concerns and qualms about the nature of the self time and time again. Despite the benefit of the discussion, we cannot be the post-modernists and the sophists before them. However, some change must be made as our current conception of *ethos* neglects certain voices and limits the range of discussions we can have regarding appeals to character. We have an opportunity to continue Yoos' revival work in such a way that fortifies our understanding of the appeal and provides students with the full spectrum of *ethos* that speaks to the complexity of contemporary occasions.

Rethinking *Aretê*

In order to anchor our revival of *ethos*, we will explore how the component known as *aretê* invites rhetorical analyses and examinations of a speaker's presented moral character. A brief overview of *aretê* provides the theoretical framework for the concept and demonstrates the common lineage that links *aretê* to contemporary iterations of morality and virtue. As an extension of this framework, we will then emphasize the public quality of *aretê*, connecting it to *agôn* and the early sophistic debates. Knowing *aretê*'s moral lineage provides an opportunity to develop *aretê* into a tool for the classroom that engages students in aretiac discussions of public discourse.

In Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, the rhetorician divides *ethos* into three components: *phronesis*, *eunoia*, and *aretê*—the last of which is typically translated as excellence of character. At the beginning of its history, ancient Greeks used *aretê* to describe the maximum ability and effectiveness of a person's existence (Liddell and Scott). Frequently associated with bravery, but more often with effectiveness, *aretê* is the perfect

realization of an object's existence. This term could be applied to any number of things—a lion exhibits *aretê* if it is very good at being a lion and a woman demonstrates *aretê* if she is very good at being a woman. Early on, Homer and others used the term to describe a kind of goodness or excellence, often associated with the gods (9.498, 15.642, 20.411; Herodotus 1.176, 8.92; Aristotle 1106a15).

Over time, the use of *aretê* shifts and comes to mean a code of values or moral standards that one must maintain in order to be a good citizen. Plato and other's uses of *aretê* represent “moral virtue”—an ethical knowledge that is distinct from both intellectual or theological excellence (“Laws” 963a; *Republic* 500d; *The Apology of Socrates* 18a; Xenophon 2.1.21). Morality comes from the 4th century Latin *moralitas*, meaning ethical character or behavior (“Morality”). Virtue has similar Latin roots, coming from *virtus*, meaning particular excellence of character, morality, or goodness (“Virtue”). While “morality” and “virtue” have become distinct words, they are often defined using each other, and for the purpose of this research, *aretê*, morality, and virtue will all be used interchangeably to represent the ethical qualities one must possess in order to demonstrate good character.

Aretê and *Agôn*

A conceptual understanding of *aretê* perhaps begins best with an auxiliary journey into *agôn*, a kind of competition often associated with athletics but one that also informed the practices of early rhetoricians. While the goal of most competitions is to crown one participant a champion, *agôn* is different in that it emphasizes the struggle that occurs during an event over the victory itself. The Olympic Games, for example, celebrated the gathering of athletes, judges, and spectators—the encounter rather than the

division of two sides. As Debra Hawhee says, *agôn* suggests, “movement through struggle, a productive training practice wherein subjective production takes place through the encounter itself”(186). And though the concept is often associated with athletics, agonism created a model that early rhetoricians used as they developed and trained for their art (Poulakos 35).

Agonism, then, functions as a kind venue for *aretê*, where an athlete’s goodness, courage, and skill are on display. One of the earliest depictions of *aretê* is Homer’s Achilles, who is described as “strong,” “swift,” and “godlike” (1.129; 1.140). He is a stunning warrior, being “the best of the Achaeans” (16.279). But simply possessing these characteristics does not demonstrate Achilles’s *aretê*. As David Cohen points out, Athenian virtue relies on public opinion, “whose poles are honor and shame.” Conceptually, *aretê* is tied to honor, and so it functions as an external phenomenon dependent on external acknowledgement for its materialization. In other words, one cannot just be virtuous, one becomes virtuous by performing and personifying moral actions in public settings. As Hawhee states, “In ancient Greece, one *is* what one does—or better, what one is perceived as doing” (190). *Aretê* becomes a performative phenomenon, dependent on visibility and external acknowledgement.

A common way to encourage that outside validation was to erect statues in the names of athletes and other celebrated men. Joseph M. Bryant points out that mythical and historical warriors served as exemplar of *aretê*, given their bodily strength and readiness for battle. Their statues not only served as beacons for the public’s perception, constantly testifying of the celebrated figure’s excellence, but the craftsmanship needed to render the human form so accurately also modeled *aretê* for their beholders (28). This

is no surprise as the ancient Athenian culture inextricably tied physical beauty and moral superiority (Vernant 28). These statues served to simulate the bodies of the gods and exhibit “stature, breadth, presence, speed of leg, strength of arm, freshness of complexion, and a relaxation, suppleness and agility of limbs” (28). Not surprisingly, the gods most connected to athletics sported the most bodily *aretê*: Apollo, Hermes, and Heracles were often invoked by sculptors. The physical characteristics suggested a capacity for the agôn and could “be read upon [the body] like marks that attest to what a man is and what he is worth.” These “divine superbodies” radiated excellence and constituted what Aristotle called *sômatos aretas*, the virtue of the body (Vernant 28; 1360b4).

Rhetorical *Aretê*

Rhetorical *aretê* runs a parallel path to bodily *aretê*, beginning with agonism bleeding over into other aspects of Greek life, with the concepts permeating the realms of drama, poetry, and music. Soon, agonism emerges in rhetoric, with the sophistic school gathering forces together to depict the “athlete in a contest of words rather than to declare a victor of the debate (Plato 231e). *Aretê* informs this agonistic perspective, as the Greeks sought after the esteem of others through competitive engagement, whether it was “skill at javelin throwing or delivery of encomium” (Hawhee 187).

In sophistic rhetoric, agonistic philosophy emerges as a discursive practice through which orators can demonstrate their character and virtue. Protagoras was among the first to incorporate the competitive debates into rhetorical curriculum, controversially claiming to teach *aretê* to his students. Plato depicts the sophist asserting, “I have shown you by both fable and argument that *aretê* is teachable” (328c). In that same dialogue,

Protagoras continues, saying that *aretê* comes through repeated attempts at moral behavior: “every day you will constantly improve more and more” (318a-b). Rhetorical *aretê* parallels athletic *aretê* in that it is also dependent upon the perception of others, and therefore, it only transpires in relation to others and to particular actions.

Plato opposes their idea that *aretê* can be taught—arguing instead that *aretê* is tied to the circumstances of one’s birth. Additionally, the goal of rhetoric then is not to demonstrate *aretê* in the struggle but rather to pass along the principles of *aretê* one has uncovered. For Plato, the pursuit of pure truth as a key component of rhetoric, which drastically contrasts the beliefs of the sophists. Throughout many of Plato’s dialogues, he explores the connection between what seems to be morally true and what actually is morally true. To Plato, the purpose of rhetoric is not to manipulate and deceive others but rather to educate others on the principles progress and improvement.

To update *aretê* for the 21st century, we turn to contemporary psychologists and anthropologists who have undertaken the tremendous task of examining innate human morality. Recent works by Richard Shweder, Jonathan Haidt, Craig Joseph, and others propose the Moral Foundations Theory and provide quantitative measurements that suggest five foundations of an innate, universal morality. Their work creates new potential for the study of *ethos* as a rhetorical appeal and a special opportunity revive the particular moral portion of *ethos*, *aretê*, that has fallen from the discourse.

Incorporating Morality

Morality has, for some, become a difficult term, one especially unattractive in evaluating the thoughts and actions of others. Indeed, it has become an ambiguous term, lacking a distinct and applicable definition. Other elements of rhetoric, such as *kairos* or

energeia, seem to be more concrete, so it is easier to trace and evaluate their use. But, as literary theorist John Gardner states, to avoid evaluative discussions because of morality's indefiniteness "is to treat art as a plaything" not worthy of serious discussion (8). Gardner defends a discussion of morality, continuing that "[morality] may not really legislate for humanity—an idea still worth trying—but whether it is heard or not, it is civilization's single most significant device for learning what must be affirmed and what must be denied." There are a number of arguments that wrestle with the existence of a universal morality, and regardless of which side of the discussion we are on, we can acknowledge that a belief in morality can elicit change (Booth 25). If virtue and similar values inform our decisions, which is the assumption of this essay, then we must establish a definition for morality with which we can study its progression and use.

In trying to universally define morality, we must first acknowledge that, unavoidably, we will exclude certain individual definitions of the term from our argument. Unfortunately, this is a needed exclusion if we are to venture into any discussion of morality, lest we continue asking "whose ethics? whose morality? whose standards of propriety? whose community? whose censors? whose judges?" endlessly (Oates 239). While the particulars may vary, morality seems concerned with the progress of humanity. This seems to resonate with Aristotle, who offers the following analogy:

And although sailors differ from each other in function...the most exact definition of their excellence will be special to each, yet there will also be a common definition of excellence that will apply alike to all of them; for security of navigation is the business of them all, since each sailor aims at that. (qtd. in Atwill 79)

Just as the sailors represent individual and group interests, a universal morality does the same.

Stephen Pinker has, perhaps, one of the simplest definitions. The cognitive psychologist, linguist, and author says that morality is “what gives each of us the sense that we are worthy human beings” (“The Moral Instinct”). Gardner expands on this idea, saying that if morality “means nothing more than doing what is unselfish, helpful, kind, and noble-hearted...whether or not it was against some petty human law,” then morality is any action that affirms life (6). Gregory Vlastos defines morality more objectively with the terms *harmonia* and *isonomia*, which he says represent the idea of harmony and order in equal and unequal situations, adding an element of justice and mercy to our definition (qtd. in Atwill 77).

The distinct characterization of morality may vary from person to person, but the common thread through each of these definitions is that morality is explicitly connected to the pursuit of excellence that we see in *aretê* as well. If *aretê* and similar values inform our decisions, which is the assumption of this research, then we must establish a lexis for morality with which we can study its progression and use.

The Moral Foundation Theory

Even if the value of morality’s presence in rhetoric has waxed and waned, its use as a rhetorical tool has been consistent throughout the canon. However, we are lacking a language to use when discussing these moral appeals. To assist our examination of moral petitions, we turn to contemporary psychologists and anthropologists who have undertaken the tremendous task of examining innate morality (Brown; Haidt and Joseph).

Their work gives rise to five foundations of morality⁷: safety, sanctity, community, authority, and fairness, which supplements the initial idea that morality is an appeal to the improvement of one's life and the lives of others. These foundations inform our discussion of moral appeals, affording us the ability to see how speakers use morality as a nuanced technique.

Appeal for safety.

Rhetoricians will often use a specific appeal for safety to protect people who cannot protect themselves. For Fredrick Douglass, this appeal became a mainstay of his work as he advocates for those who are powerless against their oppressors. In an excerpt from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, he offers the following account:

[Mr. Thomas] owned two slaves. Their names were Henrietta and Mary.... Of all the mangled and emaciated creatures I've ever looked upon, these two were the most so.... The head, neck, and shoulders of Mary were literally cut to pieces. I have frequently felt her head, and found it nearly covered with festering sores, cause by the lash of her cruel mistress. (34)

Like others in the same genre, Douglass's slave narratives depicted the brutal and violent treatments of the defenseless, petitioning his audience to protect others from that same harm. Often, this style of appeal will present some sort of imminent threat to a helpless party. Leslie Durrough Smith calls this "chaos rhetoric," explaining that rhetoricians will attempt to persuade by endangering an entity, "portray[ing] a world where threat,

⁷ Current research associated with the Moral Foundations Theory proposes several new candidates for foundations, including liberty, waste, honesty, and ownership. While each proposed foundation shows promise—especially liberty—they have not been incorporated into this study since they have yet to garner the same depth of data used to support the five original foundations.

disorder, fear, and chaos reign” (5). Often, the speaker will then offer his or her own solution that saves the potentially harmed party and embraces justice and improves the lives of others.

Appeal for sanctity

Similar to the appeal for safety, a call for sanctity often protects the innocence and virtue of a defenseless entity. Gorgias provides an example of this moral appeal in “Encomium of Helen” as he defends Helen’s chastity after she yielded to Paris. His argument is that Helen is not an unvirtuous woman, but one blinded by the power and allure of rhetoric; thus, the audience should acquit her of all charges (132). By addressing her purity, Gorgias creates an opportunity for the audience to commiserate with her and agree with his cause. As stated previously, an appeal to morality will pertain to the betterment of life, and this technique advocates a better life through the preservation of sanctity.

Appeal to community

Violations of community are often invoked when confronted with an idea that challenges the group's progress. This idea is not dissimilar to an appeal to civic duty established by classical rhetoricians like Pericles and Aristotle (Atwill 83). Nina Rosenstand connects an appeal to community and an appeal to duty, pointing out that they both “emphasize that the morally relevant consideration is whether or not an action has an overall positive or a negative outcome” (159). In *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*, Christine de Pizan implements this rhetorical appeal when she advocates for women to protect their own community. In the work, de Pizan tells women not to gossip or speak ill of each other since this would divide the community and undermine their

pursuit of improved treatment. Instead of putting each other down, women should focus on creating the ideal environment for the whole group. This style of appeal puts the needs of many before the needs of the few, thus fortify the speaker's audience while also protecting the motives of the speaker from his or her own community.

Appeal to authority

Rhetoricians create a moral appeal when they imbue themselves with a higher authority. This is often depicted as some kind of calling from the divine, evoking a certain untouchable nature about their works. Margret Fell exercises this moral trope in her argument, "Women's Speaking Justified, Proved, and Allowed by the Scriptures." She argues that women answer to a higher authority than man, and are able to speak for God if they are so prompted. Fell uses various scriptures to prove that women have always had a place in religion. As a whole, Fell builds her argument on religion, which Leslie Dorrough Smith calls "automatically a power claim...because it asserts that its legitimacy comes from an ultimate and unquestionable source" (19). She specifically challenges Paul and his epistle to the Corinthians, making significant contributions to a discussion that would not be possible unless she makes the moral petition first. This appeal to authority carves out a space for speakers to present a protected argument since opponents cannot often supersede the invoked moral authority.

