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Elvin T. LIM
Singapore Management University, elvinlim@smu.edu.sg

Citation

THE LION AND THE LAMB: DE-MYTHOLOGIZING FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT'S FIRESIDE CHATS

ELVIN T. LIM

We are accustomed to a characterization of Franklin Roosevelt's legendary Fireside Chats as intimate exchanges between the president and the people. This essay argues that the Fireside Chats were a harsher, more castigatory rhetorical genre than such a characterization would allow. A content analysis of the 27 Fireside Chats recorded in FDR's Public Papers *suggests that the Fireside Chats were, on a number of indices, far less intimate than have traditionally been supposed, and in fact among the more vitriolic and declamatory utterances of the 32nd president. The essay proceeds with a discussion of how this illusion of intimacy was created and perpetuated, and explores the implications of these findings for the nature of presidential oratory.*

We study words because that is how we decipher and remember an historical personage. Franklin Roosevelt himself was thoroughly conscious of this fact. "No one knew better than he," recalled Robert Sherwood, "that, once he had the microphone before him, he was speaking for the eternal record."[1] FDR's Fireside Chats, in particular, deserve special attention because they were his principal instrument of leadership, "a staple in his arsenal of weapons for wooing mass opinion" and "the greatest weapon of the New Deal."[2]

Yet popular memory of these speeches is inaccurate in a number of ways. The very name, "Fireside Chat," conveys a misleading impression of what these chats really were. Even FDR openly acknowledged the artificiality of the term when he noted the peculiarity that "the name 'Fireside Chat' seems to be used by the Press even when the radio talk is delivered on a very hot mid-summer evening."[3] The real venue of the Fireside Chats was not a quiet living room in a secluded farmhouse, but the cluttered, uncomfortable Diplomatic Reception Room in the basement of the White House; there was a fireplace in this room, but it was never used.

Other facts about the Fireside Chats have also been misreported. The Fireside Chats were not typically devoted to a single issue but several;[4] they were not always

Elvin T. Lim is a doctoral candidate in Politics at Nuffield College, Oxford, in Great Britain. He is grateful to the staff of the FDR Library for their assistance, and especially to Virginia Lewick.

or usually held on a Sunday (only 10 of 27 were held on a Sunday);[5] the term "Fireside Chat" was not coined by Robert Trout but by Harry Butcher of the Columbia Broadcasting System's Washington station,[6] who applied the term to the second Fireside Chat of May 7, 1933, in a network press release.[7]

Today's presidents not only continue to live in the lengthened shadow of FDR, but they live in the shadow of his oratorical genius. As scholars and politicians today look to FDR as the gold standard for American political oratory, it is important that we properly understand exactly what these Fireside Chats were.

This is not a history of the four Roosevelt administrations, but I will assume that the reader has some knowledge of the history of the United States from the Great Depression to World War II, and in particular, of the actions taken by the Roosevelt administrations that the Fireside Chats were designed to justify.

THE PREVAILING CHARACTERIZATION

FDR's Fireside Chats have been described with a number of adjectives, but one stands out because of its frequent recurrence and, I argue, its questionable applicability. Here is a sampling of the prevailing wisdom, with my own emphasis indicated in italics:

> But Roosevelt's most important link with the people was the "Fireside Chat." . . . they were fresh, *intimate,* direct, moving.[8]
>
> The "fireside" phrase conveyed Roosevelt's conception of himself as a man at ease in his own house talking frankly and *intimately* to neighbors as they sat in their living rooms.[9]
>
> The famous Fireside Chats powerfully reinforced the bonds of *intimacy* between Roosevelt and the public.[10]
>
> The Roosevelt mastery of communication, so well exhibited in the Fireside Chats, produced a sense of *intimacy* between the president and the American people.[11]

The concern of this essay, then, is with the textbook characterization of the Fireside Chats as an intimate rhetorical genre. It is important to keep these quotes in mind, because it will become increasingly tempting, as this essay progresses, to forget the extent to which they represent the conventional wisdom.

Because so much of what follows hinges on what "intimacy" means, it is worthwhile to define the word in precise terms. Taking the *Oxford English Dictionary* as an authority on meaning,[12] these scholars, if they are using the word *intimate* correctly in their characterization of these chats, must be using the word in one, some, or all of the following ways:

1. Inmost, most inward, deep-seated; hence, pertaining to or connected with the inmost nature or fundamental character of a thing; essential; intrinsic. Now chiefly in scientific use.
   A. Pertaining to the inmost thoughts or feelings; proceeding from, concerning, or affecting one's inmost self; closely personal.
   B. Close in acquaintance or association; closely connected by friendship or personal knowledge; characterized by familiarity (with a person or thing); very familiar.
   C. Of knowledge or acquaintance: Involving or resulting from close familiarity; close.
2. Of a relation between things: Involving very close connection or union; very close.