Appeal to fairness

The final appeal, one based on fairness, represents the idea that, for a better life, we must strive for equality. Nineteenth-century rhetorician Sarah Grimké hones the use of this appeal in the argument presented in *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women*. When advocating for egalitarianism, she states:

If brute force is what my brethren are claiming, I am willing to let them have all the honor they desire; but if they mean to intimate, that mental or moral weakness belongs to woman, more than to man, I utterly disclaim this charge. (18)

Grimké later concludes that, until there is equality, the sexes and divisions like the previous no longer exist, society will never have the full benefits God intended for it. In suggesting fairness instead of aggression, a speaker tempers the audience's reaction, giving him or her greater control over rhetoric and persuasion.

While there are a number of moral theories we could use, the five foundations of morality defined by Haidt and Joseph provide a strong foundation for our discussion, as the categories they define have been used in previous lexical analysis (Graham et al.; Sagi and Dehghani). And because their research suggests a morality of five separate categories, we also incorporate a rich lexis to use when evaluating the works of both ancient and contemporary scholars. There is still much work to be done, however, in understanding how we juggle these foundations. If virtue and similar values inform our decisions, which is the assumption of this work, then we must establish a method to evaluate its progression and use.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

9 November 2016

As I walk across campus towards the TA office, there's a quiet that hangs in the air like fog. Students walk to class with headphones in and their eyes focused on the ground in front of them. Footsteps are slow and heavy. I run into Clyde, one of my professors, locking up his bike outside the Liberal Arts building, and he offers a soft, "hey." His usual charismatic sparkle has winked out. Instead, just a subdued, "hey." I've never experienced a silence so thick before.

In the TA office, everyone is speaking delicately. The usual conversations of sharing project guidelines and teaching notes have given way to tenuous discussions about the election results. It's strange, but no one names the election directly, only speaking about "what happened." By now, a few of the TAs have already met with their students, and they share their experiences. Some have felt the strangeness in their classrooms but ignored it. Others wanted to talk about it but were afraid to. A handful of us are wanting to address it with our students, but a single year of teaching hasn't given us the tools to know how to—or even if we should. "It just doesn't have anything to do with what they're studying," someone says. The statement feels hollow to me, as if it couldn't be further from the truth.

I get to my classroom ten minutes early, ready to talk about the different literacies a discourse community uses. My opening slide is already projected on the screen. While clusters of my students shuffle to their seats, I listen. They whisper to each other, and I

catch bits and pieces. One student has been texting his friends all morning, asking if they're safe. Another student tells her table that she wanted to wear her Trump shirt today, but she wore it yesterday and didn't want to smell. I know I need to teach, but I just listen. I am standing in front of the class, and the words won't come out. They seem too flimsy compared to the conversations my students having. In their voices are concern and questions. Some are confused. Some are scared. Some are lost in their phones; I'm assuming either ambivalent to the conversations surrounding them or checking the Twitter for updates. It's ten minutes into class, and I haven't found the right way to begin.

A few more minutes pass, and more and more students notice me standing at the front of the classroom. The conversation eventually dies out, and I start talking. I tell them how it's been a strange morning. I tell them about the strange, quiet fog I feel, and I ask them if they feel it too. I tell them how I've been listening to them, and it seems like they're having important conversations. A few students nod their heads, and one shrugs. I tell them that I have a lesson prepared, but it seems strange to talk about discourse communities on a day like today.

The student who had been texting friends, raises his hand and tells me that he agrees. He tells me that the friends he's been texting are gay, and they're scared of what this means for their future. He says that he's gay too, and he's worried about conversion therapy. He's worried about his community, he says.

"Mr. Meeks," he says, "Is this a country where it's okay to hate?"

* * *

The same vibrant conversations surrounding *ethos* and moral virtue that exist in current scholarship are noticeably absent from our writing and rhetoric classrooms. As previously discussed, this is partly due to a lack of resources and partly due to convenience. Teachers who do end up incorporating Aristotelian appeals into their pedagogy often do so in a reductive way, oversimplifying *ethos* as source credibility; however, this eliminates *aretê* and inhibits students' abilities to articulate the moral complexity of what they are seeing in discourse that threatens the value of character. If we hope to strengthen these abilities, the first step is engaging students in activities that surface moral language to illustrate previously unnoticed patterns threaded throughout various rhetorical situations. This chapter outlines an empirical, lexical analysis as a way of demonstrating how we might uncover moral language for our students and ease them into aretiac conversations. The analysis provides quantifiable evidence that refines our understanding of morally directed appeals and expands the language we use to discuss such complex and nuanced rhetorical tools. In addition to demonstrating the feasibility of the framework, this iteration of lexical analysis can help students surface unmediated patterns of use in other genres to understand additional conversations that currently escape description and frustrate judgment.

In 2013, Eyal Sagi and Morteza Dehghani conducted a lexical analysis that provides a precedent for analyzing morality in public discourse. In their study, the two researchers analyzed a speaker's moral loading, which is the concentration of different key moral terms. This moral loading is based on Haidt and Joseph's aforementioned work with the Moral Foundations Theory. In their research, Sagi and Dehghani used a combination of the Moral Foundations Dictionary (MFD) and the Linguistic Inquiry and

Word Count (LIWC) software to perform their analysis. The MFD is a database of 295 words and word stems related to each of the moral intuitions of safety, sanctity, community, authority, and fairness first established by Jesse Graham, Haidt, and Brian Nosek; and the LIWC is a program developed to search a corpus for these key terms and determine the different types of morality invoked in different parts of the corpus.

Sagi and Dehghani emphasized their method's ability to analyze more contemporary forms of communication like social networking or blogging, and this study extends their research to focus on the discourse of the 2016 election, specifically evaluating the way each candidate uses moral appeals to talk about certain issues and the way each candidate then responds to the opposition. This allows us to see not only that a candidate is appealing to *aretê*, but when he or she is doing so, which will be valuable information for understanding the particular patterns of use that create moral appeals.

Materials and Artifacts

Political discourse is a living, breathing thing, with adjustments, responses, and actions occurring every day. And what's more is that our current political discourse reaches millions of people in an instant, with many more millions returning to articles and transcripts and analysis just days after. The reach of political discourse is unprecedented; the first debate between Trump and Clinton broke a 36-year-old record, bringing in 84 million television viewers with many more people interacting with the dialogue through countless other media sources. The sheer magnitude of the audience makes the debates an intriguing and important rhetorical artifact to study.

Exposure aside, debates represent a continuation of rhetoric's ancient beginnings. Conceptually, these debates function as agonist events that allow candidates to present

their best selves—their *aretê*—in an attempt to sway American voters. The back-and-forth movement of the debates are the ideal structure for candidates to perform their excellence. The debate stage is no different than the sophistic arenas, with the public being a necessary component to perceive and validate a candidate’s moral performance. This study recognizes, however, that the debate as an agonistic experience is the ideal, and that many contemporary debates can be interpreted as antagonistic encounters, with candidates working to damn the conversation rather than propel it forward.

The magnitude of the audience is not unprecedented, but it’s certainly unique. However, it is this level of exposure combined with the debate’s agonistic lineage that warrants further examination. As we know, *aretê* is a component of character that needs a platform, and the debates are a place where candidates can demonstrate their moral virtue to the public in hopes of it being perceived and validated by voters. These debates represent a specific place where candidates perform their *aretê* for millions and millions viewers, and so the 2016 presidential debates represent an exceptional opportunity to study morality in the twenty-first century, given their agonist heredity and immense coverage.

Furthermore, these debates embody the clearest and most impactful example of rhetoric for many of our students. Media coverage of politicians is almost inexhaustible, and this publicity elevates the status of the politician. In the eyes of our students, these candidates represent the ideal speaker, and as such, they are the epitome of rhetorical dexterity—a perception that should not go unchallenged. Additionally, presidential debates are also the first time many of our students see how language and rhetoric can create significant and lasting change. A candidate’s words have to be carefully measured

considering the almost unfathomable ramifications; one need look no further than Clinton's "basket of deplorables" comment for an example. Given the elevation of candidates and the consequences of their words, the debates represent an opportunity to engage students in aretiac conversations that examine the way morality is performed and manipulated in order to sway an audience one way or the other.

2016 Debate Formats

Because each of the presidential debates of 2016 varied in format, subject, and physical arrangement, a brief overview of each will foreground our analysis of the debate discourse. The first and third debates were led by a single moderator who began individual segments with questions; the second debate took the form of a town hall meeting, with half of the questions posed by two moderators and half posed by citizen participants. In all three instances, candidates were given two minutes each to respond, and the moderators facilitated any remaining time before moving on to the next segment.

The first debate took place at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York, on Monday, September 26, 2016. The candidates stood behind lecterns while moderator Lester Holt asked them questions. The debate was split into six 15-minute segments, with the first two focusing on "America's Direction," the next two on "Achieving Prosperity," and the final two on "Securing America." Holt began each segment by introducing an issue and giving each candidate two minutes to respond. The remaining time consisted of discussions between the candidates and supplement questions by the moderator.

On October 9, 2016, the candidates participated in the second debate at Washington University–St. Louis in St. Louis, Missouri. Unlike the first presidential debate, moderators Martha Raddatz and Anderson Cooper facilitated a town hall format,

where half of the questions came from undecided voters and half came from the moderators themselves. Topics included universal healthcare, discrimination against Muslims, public and private policy positions, tax provisions, humanitarian crises in the Middle East, Supreme Court nominations, energy policy, Clinton's use of a private email server as well as a leaked video where Trump described kissing women without consent and grabbing their genitals. The candidates were given two minutes to respond with another minute for the moderators to ask follow-up questions and further the discussion.

The third and final debate was hosted by University of Nevada–Las Vegas in Las Vegas, Nevada, on October 19, 2016. The format was similar to the first debate, with Anthony Wallace moderating. The third debate was divided into six segments: “Debt and Entitlements,” “Immigration,” “Economy,” “Supreme Court,” “Foreign Hot Spots,” and “Fitness to be President.” The candidates were also allowed to have two min for closing statements.

Transcripts from each of the three Clinton-Trump debates served as the corpus for lexical analysis (Politico). Statements made by each candidate (and not the moderator) were divided and then split into two categories: primary responses and additional responses. Primary responses were identified as isolated statements made directly after formal questions from the moderator, with any subsequent reactions and rebuttals considered as additional responses. The complete artifact includes answers to follow-up questions, exchanges between candidates, and interruptions, no matter if the statement was as short as a single word or as long as several paragraphs. In total, the corpus for study is over 40,000 words.

The immediate responses were likely the most practiced⁸, so any moral appeals offered were assumed to be calculated rhetorical choices of the campaign that colored the moral perception of policies and events and not unintentional reactions. Evaluating these statements surfaced how each candidate's vocabulary colors the moral perception of policies, surfacing patterns of use present in the discourse. Analyzing the additional responses accomplished two things for the study: saw how a candidate used moral appeals in a somewhat spontaneous environment and saw how each candidate responded to the moral appeals of the other.

This is where previous research seemed to be lacking; many studies focused on all of the words used to describe an event or issue and viewed the analysis as a whole—painting the entire event with one color (Andersen et al.; Day et al.; Graham et al.; Sagi and Dehghani; Winterich et al.). This type of analysis, however, did not alleviate this study's initial exigency: we were still using blunt language to describe morally-finessed situations. In seeing these appeals in dialogue with one another, we illuminate how a speaker might use the tool differently depending on the message of his or her opponent. Additionally, debates foster a sort of agonistic fluidity of appeals that are elucidated by dividing the debate discourse into its two parts—the initial response and the immediate follow-up.

⁸ This election cycle presents another unique situation as Trump prides himself on being more of a spontaneous, organic speaker who rarely uses notes or scripts. Studying debate responses gives us the highest chance of analyzing practiced, deliberate language, but there are not guarantees that Trump is sticking to pre-planned talking points.

Tools

To analyze these debates, I performed a lexical analysis that looked for moments in the discourse where candidates relied on morally charged language to either shape the discourse surrounding an issue or to present his or her character in a particular way. Two tools were used to conduct this analysis: the Moral Foundations Dictionary and the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count software. Previous researchers have used these tools to analyze a wide range of texts, including political discourse, but the majority of these studies inform social science research and are not directed towards rhetorical conversations that are introduced in the first-year writing classroom. This study will use these tools to extend their research and examine the ways speakers use morality as a rhetorical device to either build their own moral credibility or detract from the character of another, situating this conversation in the writing classroom

Moral Foundations Dictionary

Identifying moral rhetoric in a text provides a tremendous advantage for first-year writing students who are trying to understand the contemporary use and effects of a character-based appeal. To date, much of the research that has been able to quantify moral rhetoric relies on word count methods that utilize the Moral Foundations Dictionary (MFD), created by Haidt et al. as a supplement to the core concepts established by the MFT (Graham et al.). The MFD is organized by five summary-level categories: safety, fairness, community, authority, and sanctity. Each of these foundations can be split into “virtue” and a “vice” categories, meaning that there are 10 potential summary-level domains that can be analyzed using the LIWC. Under each central concept, there are a number of individual-level variables that consist of words and word

stems that trigger the word count software. Asterisks were used to cover different forms of a word; for example, “benefit*” captures benefit, benefits, benefiting. All reported analyses illustrate the total percentage of words that fall within each moral foundation. For the full MFD, see appendix A.

Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count

This study of character-based appeals and morality benefited from the use of an objective method of measuring words in a text called the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (Pennebaker et al.). The LIWC is a computerized lexical analysis program that utilizes an internal dictionary to determine word frequencies and classify language use into over 70 different categories. The software is often used to identify different parts of standard language categories (i.e., articles, prepositions, pronouns), which researchers have used to measure the occurrence of emotion in texts, to analyze suicide notes, and to predict a student’s final course performance (Alpers et al.; Burke and Dollinger; Fernandez-Cabana et al.; Handelman and Lester; Kahn et al.; Robinson et al.)

To better aid our research, a custom dictionary, the MFD, was uploaded to the LIWC so the software would identify and classify parts of a corpus in relation to Haidt’s five foundations of morality. LIWC variables were organized hierarchically such that summary-level variables contained sets of individual-level variables. For example, the “Harm/Care” summary-level variable contained the “peace*,” “benefit*,” “abuse*,” and “violen*” individual-level variables. After processing the transcripts for each of the debates, the LIWC created an output file that reflected each category as a percentage of the total word count. For example, if a transcript received a score of 3.2 on the “Authority/Respect” category, this would indicate that 3.2% of the total number of words

classified in the transcript appealed to the audience's "authority/Respect" foundation of morality.

The most recent version of the LIWC software was used to prepare the data for analysis (Pennebaker et al.). See Bantum and Owen and Tausczik and Pennebaker for more information regarding the reliability and validity of LIWC.

Procedure

This research incorporates a mixed-methods approach, supporting the quantitative lexical analysis phases with the qualitative coding phase. To prepare the corpus for analysis, transcripts from each of the debates went through two stages of categorizations. In the first, the transcripts were split into statements made by Hillary Clinton and statements made by Donald Trump, with each candidate receiving a new, separate document for each debate. The second stage took these documents and divided them into a candidate's primary responses made after direct questions by moderators and any additional responses a candidate made during the course of the debate.

Quantitative Analysis Overview

For this phase of analysis, the LIWC coded each document according to key linguistic moral markers drawn from the MFD. There were two primary streams of quantitative data for this study: one lexical analysis of each candidate's primary responses and one lexical analysis of any additional responses they follow. This included 10 summary-level categories and 295 individual-level markers, as well as a general morality summary-level category. Supplementing the quantitative phase was a contextual review of each triggered word to ensure that a phrase like "in order to" did not count towards a candidate's moral foundation of authority and that loaded words like

“corruption” and “lead” were included. This supplemental analysis was performed in respect to all five foundations of morality, with the list of included and excluded words shown in appendix A. The results were then plotted on a series of graphs to show various content areas, including summary-level presence and general moral loading.

Primary Responses

As stated before, this study assumes that the initial response by each candidate are the most rehearsed, which depicts theoretically unaffected attempts at primary moral loading. As an example, in the first debate on September 26th, 2016, Republican candidate Donald Trump gave the following as part of a response to how he might heal the race relations in the United States:

In Chicago, they've had thousands of shootings, thousands since January 1st. Thousands of shootings. And I'm saying, where is this? Is this a war-torn country? What are we doing? And we have to stop the violence. We have to bring back law and order. In a place like Chicago, where thousands of people have been killed, thousands over the last number of years, in fact, almost 4,000 have been killed since Barack Obama became president, over—almost 4,000 people in Chicago have been killed. We have to bring back law and order.

In an analysis of his full response, the Republican candidate relied most heavily on a moral appeal to authority, with 3.4% of the response containing key words or word stems like “law,” “order,” and “illegal.” Appeals to safety (1.3%) and community (.78%) followed suite, with no attempt to appeal to fairness or sanctity. This shows that Trump is making a deliberate effort to reshape the discourse surrounding race relations to more closely align with his previous presented character.

Additional Responses

To expand the analysis, the LIWC was used to examine how each candidate responded to the other's initial attempts at moralization as a way to demonstrate the complexity of character-based appeals. The study used the same methodology for analysis as before, but shifted to the unscripted, unplanned rebuttals, responses, and interjections by each candidate. As an example of this analysis, we can turn to Clinton's response to Trump's previous answer. In a comparable sample, the Democratic candidate relied most heavily on an appeal to community and safety, with .85% of her response containing words like "community" or "family" and .82% containing words like "safe" or "harm." While the rest of her use of moral appeals fell below .5%, Clinton did employ each of the moral foundations at least once.

It stands to reason that the last words spoken can give candidates certain advantages as they try to shape narratives around particular events. Sagi and Dehghani demonstrate this in their analysis of moral loading and the World Trade Center. After the September 11th attacks, the moral loading used in the description of the two buildings increased dramatically. It shifted how the public viewed the structures. Rather than finances, industry, and offices, the two towers were immediately portrayed as monuments of American resilience and community. Similarly, as candidates discuss issues, they rhetorically fight for the opportunity to morally load an event in their favor. In examining the unscripted responses, we hope to capture that struggle to get the last moralization of an issue, as it may have lasting influence with the public's perception.

General Results

Implementing the process described above, this research analyzed over 40,000 words spoken by Clinton (19,591) and Trump (21,892), drawn from the transcripts of the 2016 presidential debates held on September 26th, October 9th, and October 19th. The analysis included all a variety of response and sentence lengths, with the longest being 45 words and the shortest being a single word. Below we see a typical response from the candidates, with the triggered words bolded:

Right now, that's not the case in a lot of our neighborhoods. So I have, ever since the first day of my campaign, called for criminal **justice** reform. I've laid out a platform that I think would begin to remedy some of the problems we have in the criminal **justice** system. But we also have to recognize, in addition to the challenges that we face with policing, there are so many **good**, brave police officers who **equally** want reform. So we have to bring **communities together** in order to begin working on that, as a mutual goal.

In this response, the LIWC paired with the MFD classified “justice” and “equally” as invocations of the fairness foundation and “communities” and “together” as petitions to the community foundation. Additionally, “good” was classified as a general appeal to morality. While one could make the argument that words like “criminal” have moral connotation, this research excludes them in favor of words with clear, distinct moral denotations as determined by the MFD.

The quantitative evidence gathered from this analysis addresses two primary questions: (1) is morality still present in our discourse, and (2) if so, what trends can an updated understanding of morality identify. While the next chapter will explore the

answers to these questions in further detail, a general review of the data uncovers three intriguing findings. First, broadly overviewing the total moral loading in the debates offers an exploration into moral concentration and moral volume. Second, identifying the questions that accompanied the most morally loaded responses shows us what topics and issues exist in rhetorical gray areas and warrant the most moral reasoning. And finally, isolating the five specific foundations from general appeals to morality reveals an troubling preference for binary, inarticulate language.

Given the results of the 2016 election, it may be tempting to view this data as correlative evidence and say that moral language is why a candidate did or didn't win the presidency; however, that level of connection is beyond the scope of this study. Rather, this research presents a purely demonstrative case, aimed at starting a conversation.

Moral Concentration Versus Moral Volume

The first finding introduces two concepts: moral concentration and moral volume. For the purposes of this research, moral concentration is defined as the relative amount of morally loaded words contained within a particular response. It is a measurement that considers not just moral appeals, but moral appeals in proportion with the complete corpus. Conversely, moral volume is a measure of magnitude and refers to only the quantity of morally loaded words present in a text. In essence, the two measurements evaluate the quantity of moral loading versus the quality of moral loading.

Observation of the first debate establishes an interesting overall trend, with Clinton leading the moral concentration despite Trump leading in moral volume. Of the 6,341 words spoken by Clinton, 152 were morally charged, representing a 2.29% moral loading, and 179 of Trump's 8,469 words were morally loaded (2.11%). Despite the

concentration difference, Trump lead in pure quantity, having 17.76% more morally loaded words than Clinton. Figure 1 represents each candidates' total moral loading divided by question.

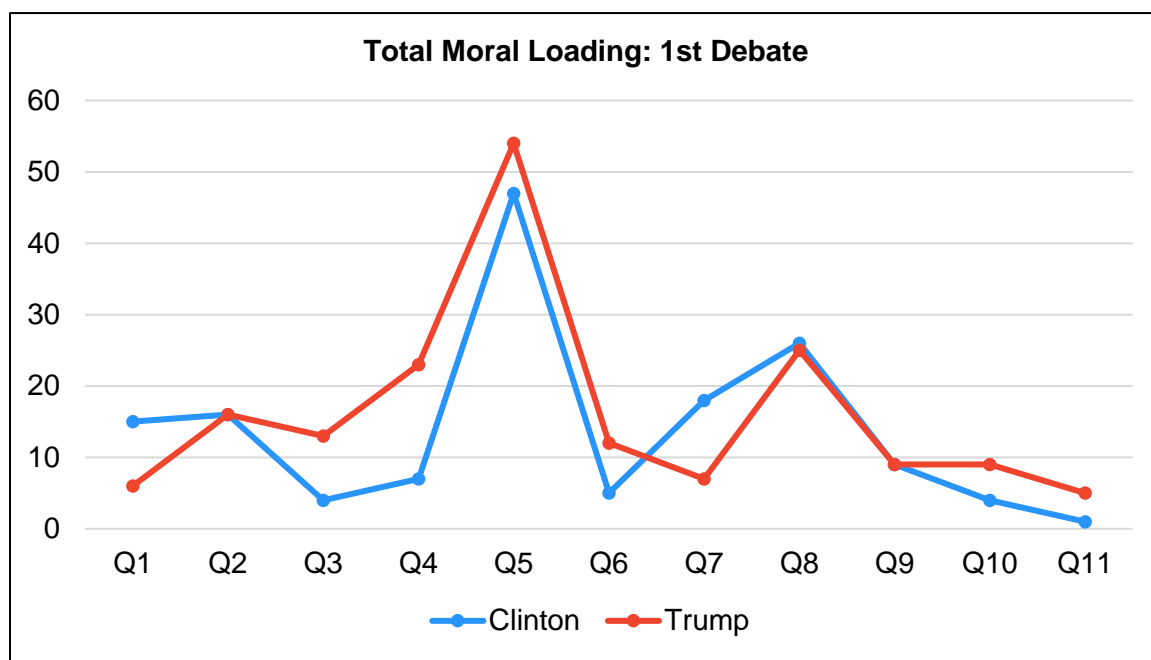


Fig. 1. Total Moral Loading of the First Debate

The second debate showed the lowest cumulative moral loading (266 words between the two candidates), and it also was the debate where the candidates were most evenly matched in regards to moral concentration. Clinton used 123 morally loaded words to her 6,115 total words, while Trump used 143 to his 6,975 words, representing 2.01% and 2.05% respectively. Trump again led in volume, having 16.26% more moral loading. Figure 2 represents each candidates' total moral loading divided by question.

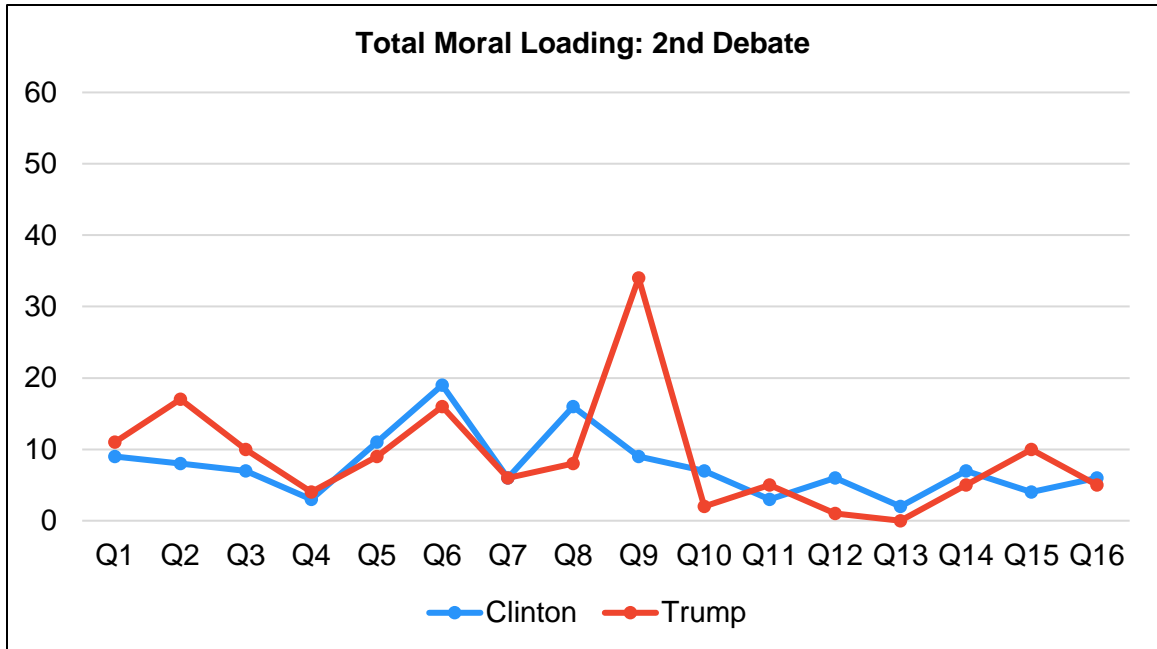


Fig. 2. Total Moral Loading of the Second Debate

Conversely, the final debate represented a reversal of the trend, with Clinton leading in quantity of moral loading (153 to 152) while Trump led in concentration (2.36% to 2.15%). Figure 3 represents each candidates' total moral loading divided by question.