We can reject the applicability of definitions 1 and 2 purely on categorical grounds: "intimacy" in these usages describes things or relationships between things rather than relationships between people. This leaves us with three relevant ways in which "intimacy" has been used: 1) in describing the *personal* way in which FDR revealed and projected his inmost self in his appeals to the people (definition A); 2) in describing FDR's emotional and social *association* with the people (definition B); and 3) in his *familiarity* with them (definition C).[13] We will return to these definitions in various parts of this essay.

Meanwhile, we can obtain a subtler understanding of the conventional characterization by comparing the Fireside Chats with a genre antithetical to intimacy. The above characterizations of the Fireside Chats were probably made in conscious contradistinction to an older, early-twentieth-century mode of political oratory. Before the first Fireside Chat on March 12, 1933, the principal mode of presidential rhetoric was a public speech on the rear platform of a train, or at a podium of a town hall, or on the stump of a newly felled tree in a western forest clearing. These orations—typically loud, castigatory, and declamatory—had been popular spectacles in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and were part of a distinct oratorical tradition easily identified by their practitioners: among others, William Jennings Bryan, Theodore Roosevelt, Huey Long, and Robert La Follette. Theirs was an assertive and morally demanding rhetorical genre rooted in the Jeremiadic preaching tradition,[14] such as when Bryan served notice at the 1896 Democratic National Convention that he would not allow mankind to be crucified upon a "Cross of Gold." Such rhetoric was anything but intimate: its principal rhetorical posture did not express the innermost thoughts of the orator, assume or cultivate the orator's close association with the audience, or highlight his familiarity with them. This essay challenges the historical record of Franklin Roosevelt's Fireside Chats as an intimate rhetorical genre, and posits that in fact, its strongly declamatory elements hark back to the platform style of the early twentieth century.

METHOD

Content analysis, qualitative and quantitative, is the principal method used in this essay. While the Fireside Chat is fundamentally an aural genre, this essay assumes that the content analysis of what is said is equally as important as the performance analysis of how something is said. Indeed, there is scholarly consensus that the rhetorical potency of the Fireside Chats was generated not by gesticulation or volume or pitch, but by *words*. As one scholar surmises: "On the newsreels and radio and in person, Father Charles Coughlin, Senator Huey Long, and Fuehrer Adolf Hitler had in common with President Roosevelt the ability to electrify their audiences primarily with their forceful deliveries. Devoid of live dynamism, however, Coughlin's, Long's, and Hitler's speeches lost considerable voltage on the printed page. Roosevelt's did not."[15] To be sure, FDR's use of tonal inflections and emphases, cadences, and rhetorical pacing contributed to his eloquence and his perpetration of the illusion of intimacy, but these are not the objects of the present analysis.

Indeed, as I have mentioned and questioned elsewhere, we see in the literature on the Fireside Chats a focus on rhetorical technique to the negligence of substance.[16] A typical claim is this: "The effects of Roosevelt's Fireside Chats, as well as his other radio broadcasts, were due to a synergism of his rhetorical techniques, his careful timing and spacing, and his radio delivery."[17] While content and technique are related, to overemphasize technique to the negligence of substance would be to ignore an immense body of data.

The utility of content analysis derives from the fact that what has been said (as opposed to what has been thought, felt, and even done) is permanently and undeniably on the public record. The best defense of this method comes from a man who spoke even before there was a legacy of FDR: "[N]obody really knows Franklin D. Roosevelt or what he will do in the years to come or what his position will be in the long verdict of history. Yet what seem to be some of his characteristics may be discovered and set down. What he has said and done, he has said and done for all time."[18]

This study and its method affirm the importance of rhetorical content, but will go beyond the content summary of the Fireside Chats that others have ably performed elsewhere.[19] The aim here is to content analyze, not summarize. This study also adds to other studies by examining the full set of 27 Fireside Chats whereas previous works have been restricted to a few case studies.[20]