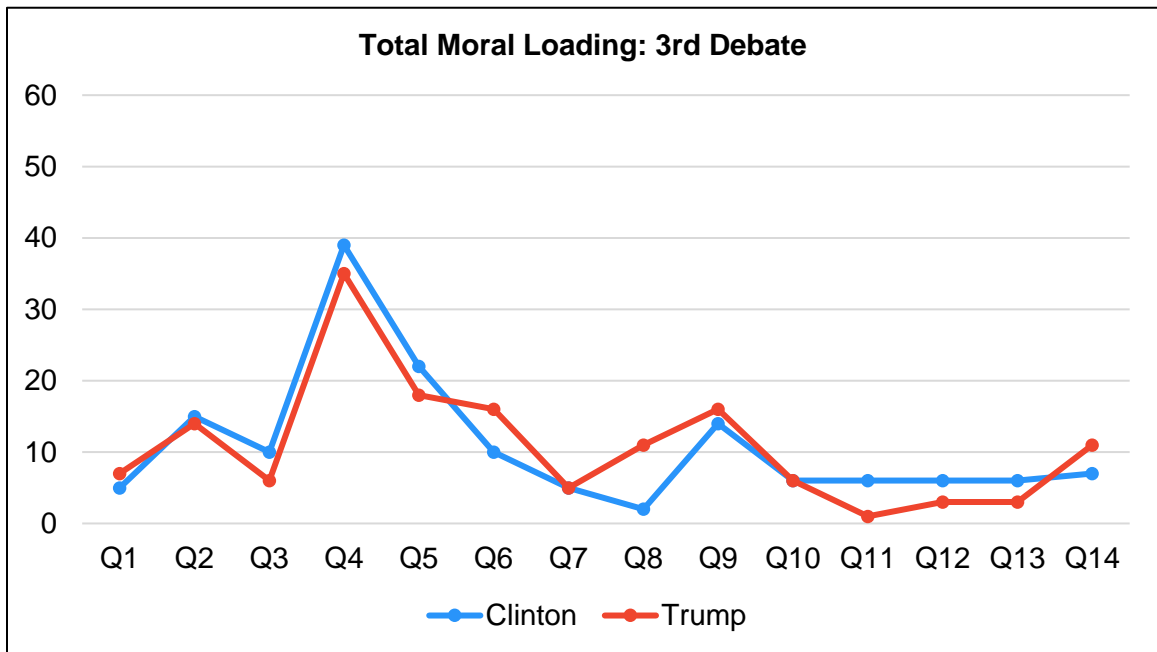


Fig. 3. Total Moral Loading of the Third Debate

Of the 19,591 words spoken by Clinton, 428 words were morally charged, representing a 2.18% moral loading. Of the 21,892 words spoken by Trump, 474 were morally loaded (2.16%). While neither candidate demonstrated a significantly higher percentage of moral loading, Trump typically lead the moral loading volume, having a mean of 158 morally loaded words compared to Clinton's 142 words, representing an 11.26% increase in moral loading. The total moral loading through each of the three debates is shown in figure 4.

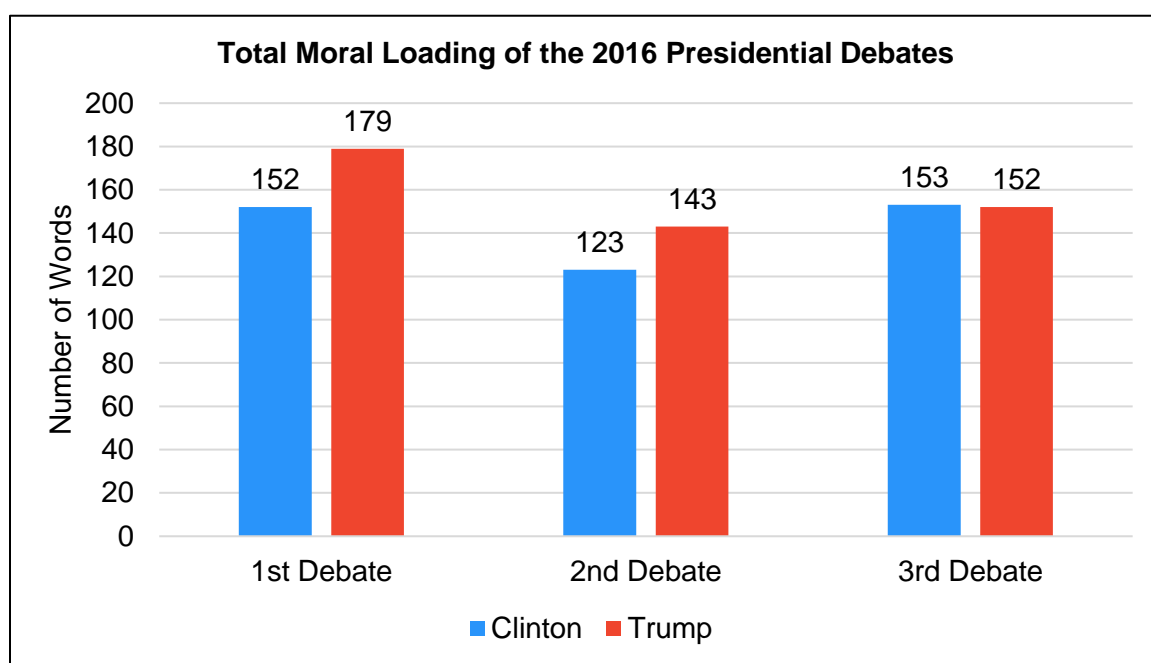


Fig. 4. Total Moral Loading of the 2016 Presidential Debates

It is apparent that, in respect to our first research question, morality is indeed present in our discourse. A review of the means across the three debates indicate that, while Clinton had a slightly higher moral concentration, Trump had a significantly higher quantity of morally loaded words. A more detailed investigation of these numbers comes in the

following chapter, but this general analysis shows that, by not teaching a revitalized *ethos* that includes aretê, we are leaving our students open to moral manipulation.

Peak Moral Loading

Examining each debate's peak moral loading, or the response in each debate that held the highest number of words from the MFD, surfaces the topics that employ the most petitions to morality. This peak moral loading demarcates issues that exist in rhetorically ambiguous spaces that necessitate exploration through a moral vocabulary. Not only are we using moral appeals, but we are also using morality to portray and perceive some of our most pressing problems.

In the first debate, the peak moral loading for both candidates occurred in response to question five. The question asked Clinton and Trump what steps they would take as president to ease racial tensions within the United States, and in their responses, candidates used 101 morally loaded words, representing 30.51% of the total moral loading from that debate. In the second debate, the peak moral loading for Clinton occurred in response to question six, which asked about caring for Muslims in an increasingly hostile environment. Trump's most morally loaded response came after question nine, which asked candidates to outline a plan of action to resolve the humanitarian crisis in Syria. Combined, these two questions represented 29.32% of the second debate's total moral loading. In the final debate, the peak moral loading for both candidates occurred in response to question four, which asked candidates to critique their opponent's immigration policies. In their combined responses, Clinton and Trump used 74 morally loaded words, which represented 24.26% of the moral loading from the third debate. Appendix B provides each question in full.

Interestingly, the most morally loaded questions from each of the debates mirrored Gallup polls taken leading up to and extending through the election. These polls asked Americans what was the most important problem facing the country today. The results of the September, October, and November polls revealed that three of the top five perceived non-economic challenges were poor leadership, race relations, and immigration. It is no small coincidence that our most important problems are also our most moral. As we face increasingly more complex and complicated challenges, it is essential to develop and expand our moral vocabulary to more accurately describe these uncharted issues.

Specific Versus General Morality

To develop a more nuanced understanding of how candidates used appeals to morality, the responses were isolated depending on which foundation each word corresponded to. The five main foundations included safety, fairness, community, authority, and sanctity. A sixth general morality category was also isolated. This isolation allowed us to see not just that a candidate was making moral appeals, but also how those appeals were used in relation to one another.

During the first debate, Clinton's three most employed moral foundations were, in order, community, safety, and authority, which occurred an average of 4.27, 2.90, and 2.81 times per question. Clinton's isolated moral loading for the first debate is broken down by question in figure 5 below. Conversely, Trump's three most frequently used moral foundations were general morality at an average of 5.36 times, safety at 4.00 times, and authority at 3.27 times per question. Trump's isolated moral loading for the first

debate is seen in figure 6 below. Each candidates least frequent appeal was to sanctity, which occurred an average of .09 times per question for both candidates.

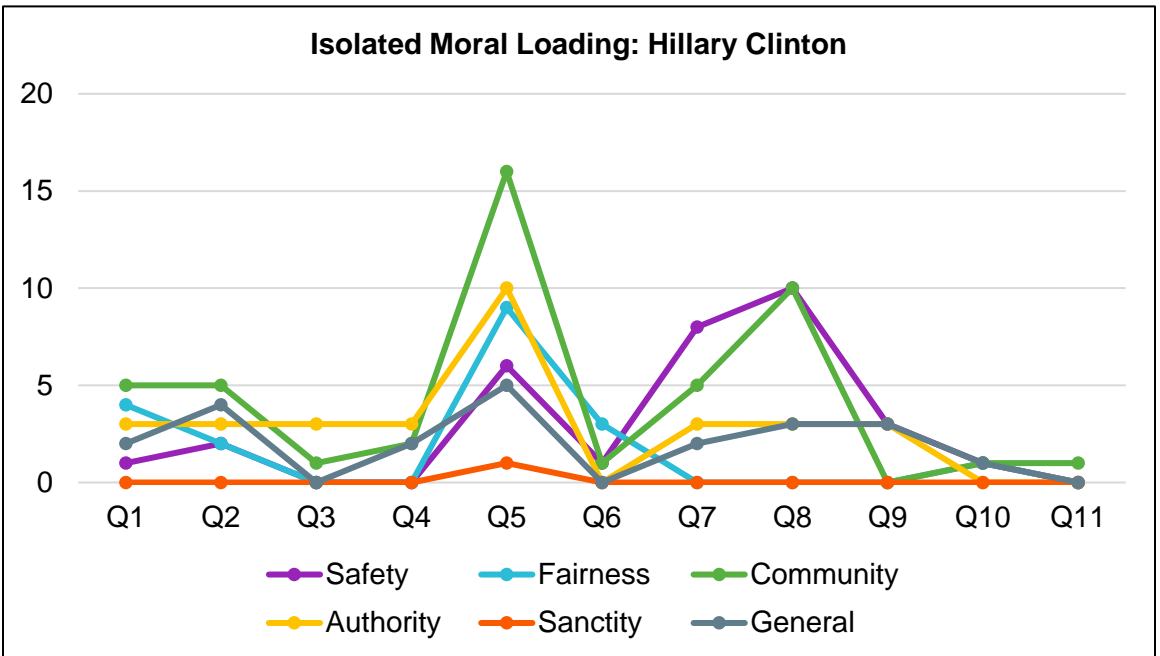


Fig. 6. Isolated Moral Loading from the First Debate: Hillary Clinton

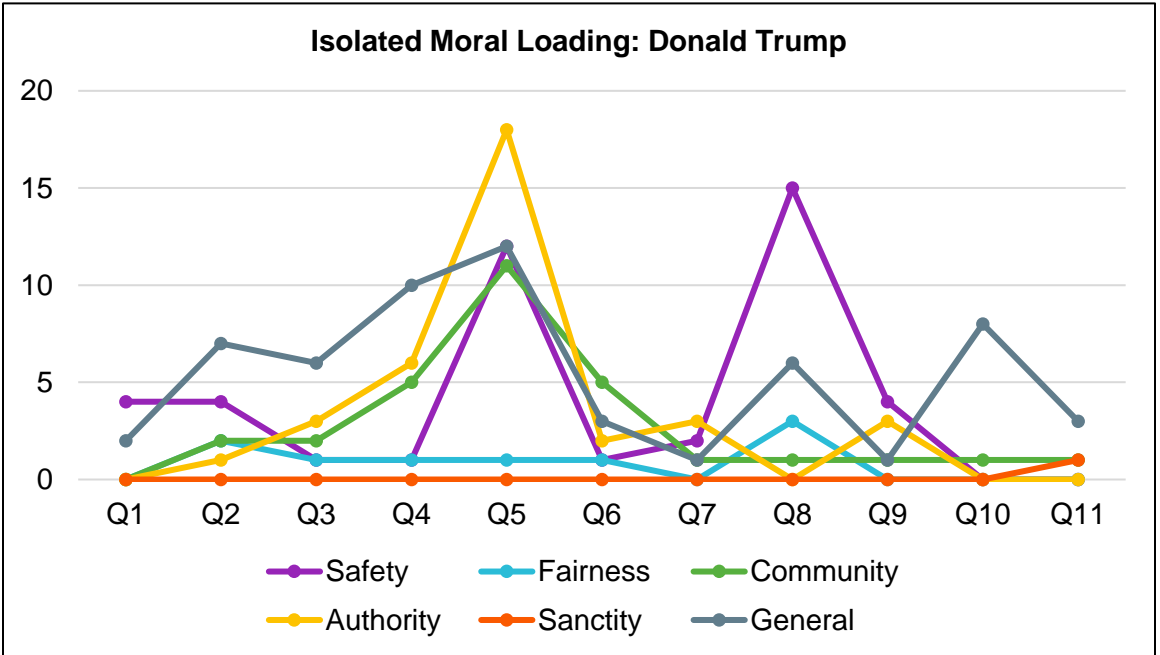


Fig. 5. Isolated Moral Loading from the First Debate: Donald Trump

In the second debate, Clinton sustained community, safety, and authority as her three most employed foundations, occurring an average of 2.19, 2.125, and 1.625 times per question, respectively. Clinton's isolated moral loading from the second debate is shown in figure 7 below. Trump maintained his most prominent appeals, but shifted their ranking, with safety occurring most frequently at 3.00 times, general morality at 2.00 times, and authority occurring 1.81 times per question. Clinton's isolated moral loading from the second debate is shown in figure 8 below. Again, each candidates least frequent appeal was to sanctity, which occurred an average of .06 times per question for Clinton and .19 times per question for Trump.

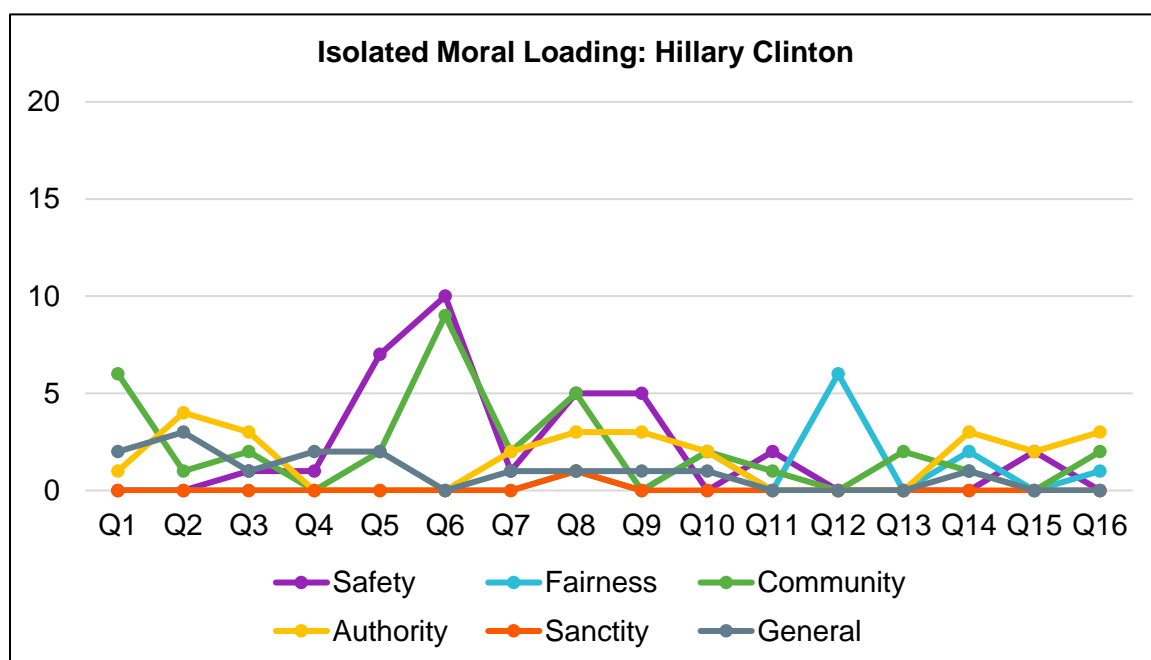


Fig. 7. Isolated Moral Loading from the Second Debate: Hillary Clinton

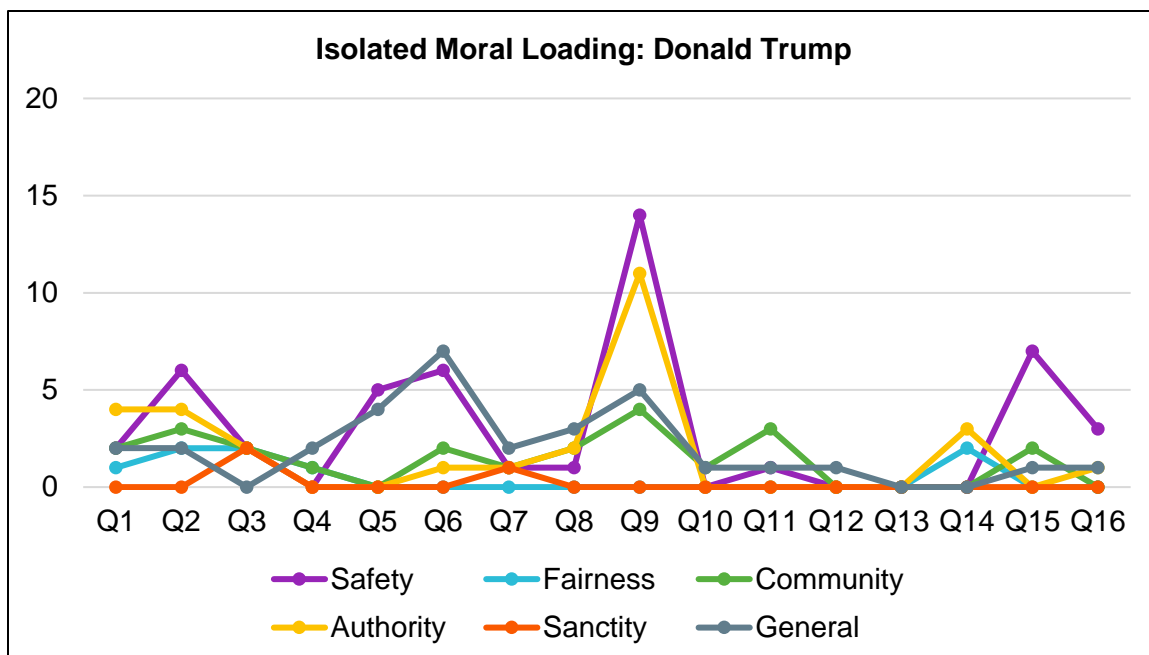


Fig. 8. Isolated Moral Loading from the Second Debate: Donald Trump

In the final debate, both candidates stuck to their three most frequent appeals, with Clinton using safety, community, and authority at an average of 4.00, 3.5, and 1.71 times per question and Trump using authority, safety, and general morality at an average of 3.07, 2.93, and 2.57 times per question. Once more, each candidates least frequent appeal was to sanctity, which Clinton did not invoke once and Trump invoked an average of .14 times per question. Each candidate's isolated moral loading from the second debate is shown in figures 9 and 10 below.

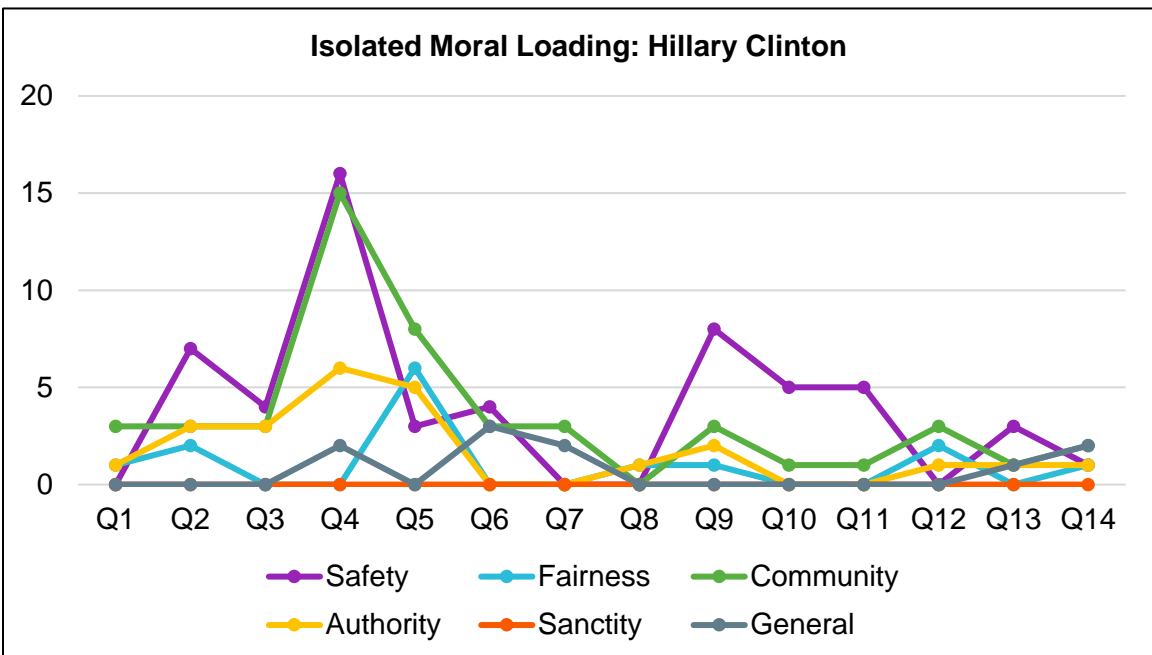


Fig. 9. Isolated Moral Loading from the Third Debate: Hillary Clinton

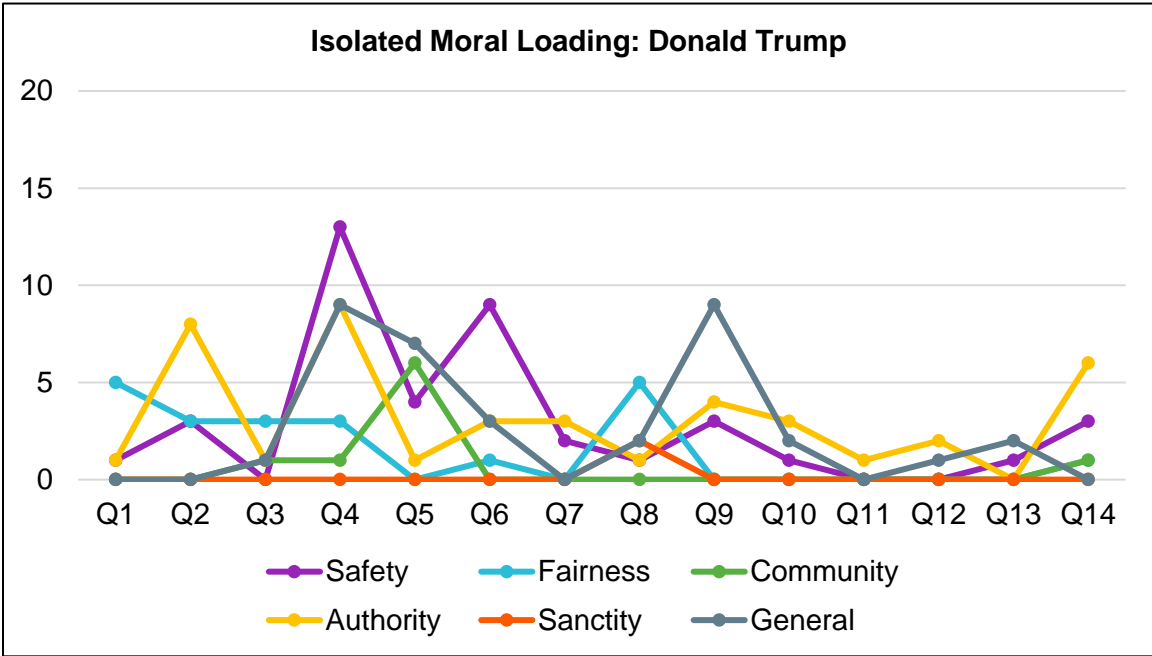


Fig. 10. Isolated Moral Loading from the Third Debate: Donald Trump

Through all of the debates, appeals to safety were most prevalent, comprising over a quarter of the candidates total appeals (27.16%). Clinton’s most frequent moral appeal

was that of community (30.61%), and Trump relied most heavily on safety (28.06%). Additionally, while both candidates consistently favored the same top three categories through each debate, Trump demonstrated somewhat more flexibility with a different category leading each time.

This isolation yields two intriguing observations. The first observation is that, for whatever reason, the moral foundation of sanctity was all but missing in each of the debates. Consistently the least frequently employed appeal by either candidate, appeals to sanctity represented less than 1% of the total moral loading through all of the debates. Whether purposeful or not, this void seems to signal that we have become so cautious and wary of moral language that candidates can neglect a foundation completely. If this trend continues, then it becomes all the more important to fortify what little moral vocabulary we do have.

The second finding is perhaps the most significant. When looking at the complete moral loading by each candidate—the five foundations plus the sixth general category—Trump had just over 10% more moral loading than Clinton. When isolating just the five foundations, Clinton actually reverses that number, leading Trump by 9.80%. However, isolating the general moral category reveals an even more interesting trend, with Trump using 127 appeals to general morality to Clinton's 47—representing a staggering 170.21% increase. This is not to argue that Trump's use of the general morality is why he won, but it certainly could have played a factor. At the very least, such a heavy emphasis signals something intriguing about the type of moral rhetoric his campaign feels would be most effective.

Classroom Implementation

This lexical analysis demonstrates what is possible when we take the first steps toward engaging students in aretiac conversations in the classroom. Simply surfacing the language gives us a better understanding of how speakers used moral appeals, which subjects they thought required the most moral language, and which appeals they considered most influential to the audience. Without the analysis, these insights would not have the same quantifiable support. Furthermore, the initial introduction into aretiac language establishes a foundation for more complex analysis and evaluation, as seen in the next chapter.

Given the complex tools used to highlight and categorize moral appeals, this level of analysis may seem out of reach for the first-year writing classroom. However, the same level of sophistication is not requisite for this type of research. Instead of employing tools like the LIWC that demand money and technical knowledge, composition students can perform the same level of analysis using no more than a pencil, a transcript, and the MFD. Similarly, the search function of any word processor can find keywords from the MFD in texts just the same. The advantage of using the LIWC is that it allows individuals to analyze a larger corpus in a shorter amount of time, but the quantitative value is no different. Hand coding or using complex software makes no difference; what matters is that instructors facilitate student interactions with morality and present a speaker's *ethos* as much more than the credibility of his or her sources.

Similarly, many of this analysis's other factors can be adapted to suit a variety of needs. For example, rather than search for all five categories proposed by the MFT, students may be interested in only one. Or, instead of presidential debates, students may

be interested in examining TV shows or classical poems or geology articles or tweets. It might even be beneficial for students to study their own writing to see where their biases are. Armed with the appropriate tools, first-year students could look for all types of moral language in all types of sources. It seems as though the limits of this research are the limits of morality, meaning that aretiac inquiry exists as long as morality continues to inform and influence our decisions.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

“Two things overwhelm the mind with constantly new and increasing admiration and awe the more frequently and intently they are reflected upon,” wrote Immanuel Kant, “the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me” (198). Since the nineteenth-century, morality has been reflected upon less and less, yet we are still communicating in ways that necessitate moral discourse. Morality in any of its iterations seems inevitable within the world that surrounds our students; and it, therefore, requires a more serious study of how to integrate moral appeals into the lessons of rhetoric within the first-year writing classroom. Morality deserves a revival of sorts, reestablishing its value in rhetorical studies and redefining its use as a rhetorical device. As we navigate the complexity and delicateness of future discussions, we must now seize the opportunity to reemphasize morality’s role in the discourse and engage our students in aretiac discussions.