DATA AND TREATMENT

A proper investigation of the Fireside Chats should be conducted against the backdrop of the entirety of FDR's oratorical legacy. Only then can we know if the chats

were quintessential or unusual, and in what manner: When we remember the Fireside Chats as "intimate," we make the implicit and testable claim that they are a more intimate genre than most if not all other genres of FDR's rhetoric. Appendix I indicates a breakdown of all 2,137 items recorded in FDR's *Public Papers*.[21] This study uses the full text documents of four principal genres of FDR's rhetoric—comparing the 27 Fireside Chats with 203 messages to Congress, 83 radio addresses (not designated as Fireside Chats), and 473 public addresses—which together constitute over a third of the contents of the *Public Papers.*

To say that the Fireside Chats were an "intimate" genre is to make another implicit claim: that these chats were a particularly intimate genre compared not only to the rest of FDR's rhetoric but also compared to that of other presidents. There would be no reason to remember the Fireside Chats as especially intimate if the radio addresses (which are the closest comparable genre) of other presidents in the same era could also have been characterized as such. To test this claim, the Fireside Chats will be compared with the radio addresses of Presidents Herbert Hoover and Harry Truman. The radio addresses of these presidents were chosen so as to keep context constant as far as possible: Hoover, like Roosevelt, had to deal with the Great Depression, and Truman, like Roosevelt, faced the challenge of World War II; all three presidents spoke to the American people before television came of age. Again, the number (23 and 52 respectively) and full texts of these addresses were taken from the *Public Papers* of each president.

There is some question about the exact number of Fireside Chats Roosevelt made. This question needs to be reasonably resolved because of the quantitative and comparative genre analysis that will follow. Fortunately, the margin of disagreement is small. All scholars agree that there were between 25 and 31 chats. John H. Sharon counted 25,[22] Waldo Braden and Earnest Brandenburg counted 28,[23] Halford R. Ryan counted 30,[24] Russell D. Buhite and David W. Levy counted 31,[25] and David M. Ryfe counted 29.[26] I have simply taken the number suggested by the editors of the *Public Papers* to be the most authoritative, and according to them there were 27 Fireside Chats.[27] These are listed in Appendix II and will henceforth be referred to by FC (Fireside Chats) 1 through FC 27, according to the order of the dates on which they were broadcast.

The "data" here—the texts organized into their various genres—are based on the genre decisions of the editors of the *Public Papers,* and these decisions are admittedly fallible. The messages to Congress and public addresses are fairly coherent genres, but an objection that can arise at this stage is that the Fireside Chat is in some sense an artificial genre,[28] and by some arguments, it is silly to try to distinguish it from its close cousin, the routine radio address. This is a proposition that I will soon put to the test and determine implausible. For now, I will only attempt to defend the minimal proposition that there are sufficient *ex ante* reasons for us to take the claim that the chats are a distinct genre seriously enough to subject it to testing.

The basic argument for the existence of a rhetorical genre is that it satisfies the condition that sufficient characteristics (genre imperatives) exist to connect all its members with each other and to distinguish them from other genres. The most telling indication that this condition obtains in the case of the Fireside Chats is that the speaker (and master ghostwriter) himself was aware of the genre difference. When drafting a Fireside Chat, FDR would title it a "Fireside Radio Address"[29] as opposed to a "Radio Address" or "Radio Broadcast." FDR also made specific references in his chats: he expressed his desire that "the hope of Easter may be more real at firesides everywhere" (FC11), he noted that "this talk tonight will be referred to as a fireside talk" (FC12), that "we seek to keep war from our own firesides" (FC13), and that "this is not a fireside chat on war" (FC15). Other times he overtly linked his chats to each other by direct comparison to the first (and most illustrious) of the genre (FC2, FC9, FC15).

Also revealing is the fact that FDR practiced two distinct radio strategies, one for the Fireside Chats and one for the radio addresses. He placed severe limitations on the number of Fireside Chats he gave each year—usually no more than three a year, or an average of 164 days between each chat—while placing no such limit on the number of radio addresses. White House Press Secretary Steve Early explains the strategy governing the Fireside Chats: "The President has asked me to explain to you his radio policy. . . . The President will broadcast at very infrequent intervals, whenever the national emergency requires. At such times he will speak direct to the country, voicing his own appeal."[30] The fact that FDR gave over three hundred radio addresses in 12 years in office[31]—and that that is on average over ten times the number of Fireside Chats he delivered a year—reveals that radio addresses were deemed to be immune from the dangers of becoming a "platitude to the public"[32] and that their extensive use was not a threat to the Fireside Chats becoming so.[33]

RESULTS OF QUANTITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSES

In what follows, I discuss the results of the quantitative content analysis that support my claim that the Fireside Chats have been curiously shrouded in the illusion of intimacy when the textual evidence suggests quite the opposite. These analyses take into account every word in the 861 texts used for this essay; hence the validity of these results stems from the fact that every word in each genre is accounted for, and nothing will be taken out of context or heralded as representative of the whole. That is to say, the results presented here are literally of the all-things/words-considered sense, and provide the necessary backdrop to the more specific and qualitative analysis that will follow in the next section. Here, three kinds of mutually reinforcing analyses are conducted. Each respectively and cumulatively challenges the conventional characterization of the Fireside Chats as "intimate" in the word's three defined usages.