As a way of doing so, this study advocates for updating Aristotle’s *aretê* with current conceptualizations of morality—a move justified by their shared history. Others scholars, including Yoos and Corder, have already begun this work, but their efforts lack the quantitative potential that complements Haidt and Joseph’s Moral Foundations Theory. The MFT not only gives us five distinct components of morality, but it also gives us specific vocabulary to define and clarify when and how morality is utilized. Opposed to prevalent classroom conceptions of *ethos* that produce flat, generalized analysis, an *ethos* that embraces a modernized *aretê* establishes a mature and dynamic framework that

helps us better understand the ways in which morality shapes our perception of the events and issues we encounter every day.

A number of other scholars have applied Haidt and Joseph's concepts to analyze shifting political opinions, marketing strategies, business students, and many others. However, none of their corpora offer the same agonistic environment that accompanies rhetorical uses of morality, which is why the 2016 presidential debates between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump were key artifacts for this study of the ways in which speakers employ moral appeals in their discourse. These modern debates echo the debates of the sophists, where orators engaged in linguistic competitions to demonstrate their character and virtue. Similarly, as Clinton and Trump discussed current issues and policies, they also demonstrated their character to the public in the form of morally loaded language. The Moral Foundations Dictionary helps us surface that language and see how students are being morally swayed without the ability to discern so, representing a unwitting manipulation equally as dangerous as the emotional influence teachers currently guard against, if not more so.

As evidence of that need, this study found that, despite post-modern arguments that introduce and emphasize moral relativism, morality continues to be threaded throughout our discourse. Furthermore, this moral loading is not tucked away in the far reaches of our communication, but rather on display to millions and millions of people around the world—morality is not just present, it is prevalent in some of our most public discourse. Returning to what we know about *aretê*, this presence should be no surprise; as Hawhee argues, public acknowledgment is necessary to foster *aretê*, and so demonstrations of moral virtue are likely to occur in the most visible venues.

The lexical analysis previously reviewed provides a way of acclimating students to this moral performance, but first-year writing instructors must extend students' preliminary knowledge and engage them in deeper levels of thinking, lest we let their budding understanding die out the moment it is obtained. As a second step to reviving *aretê* in the classroom, instructors can introduce assignments that ask students to look more closely at patterns and draw their own conclusions from the data. To demonstrate the potential of this second step, this chapter offers a deeper critique of Trump and Clinton's rhetoric as a way of demonstrating how students can analyze and evaluate a speaker's moral language. The analysis first shows the complex struggle to both establish one's own character and also diminish an opponent's, and then uses that evidence to draw conclusions about the state of moral rhetoric in current political discourse.

Establishing Candidates' Individual *Aretê*

We see this as early as the first debate. The first question posed to both candidates was, "why are you a better choice than your opponent to create the kinds of jobs that will put more money into the pockets of American workers?" Clinton, who responded first, replied, "The central question in this election is really what kind of country we want to be and what kind of future we'll build together." She goes on to discuss fair wages and the creation of jobs as a direct response to the moderator's question, but her first move attempts to reframe the question as a matter of community—"what kind of future we'll build *together*." In doing so, Clinton tries to build her own *ethos* by reframing the election cycle as a matter of inclusivity and diversity, an area of emphasis for her campaign as evidenced by her slogan "Stronger Together." Additionally, by emphasizing community, Clinton is also attempting to show her opponent's weakness in the area. Up

to that point, Trump had intentionally or inadvertently marginalized women, people with disabilities, Mexican immigrants, Muslims, prisoners of war, Iowans, and several other groups. This is not just an instance of morality; it is a moral appeal that deliberately attempts to rhetorically recast the question and the election to suite Clinton's previously presented *ethos*.

In his response to the same question, Trump uses morally loaded language in an attempt to re-anchor the narrative in a different foundation, saying, “[China is] devaluing their currency, and there's nobody in our government to fight them. And we have a very good fight. And we have a winning fight.” Rather than respond to Clinton's appeals to community in kind, Trump recognizes his deficiency and re-moralizes the conversation to better fit his strengths. He argues that the American people are fighting for jobs, and who better to protect them than the candidate who promises to build a wall. He reinforces his rhetorical choices in a follow up question that asks, “How are you going to bring back the industries that have left this country for cheaper labor overseas? How, specifically, are you going to tell American manufacturers that you have to come back?” Towards the end of his response, Trump says:

And look at her website. You know what? It's no difference than this. She's telling us how to fight ISIS. Just go to her website. She tells you how to fight ISIS on her website. I don't think General Douglas MacArthur would like that too much.

No, no, you're telling the enemy everything you want to do. [Interruption]

See, you're telling the enemy everything you want to do. No wonder you've been fighting—no wonder you've been fighting ISIS your entire adult life.

[Interruption]

Even when he is critiquing his opponent, he is reinforcing the narrative that best demonstrates his moral virtue. In essence, he's arguing that, in order to be an effective president of the United States, one needs to protect the country and fight for its people. He then demonstrates his prowess and Clinton's ineptitude to do so through morally loaded language.

An exchange from the first debate demonstrates this complex moralization and remoralization that occurs when candidates attempt to portray an issue in a way that more closely corresponds with their presented moral characters. The moderator introduces the topic of race relations by summarizing the tension that exists between African-Americans and police officers, calling it, "a very wide and bitter gap." He then asks, "How do you heal the divide?" Clinton's full response is in appendix C. Appeals to authority lead her response, occurring six times in the words "respect" and "law." This is expected considering the moderator's initial inclusion of the police anchors the question in authority. Clinton had to acknowledge the foundation established by the moderator at the risk of appearing like she was misdirecting the audience. Following just behind that, however, were appeals to community, occurring in "communities" and "together. Also of note is that this community-centered loading surfaces at the end of her response. In essence, Clinton acknowledges the question's inherent moral loading first, and then she attempts to shift the moral loading to a foundation that coincides with her presented

character. In doing so, Clinton is hoping that the audience associates the solution to the racial divide with communities, a foundation that she has built her campaign on.

In his response to the same question, Trump employs a similar tactic. Taking advantage of the questions natural moral loading, Trump doubles down on appeals to authority and denies Clinton's attempts at remoralizing the issue in terms of community. His full response is seen in appendix D. Appeals to authority lead the response. Again, this is not surprising given the natural moral loading of the issue, but what is interesting, however, is the magnitude of this appeal, occurring 13 times in the form of "law," "order," and "illegal." Similar to the way Clinton opened the debate, Trump begins his response by reframing the problem an issue of authority. He begins with "law and order" and repeats the phrase four other times in his response. Given that both "law" and "order" fall into the authority foundation, this is a potent phrase for him. His opponent's preferred foundation of community appears three times, and one of those times has authoritarian connotations (e.g., "police group"). While Clinton is trying to pull the dominate moralization towards the foundation of community, Trump pulls back towards the realm of authority, which better accentuates his demonstrated moral character.

In the second debate, candidates continued using morally loaded language in order to remoralize an issue in way that more closely aligns with their presented moral personas. To open the event, an audience member expresses her belief that the last debate "could have been rated as [mature audiences]" and then asks, "knowing that educators assign viewing the presidential debates as students' homework, do you feel you are modeling appropriate and positive behavior for today's youth?" The questions itself directly inquires about each candidates character, with appropriateness being an

extension of *aretê* and the fitness for the occasion. Additionally, because the question asks generally about the character of each candidate, there is no specific inherent moral loading, and Clinton and Trump have essentially a blank canvas to paint with whichever moral foundation they desire. Clinton, who answered first, offered the response shown in appendix E.

In her response, Clinton reinforces the general moral loading of this question, saying “our country really is great because we are good,” with “good” invoking the audience’s moral mindset. After, Clinton responds to the question of appropriateness by again demonstrating her competence in the community. She uses inclusive language like “we,” “us,” and “our” that primes the audience for the community-oriented loading that finishes her response through the repeated use of “together.” And to show that her persona matches up with the standards of community she just established, Clinton reminds the audience of her campaign slogan: stronger together. When given the opportunity to direct the moral loading to her advantage, Clinton argues that a good candidate needs to be a part of the community, a deliberate decision she reinforces with community-oriented language.

Responding to the same question, seen in appendix F, Trump does not take advantage of the neutral moral loading as much as Clinton’s did, instead offering a much more general answer, with no foundation really distinguishing itself from the others. He does, however, seem to be making a small attempt at appealing to authority, employing “law,” “order,” and “respect” repeatedly. Based on the language in his response, the audience is led to believe that appropriate behavior for a president is connected to each of the foundations, but mostly to authority. Again, this may be a missed opportunity for

Trump, as Clinton was able to include more morally-focused language that corresponds to her presented moral virtue.

As candidates use morally loaded language, they are influencing the perception of the audience. Or, more accurately, they are inviting the audience to perceive them in a specific moral way. As Hawhee states, one is “what one is perceived as doing,” and both Clinton and Trump use aretiac appeals to provide the opportunity for the audience to believe that he or she has the necessary character to excel at handling the presented issue (190). It is the responsibility of the audience discern if the language they use aligns with his or her authentic character and not just the presented character. However, with a limited vocabulary, this task is nearly impossible, given that the current *ethos* lexicon of the classroom is far from adequate to describe these complex rhetorical situations. Using a revised understanding of *aretê* gives students a more sophisticated vocabulary to describe what they are hearing in the debates and what they are perceiving in reality, helping them engage in complex discussions of character.

Attacking an Opponent’s *Aretê*

A second rhetorical strategy uses moral appeals to diminish the perceived virtue of his or her opponent. This is typically done by associating the opponent with a negative moral characteristic, i.e., harm instead of safety or inequality instead of fairness. In the first debate, Trump employs this technique, saying, “But we have no leadership. And honestly, that starts with Secretary Clinton.” He establishes a moral deficit and attributes it to Clinton in an attempt to negate the authority credibility Clinton had previously established. While the previous technique is more defensive, seeking to fortify individual

character, this second technique is more offensive, directly attacking the opponent's moral reserves.

Clinton employs this same technique, saying, "But remember. Donald started his career back in 1973 being sued by the Justice Department for racial discrimination." In using "discrimination," she is not so subtly attacking Trump's attempts at appealing to the community foundation. And again, this is not an attempt to build her own *ethos* as much as it is an attempt to discredit her opponent's. Appendices G and H provide more examples of this language.

As a variation of this technique, candidates often used generic moral language to target the holistically virtue of the opponent rather than specific foundations. For example, in the second debate, Clinton was asked if Trump had the discipline to be a good leader, with "good" connoting a positive moral standard. Clinton replies rather flatly, "No." She attacks Trump's *aretê* broadly in an attempt to show that he's not inadequate in a single foundation, but rather a wholly immoral person. Similarly, in the third debate, Trump repeated attacks Clinton's "bad experience" as a way of generally diminishing Clinton's presented moral character. In every instance, Trump is coupling Clinton with "bad," which paints Clinton's entire virtue negatively. Further examples of this general attack strategy are provided in appendix I.

As we see, morally charged language can be an immensely rhetorical tool that speakers use to build up their presented character while also diminishing the character of an opponent. Certainly, an understanding of *ethos* helps us identify these moments, but it is too broad to articulate the complex exchanges and efforts of speakers. Using the MFD to update our understanding of *aretê*, however, creates an immensely nuanced component

of *ethos* that surfaces the subtle finesse and detail of a profoundly ethical discourse. If we wish to have any mechanism to analyze and understand these complex and complicated rhetorical situations, we have to bolster our current language; neglecting to do so will leave us with less understanding and more uncertainty as we encounter increasingly more complex and complicated situations.

The Stakes of Morality

This research was an exploration of the rhetorical power of morality, and the crux of the study questions whether or not morality has a place in rhetoric in the twenty-first century classroom. Certainly, there was a place for morality in Aristotle's original conception of *ethos* with *aretê*, but has that presence been maintained? And if so, how can we adapt the classical concept to incorporate contemporary philosophies and conceptions of morality? Analyzing over 40,000 words pulled from candidates during the 2016 presidential debates with respect to a conception of *aretê* that incorporates Haidt and Joseph's MFT hoped to uncover, first, if we were using morality in our discourse, and second, how we were using morality in our discourse. Given the tremendous sample, the LIWC, and MFD, we have surfaced answers to these questions, and these findings give us a better understanding of the ways candidates use morality in their rhetoric, while also discovering ways we can improve our own analysis of their rhetoric as well. More importantly, this research demonstrates that, despite its faded emphasis, morality does indeed have a place in contemporary conceptions of rhetoric.

In fact, it has never been more important. One of the first findings from our research is that morality is indeed present in public discourse, but its stake is small. Of our sample, only about 900 words were considered morally charged, roughly 2.26%.

However, despite the disproportionate occurrence, morally charged language appeared in every response from every debate. What's more is that every moral foundation made at least once appearance in each of the debates. This suggests that even though morality has been displaced from popular conceptions of rhetoric, it is still threaded throughout our conversations.

Additionally, given that character rather than policies rose to the forefront of this election cycle, morality plays an especially important role in current political conversations. Fitness to be president, an area that typically stacks one candidate's political resume against the other, became an issue of values and trustworthiness. It became so important to the American people that an entire segment of the third debate was dedicated to the matter, with Trump being asked about sexual assault allegations and Clinton asked about conflicts of interest during her tenure as Secretary of State—questions of sanctity and fairness, respectively. At the heart of one's fitness to be president was a question of *aretê*: the American people were wanting more than someone who could fill the office, they wanted someone who demonstrated the excellence and ability that classical rhetoricians associated with *aretê*. Demonstrations of moral virtue have become a necessity for politicians as the American people have increasingly associated character with capability.

As an extension of the first finding, this study also discovered that candidates use the most moral language when discussing Americans' most concerning problems. Aside from the economy, Americans said that racism, immigration, and quality leadership were three of the top five issues facing the United States in 2016. These categories corresponded to spikes in moral loading, which shows that we're not just using morality,

we're using morality to describe and advocate for our biggest and most pressing problems. Dialogues surrounding these issues are often stalemates because of their enormous complexity and ambiguity. Without the proper vocabulary, we are left unable to accurately articulate the full complexity of the issues: racism is wrong and leaders are doing bad jobs. A moral lexicon moves these conversations forward as we are able to describe how illegal immigration is an issue of communities rather than authority, or vice versa. When candidates employ morality, they aren't just making rhetorical appeals, they are demonstrate moral dexterity these issues warrant in hopes that they will be seen as individuals who can both comprehend and navigate the moral fog that cloaks these issues.

Without using language of community and fairness, it is nearly impossible to describe the disorienting hurt and ugliness that accompanied the July 25th, 2015, event that saw a convoy of trucks wave Confederate flags, yell slurs, and point guns at African Americans attending a child's birthday party. And without appeals to authority, how do we articulate our disappointment in our political leaders' inability to control ISIS forces sweeping through Syria? This moral language isn't just convenient—it's necessary. And if we hope to accurately explore these complex conversations and others like them, then we have to lean into and not away from moral vocabulary like that of the MFD. We need to make deliberate efforts to understand and articulate the rhetoric we use and we see others using too; otherwise, we will be left frustrated and stunned—not by a lack of capability but by a lack of vocabulary.

These findings justify a new, expanded vocabulary to help students of first-year writing categorize and unpack these moral appeals in the same nuanced way we do with other rhetorical devices. We see both Clinton and Trump using morally loaded language

to exhibit their own character while also attacking the perceived virtue of the opponent. This shows is that morality is a key factor in our most public discourse. Additionally, a moral lexicon alters the way we comprehend and react to various issues. At the present, these issues exist in a kind of rhetorical gray area, where logic cannot help us make sense of these problems and we can no longer process them effectively (Garver). Ultimately, it is *ethos* that speaks to these moments, reaching places that even the most rigorous logic cannot go; in particular, the virtuous and moral component of *ethos* is crucial in these moments. Given aretê's importance and power in contemporary political discussions, one would assume that our moral vocabulary would be rich, vibrant, and developed. And yet, this study shows otherwise.

Our Disappearing Morality

To explore our second finding—how speakers use moral appeals—we looked at how each of the foundations worked in conjunction with one another. The discourse was analyzed in two main individual-level groupings: the five specific foundations of harm, fairness, community, authority, and sanctity and the one general foundation of morality. Isolating the two groups allowed us to see when candidates were employing the expanded and precise vocabulary associated with the MFD and when candidates were resorting to abstract, sweeping appeals to a general morality. In this analysis, two intriguing trends surfaced.

A Sanctity Void

The first trend actually comes from what wasn't present in the public discourse. While there was a somewhat equal dispersion of the five foundations, candidates used appeals to sanctity drastically fewer times. While there could be many reasons for this,

the simplest explanation seems to be that candidates believe politics is not place to discuss purity and sanctity. This is not hard to believe, given that the sanctity foundation is largely composed of religious vocabulary, and the United States advocates for a separation of church and state.

Regardless of the reason, politicians are neglecting a facet of our morality so much so that the only time they bring it up is when one of our presidential candidates is accused of sexual assault. But even in those moments, our classrooms have become so adverse to language of sanctity, that students have no substantive vocabulary and they're left unable to name exactly what it is that bothers them. They know that the behavior violates some part of their intrinsic code, but because the vocabulary from the sanctity foundation is discourage from public discourse and their classroom instruction, they cannot accurately describe the violation and work towards a resolution.

Moral-Immoral Binary

The second trend comes from contrasting the five specific summary-level foundations against the one general foundation. By and large, general morality dominated the discourse, occurring an average of 1.22 times more frequently when combining both candidates' responses. Even more interesting is that Trump, who went on to win the presidency, relied on general morality 1.8 times more often than he did any of the other foundations. He also used the general foundation 2.23 times more often than Clinton.

Trump's rhetorical strategy, however, wasn't immensely complex. These appeals to the general foundation largely consisted of words like "bad" or "wrong" repeated over and over again. Appendix J demonstrates this rhetoric in two responses taken from the third debate, with general appeals bolded. This wrong-wrong-wrong pattern was so

prevalent in his speech that it became identifying marker for Alec Baldwin's Saturday Night Live impersonations that year. Members of the media pointed to this word choice as a sign of Trump's lack of preparation and acumen—he knew NAFTA was “bad” but he couldn't discuss the policy in any real substance. Despite the ridicule, Trump provided audiences with quick and accessible labels to help them sort through the wealth of unfamiliar topics, policies, and concerns. While we cannot point to this factor alone as to why Trump won, it certainly could be a contributing factor that warrants further explorations. We teased and criticized him for it, but whether intentional or not, Trump's language indicates something very significant about the way we use and respond to morality in the twenty-first century.

An Invitation, Not a Solution

The unsettling conclusion seems to be that we've become so adverse to conversations of morality in the classroom that we've let our rich, aretiac vocabulary become a dead language, with the only survivors being those that exist on a moral-immoral spectrum. This gives teachers and students extremely rudimentary tools to describe fantastically moral situations. When Trump discusses his immigration policies, he doesn't demonstrate the carefulness and subtlety of the argument—he tells who is bad and who is good. It's like describing the Sistine Chapel only using the words “blue,” “not,” and “very.” We're cheating ourselves out of more delicate discussions and more accurate experiences simply because our language isn't strong enough. What's more is that this study seems to signal that we've blunted our comprehension along with our usage. If speakers are relying so heavily on general appeals to morality, then audiences are only perceiving morality in general ways, which reinforces the moral-immoral binary.

We are letting sensitive moral receptors atrophy until all we can perceive are the broad shapes of character. In essence, we think that the Sistine Chapel is only in shades of blue because that's the only way we hear it described.

This imprecise binary creates deeply rooted misunderstandings since we begin immensely delicate conversations with “moral” and “immoral” as the only way to describe them. This binary is inarticulate and ugly. It leaves us frustrated because we cannot say what we feel and we cannot understand what others are feel either. And given morality's deep anchor into the soul, these imprecise classifications can only be removed with the most transformative experiences. We need better language to describe these situations because *ethos* barely scratches the surface of these deeply ethical arguments. It is time to move past binaries and embrace a full spectrum of moral rhetoric.

In pursuit of this goal, instructors can incorporate assignments that intentionally surface and engage students in aretiac language. As discussed previously, lexical analysis is an immensely beneficial way of introducing students to specific vocabulary associated with morality. To build on that foundation, first-year writing instructors can teach students to evaluate sources based on a richer understanding of *ethos*. For example, students currently use CRAAP tests to assess potential sources with respect to categories of currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose. Incorporating a question like “what is the speaker's main moral appeal?” is a simple way to improve the measure of a speaker's presented authority. Along a similar vein, the notion of moral warrants can be folded into the Toulmin method so that students break texts into smaller parts that encourage them to go beyond immediate reactions to moral appeals and discover how and why speakers use different rhetorical strategies in different situations. Furthermore,

as students incorporate moral devices in their own work, they can do so in genres like personal essays and Rogerian arguments that promote agonistic thought as a way of simulating the arena where morality is performed. Surfacing moral language introduces students to concepts of moral performance, but instructors must extend that knowledge by incorporating a variety of assignments that ask students to respond to particular arguments and, ultimately, analyze and improve the arguments they themselves make

In the past, instructors of rhetoric have adapted in the face of new challenges, significantly changing the field and developing more accurate and expressive language in the process. We have a chance to continue that legacy by adjusting to new obstacles and incorporating new research. Investigations into our current discourse reveal it to be present but diminishing, thus making this current moment ideal for restoration. Other disciplines have unearthed concepts of morality in tremendously diverse topics, and their results have shown incredible promise. Those same threads exist in our the classrooms—and nothing should prevent our students from seeing them.

In 1982, Hairston summarized the work of Thomas Kuhn, saying revolutions come as a result of “breakdowns that occur when old methods won’t solve new problems.” I am not advocating for a revolution, but I do think we have old conceptions in need of updating. What matters in this conversation is not that every iteration of aretê becomes anchored in the MFD, but rather that we begin to explore alternative structures with the potential to improve entrenched conceptions of morality. These five categories of morality provide a strong foundation for a moral discussion of rhetoric. They give us a lexis to use when evaluating the works of both ancient and contemporary scholars. Yet, there is still much work to be done in understanding how we balance these foundations.

Just as one of Aristotle's students learned to balance *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, we must also learn to balance these foundations of morality if we hope to ever legitimately assess rhetoric in terms of morality.

We cannot abandon the pursuit of moral rhetoric. In 1932, Aldous Huxley shocked readers with the depravities depicted in *Brave New World*. Nearly twenty years later, George Orwell wrote *1984* to warn of his audience about corrupt and immoral governments. Just over ten years later, those fictional fears became reality as James Baldwin lamented the moral apathy of the country and labelled many "moral monsters." If we do not establish moral guidelines to evaluate these matters, then we lose society's most substantial defense against regression and stagnation. As stated before, this work is a revival of sorts, but this revival will not simplify the conversation, however. Morality will continue to be as complex and ethereal as ever, but if we wish to navigate the intricacy of future discussions with any sort of precision, we must now embrace the opportunity to reemphasize morality's role in the rhetorical tradition.

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APPENDIX A

Moral Foundations Dictionary

01 HarmVirtue	02 HarmVice	03 FairnessVirtue	04 FairnessVice
05 InGroupVirtue	06 InGroupVice	07 AuthorityVirtue	08 AuthorityVice
09 PurityVirtue	10 PurityVice	11 MoralityGeneral	
safe* 01	injust* 04	mothers 07	refined 09
peace* 01	bigot* 04	tradition* 07	decen* 09 11
compassion* 01	discriminat* 04	hierarch* 07	immaculate 09
empath* 01	disproportion* 04	authorit* 07	innocent 09
sympath* 01	inequitable 04	permit 07	pristine 09
care 01	prejud* 04	permission 07	church* 09
caring 01	dishonest 04	status* 07	disgust* 10
protect* 01	unscrupulous 04	rank* 07	deprav* 10
shield 01	dissociate 04	leader* 07	disease* 10
shelter 01	preference 04	class 07	unclean* 10
amity 01	favoritism 04	bourgeoisie 07	contagio* 10
secur* 01	segregat* 04 05	caste* 07	indecen* 10 11
benefit* 01	exclusion 04	position 07	sin 10
defen* 01	exclud* 04	complan* 07	sinful* 10
guard* 01		command 07	sinner* 10
preserve 01 07 09	together 05	supremacy 07	sins 10
harm* 02	nation* 05	control 07	sinned 10
suffer* 02	homeland* 05	submi* 07	sinning 10
war 02	family 05	allegian* 07	slut* 10
wars 02	families 05	serve 07	whore 10
warl* 02	familial 05	abide 07	dirt* 10
warring 02	group 05	defere* 07	impiety 10
fight* 02	loyal* 05 07	defer 07	impious 10
violen* 02	patriot* 05	revere* 07	profan* 10
hurt* 02	communal 05	venerat* 07	gross 10
kill 02	commune* 05		repuls* 10

kills 02	communit* 05	comply	sick* 10
killer* 02	communis* 05	07	promiscu* 10
killed 02	comrad* 05	defian* 08	lewd* 10
killing 02	cadre 05	rebel* 08	adulter* 10
endanger* 02	collectiv* 05	dissent* 08	debauche* 10
cruel* 02	joint 05	subver* 08	defile* 10
brutal* 02	unison 05	disrespect* 08	tramp 10
abuse* 02	unite* 05	disobe* 08	prostitut* 10
damag* 02	fellow* 05	sediti* 08	unchaste 10
ruin* 02 10	guild 05	agitat* 08	intemperate 10
ravage 02	solidarity 05	insubordinat* 08	wanton 10
detriment* 02	devot* 05	illegal* 08	profligate 10
crush* 02	member 05	lawless* 08	filth* 10
attack* 02	cliqu* 05	insurgent 08	trashy 10
annihilate* 02	cohort 05	mutinous 08	obscen* 10
destroy 02	ally 05	defy* 08	lax 10
stomp 02	insider	dissident 08	taint* 10
abandon* 02 06	05	unfaithful 08	stain* 10
spurn 02	foreign* 06	alienate 08	tarnish* 10
impair 02	enem* 06	defector 08	debase* 10
exploit 02 10	betray* 06 08	heretic* 08 10	desecrat* 10
exploits 02 10	treason* 06 08	nonconformist 08	wicked* 10 11
exploited 02 10	traitor* 06 08	oppose 08	blemish 10
exploiting 02 10	treacher* 06 08	protest 08	exploitat* 10
wound* 02	disloyal* 06 08	refuse 08	pervert 10
fair 03	individual* 06	denounce 08	wretched* 10
fairly 03	apostasy 06 08 10	remonstrate 08	11
fairness 03	apostate 06 08 10	riot* 08	righteous* 11
fair-* 03	deserted 06 08		moral* 11

fairmind* 03	deserter* 06 08	obstruct	ethic* 11
fairplay 03	deserting 06 08	08	value* 11
equal* 03	deceiv* 06	piety 09 11	upstanding 11
justice 03	jilt* 06	pious 09 11	good 11
justness 03	imposter 06	purity 09	goodness 11
justifi* 03	miscreant 06	pure* 09	principle* 11
reciproc* 03	spy 06	clean* 09	blameless 11
impartial* 03	sequester 06	steril* 09	exemplary 11
egalitar* 03	renegade	sacred* 09	lesson 11
rights 03	06	chast* 09	canon 11
equity 03	terroris* 06	holy 09	doctrine 11
evenness 03	immigra* 06	holiness 09	noble 11
equivalent 03	obey* 07	saint* 09	worth* 11
unbias* 03	obedien* 07	wholesome* 09 11	ideal* 11
tolerant 03	duty 07	celiba* 09	praiseworthy 11
equable 03	law 07	abstention 09	commendable 11
balance* 03	lawful* 07 11	virgin 09	character 11
homologous 03	legal* 07 11	virgins 09	proper 11
unprejudice* 03	duti* 07	virginity 09	laudable 11
reasonable 03	honor* 07	virginal 09	correct 11
constant 03	respect 07	austerity 09	wrong* 11
honest* 03 11	respectful* 07	integrity 09 11	evil 11
unfair* 04	respected	modesty 09	immoral* 11
unequal* 04	07	abstinen* 09	bad 11
bias* 04	respects 07	abstemiousness 09	offend* 11
unjust* 04	order* 07	upright 09 11	offensive* 11
	father* 07	limpid 09	transgress* 11
	mother 07	unadulterated 09	
	motherl* 07	maiden 09	

 mothering 07

virtuous 09

Words Included in the MFD	Words Excluded from the MFD
Cybersecurity 01	Class—as in yoga class
Cyberattack 02	Clean—as in clean energy
Cyberwarfare 02	LAX—referring to Los Angeles
Lead 07	International Airport
Raped 10	Order—as in in order to
Corruption 11	Sick—as in sick days
Nasty 11	United—as in United States
Deplorable* 11	

APPENDIX B

Questions with Peak Moral Loading

Debate 1, Question 5

The share of Americans who say race relations are bad in this country is the highest it's been in decades, much of it amplified by shootings of African-Americans by police, as we've seen recently in Charlotte and Tulsa. Race has been a big issue in this campaign, and one of you is going to have to bridge a very wide and bitter gap.

So how do you heal the divide?

Debate 2, Question 6

There are 3.3 million Muslims in the United States and I'm one of them. You've mentioned working with Muslim nations. But with Islamophobia on the rise, how will you help people like me deal with the consequences of being labelled as a threat to the country after the election is over?

Debate 2, Question 9

The heart breaking video of a 5-year-old Syrian boy named Omran sitting in an ambulance after being pulled from the rubble after an airstrike in Aleppo focused the world's attention on the horrors of the war in Syria, with 136 million views on Facebook alone.

But there are much worse images coming out of Aleppo every day now where in the past few weeks alone 400 have been killed, at least 100 of them children. Just days ago, the State Department called for a war crimes investigation of the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad and of its ally, Russia, for their bombardment of Aleppo.

So this next question comes from social media, through Facebook. Diane from Pennsylvania asks If you were president, what would you do about Syria and the humanitarian crisis in Aleppo? Isn't it a lot like the Holocaust when the U.S. waited too long before we helped?

Debate 3, Question 4

Let's move on to the subject of immigration. And there is almost no issue that separates the two of you more than the issue of immigration. Actually there are many issues that separate the two of you. Mr. Trump. You want to build a wall. Secretary Clinton, you have offered no specific plan for how you want to secure our southern

border. Mr. Trump, you are calling for major deportations. Secretary Clinton, you say that within your first 100 days as president, you're going to offer a package that includes a pathway to citizenship. The question really is why are you right and your opponent wrong?

APPENDIX C

Hillary Clinton Debate 1, Question 4

Well, you're right. Race remains a significant challenge in our country.

Unfortunately, race still determines too much, often determines where people live, determines what kind of education in their public schools they can get, and, yes, it determines how they're treated in the criminal **justice** system. We've just seen those two tragic examples in both Tulsa and Charlotte.

And we've got to do several things at the same time. We have to restore trust between communities and the police. We have to work to make sure that our police are using the best training, the best techniques, that they're well prepared to use force only when necessary. Everyone should be **respected** by the **law**, and everyone should **respect** the **law**.

Right now, that's not the case in a lot of our neighborhoods. So I have, ever since the first day of my campaign, called for criminal **justice** reform. I've laid out a platform that I think would begin to remedy some of the problems we have in the criminal **justice** system.

But we also have to recognize, in addition to the challenges that we face with policing, there are so many **good**, brave police officers who **equally** want reform. So we have to bring **communities together** in order to begin working on that, as a mutual goal. And we've got to get guns out of the hands of people who should not have them.

The gun epidemic is the leading cause of death of young African-American men, more than the next nine causes put **together**. So we have to do two things, as I said. We have to restore trust. We have to work with the police. We have to make sure they **respect** the **communities** and the **communities respect** them. And we have to tackle the plague of gun **violence**, which is a big contributor to a lot of the problems that we're seeing today.

APPENDIX D

Donald Trump Debate 1, Question 2

Well, first of all, Secretary Clinton doesn't want to use a couple of words. And that's **law** and **order**. And we need **law** and **order**. If we don't have it, we're not going to have a country.

And when I look at what's going on in Charlotte, a city I love, city where I have investments, when I look at what's going on throughout various parts of our country—I can just keep naming them all day long—we need **law** and **order** in our country.

I just got today, as you know, the endorsement of the Fraternal **Order** of Police, it just came in. We have endorsements from, I think, almost every police **group**, very—I mean, a large percentage of them in the United States.

We have a situation where we have our inner cities, African-Americans, Hispanics, are living in hell, because it's so dangerous. You walk down the street, you get shot.

In Chicago, they've had thousands of shootings, thousands, since January 1st. Thousands of shootings. And I say, where is this? Is this a **war**-torn country? What are we doing? And we have to stop the **violence**, we have to bring back **law** and **order**, in a place like Chicago, where thousands of people have been **killed**. Thousands, over the last number of years.

In fact, almost 4,000 have been **killed** since Barack Obama became president. Over 4—almost 4,000 people in Chicago have been **killed**. We have to bring back **law** and **order**.

Now, whether or not in a place like Chicago, you do stop and frisk, which worked very well, Mayor Giuliani is here, it worked very well in New York. It brought the crime rate way down, but you take the gun away from criminals that shouldn't be having it.

We have gangs roaming the street. And in many cases, they're **illegally** here, **illegal immigrants**. And they have guns. And they shoot people. And we have to be very strong. And we have to be very vigilant.

We have to be—we have to know what we're doing. Right now, our police, in many cases, are afraid to do anything. We have to **protect** our inner cities, because African-American **communities** are being decimated by crime.

APPENDIX E

Hillary Clinton Debate 1, Question 1

Thank you. Are you a teacher? Yes, I think that's a very **good** question because I heard from lots of teachers and parents about some of our concerns about some of the things being said and done in this campaign. And I think it is very important for us to make clear to our children that our country really is great because we are **good**. And we are going to **respect** one another, lift each other up. We are going to be looking for ways to celebrate our diversity and we are going to try to reach out to every boy and girl as well as every adult to bring them into working on behalf of our country. I have a positive and optimistic view of what we can do **together**. That's why the slogan of my campaign is stronger **together**. Because I think if we work **together**, if we overcome the divisiveness that sometimes sets Americans against one another and instead we make some big goals and I've set forth some big goals, getting the economy to work for everyone, not just those at the top. Making sure we have the best education from preschool through college and making it affordable and so much else. If we set those goals and we go **together** to try to achieve them, there is nothing, in my opinion, America can't do. I hope we will all come **together** in this campaign. Obviously I'm hoping to earn your vote, I'm hoping to be elected in November and I can promise you I will work with every American. I want to be the president for all Americans regardless of your political beliefs, what you look like, your religion. I want us to heal our country and bring it **together**. Because that's, I think, the best way to get the future that our children and grandchildren deserve.

APPENDIX F

Donald Trump Debate 2, Question 1

Well I'll actually agree with that. I agree with everything she said. I began this campaign because I was so tired of seeing such foolish things happen to our country. This is a great country. This is a great land. I have gotten to know the people of the country over the last year and a half that I have been doing this as a politician. I cannot believe I'm saying that about myself, but I guess I have been a politician. And my whole concept was to make America great again. When I watch the deals being made. When I watch what's happening with some horrible things like Obamacare where your health insurance and health **care** is going up by numbers that are astronomical: 68%, 59%, 71%. When I look at the Iran deal and how **bad** a deal it is for us, it's a one-sided transaction, where we're giving back \$150 billion to a **terrorist** state, really the number one **terrorist** state, we've made them a strong country from, really, a very weak country just three years ago. When I look at all of the things that I see and all of the potential that our country has, we have such tremendous potential. Whether it's in business and trade, where we are doing so badly. Last year we had an almost \$800 billion trade deficit. In other words, trading with other countries. We had an \$800 billion deficit. It's hard to believe. Inconceivable. You say who's making these deals? We're going to make great trade deals, we're going to have a strong border, we're going to bring back **law** and **order**. Just today, policeman was shot. Two **killed**. And this is happening on a weekly basis. We have to bring back **respect to law** enforcement. At the same time we have to take care of people on all sides. We need **justice**. But I want to do things that haven't been done, including fixing and making our inner cities better for the African-American citizens that are so great and for the Latinos, Hispanics, and I looking forward to doing—it's called make America great again.

APPENDIX G

Selection of Trump's Attempts at Diminishing Clinton's Character

Safety	Fairness	Community	Authority
<p>Our country is suffering because people like Secretary Clinton have made such bad decisions in terms of our jobs and in terms of what's going on.</p>			<p>But we have no leadership. And honestly, that starts with Secretary Clinton.</p>
<p>Hillary Clinton attacked those same women, and attacked them viciously.</p>			<p>You treated him with terrible disrespect.</p>
<p>She's the one and Obama that caused the violence.... So sad when she talks about violence at my rallies and she caused the violence.</p>			<p>She talks in favor of the rebels. She doesn't even know who the rebels are. You know, every time we take rebels whether it's in Iraq or anywhere else, we're arming people.</p>

He has no **respect** for her....

Putin from everything I see has
no **respect** for this person.

APPENDIX H

Selection of Clinton's Attempts at Diminishing Trump's Character

Safety	Fairness	Community	Authority
<p>Donald insulted and attacked them for weeks over their religion.</p> <p>He attacked the woman reporter writing the story, called her disgusting, as he has called number of women during this campaign....That's who Donald is.</p> <p>This is a pattern...where he incites violence, where he applauds people who are pushing and pulling and punching at his rallies.</p>	<p>But remember, Donald started his career back in 1973 being sued by the Justice Department for racial discrimination.</p> <p>People like Donald who paid zero in taxes, zero for our vets, zero for our military, zero for health and education. That is wrong. And we're going to make sure that nobody, no corporation and no individual can get away without paying his fair share to support our country.</p>	<p>Donald has consistently insulted Muslims abroad, Muslims at home, when we need to be cooperating with Muslim nations and with the American Muslim community.</p> <p>Right now, a lot of those nations are hearing what Donald says and wondering why should we cooperate with the Americans, and this is a gift to ISIS and the terrorists. Violent jihadist terrorists. We are not at war with Islam, and it is a mistake, and it plays into</p>	<p>We cannot just say law and order.</p> <p>It's just awfully good that someone with the temperament of Donald Trump is not in charge of the law in our country.</p>

the hands of the **terrorists**, to
act as though we are.

APPENDIX I

Selection of Attempts to Diminish Opponent's General Character

**Selection of General Attempts to
Diminishing Clinton's Character**

So she has experience, I agree. But it's **bad, bad** experience.... And this country can't afford to have another four years of that kind of **bad** experience.

Bernie Sanders said Hillary Clinton has very **bad** judgment. This is a perfect example of it.

And again, Bernie Sanders, it's really **bad** judgment. She has made **bad** judgment not only on taxes, she's made **bad** judgements on Libya, on Syria, on Iraq.

I say the one thing you have over me is experience. But it is **bad** experience because what you've done has turned out **badly**.

Such a **nasty** woman.

**Selection of General Attempts to
Diminishing Trump's Character**

He said, you know, if they taunted our sailors, I'd blow them out of the water and start another **war**....That's **bad** judgment. That is not the **right** temperament to be commander in chief...

You know, with prior Republican nominees for president, I disagreed with them on politics, policies, principles, but I never questioned their fitness to serve. Donald Trump is different.*

APPENDIX J

Trump's General Foundation Appeals

Response 1

One of my first acts will be to get all of the drug lords, all of the **bad** ones, we have some **bad, bad** people in this country that have to go out. We're going to get them out. We're going to secure the border. And once the border is secured, at a later date, we'll make a determination as to the rest. But we have some **bad** hombres here and we're going to get them out.

Response 2

Look you're not there. You might be involved in that decision, but you were there when you took everybody out of Mosul and out of Iraq. You shouldn't have been in Iraq, but you did vote for it. You shouldn't have been in Iraq, but once you were in Iraq, you should have never left the way -- the point is the big winner is going to be Iran.

Wrong.

Wrong.

Wrong.

We don't gain anything. Iran is taking over—

Iran is taking over Iraq.

We would have gained—

No, you're the one that's unfit. You know, Wikileaks just actually came out. John Podesta said some horrible things about you, and boy was he right. He said some beauties. And you know Bernie Sanders, he said you have **bad** judgment. You do. And if you think going into Mosul after we let the world know we're going in and all of the people we really wanted, the leaders are all gone, if you think that was **good**, then you do. Now John Podesta said you have terrible instincts. Bernie Sanders said you have **bad** judgment. I agree with both.