The first is a keyword analysis that identifies the most frequently occurring words in a corpus of text as an indication of "keyness" or the "aboutness" of the texts. This analysis performs the preliminary test on the claim that the Fireside Chats and the radio addresses were different genres, and more specifically, on the "summary of content" function of content analysis, which is important for our purposes because the subject matter of a speech shapes its tone.

The second method used is a readability analysis used to measure the simplicity or accessibility of the language of the Fireside Chats and other genres. This is an important component of the analyses because so much of the perceived intimacy of the Fireside Chats is premised on the way in which FDR was able to acquaint and associate himself to his audience by his use of simple, colloquial language.[34]

The third type of analysis used here is categorical, in which the occurrences of categories of words that are thematically linked (rather than single words) are the subjects of analysis. The percentage occurrence (as a proportion of all the words in the texts in a genre) of these categories across six genres (four by FDR, one each by Hoover and Truman) is used to illustrate the ways in which the Fireside Chats were not a particularly intimate genre.

Keyword Analysis

In the keyword analysis, the keywords of the Fireside Chats and radio addresses were calculated by cross-tabulating a complete word list for the two corpora of text and comparing the frequency of each word in each of these word lists in proportion to the length of the word list and the total number of words per corpus. The results were then put under the Ted Dunning's Log-likelihood test of significance with the minimum probability level set at 0.000001. A keyword is defined as a word that is unusually frequent in one corpus in relation to its occurrence in a comparison corpus. (It is therefore also a negative keyword for the comparison corpus.) This method summarizes the key differences in the "aboutness" of two corpora of texts.[35] The first 26 words in Table 1 are the keywords of the Fireside Chats in descending order of keyness and the next 18 words are the keywords of the radio addresses in ascending order of keyness.

The table gives us an accurate approximation of the kinds of subjects with which both genres were principally concerned. The analysis shows the radical difference in the subject matter dealt with in the Fireside Chats and the radio addresses. If only on these grounds alone, we have clear evidence that the Fireside Chats and the radio addresses were two distinct genres.

More importantly, we see that the topics that the Fireside Chats covered were *not* concerned with the inmost thoughts of the orator (recall definition A of "intimacy"). As Table 1 shows, the Fireside Chats were overwhelmingly concerned with the urgent problems of government and the economy (or what we now call "hard"

TABLE 1: KEYWORDS OF FIRESIDE CHATS V. RADIO ADDRESSES

S/N		Word Freq	Fireside Chats Freq (%)	Radio Address Freq	Freq (%)
1	Prices	72	0.09	1	0.00
2	Banks	49	0.06	1	0.00
3	Money	75	0.09	17	0.02
4	Recovery	46	0.06	4	0.00
5	Wages	58	0.07	9	0.00
6	Coal	29	0.04	0	0.00
7	Congress	137	0.17	59	0.06
8	Court	37	0.05	4	0.00
9	Powers	44	0.05	7	0.00
10	Amendment	23	0.03	0	0.00
11	Cost	50	0.06	11	0.01
12	Japanese	63	0.08	19	0.02
13	Industry	80	0.10	30	0.03
14	Billion	31	0.04	3	0.00
15	Gold	28	0.03	2	0.00
16	Labor	85	0.10	34	0.04
17	Production	77	0.09	29	0.03
18	Miners	18	0.02	0	0.00
19	Italian	18	0.02	0	0.00
20	Italy	33	0.04	5	0.00
21	Bank	28	0.03	3	0.00
22	British	41	0.05	9	0.00
23	Axis	39	0.05	8	0.00
24	Drought	22	0.03	1	0.00
25	Products	32	0.04	5	0.00
26	Currency	21	0.03	1	0.00
27	Am	83	0.10	182	0.19
28	Human	33	0.04	101	0.11
29	Youth	1	0.00	28	0.03
30	Free	38	0.05	112	0.12
31	Faith	24	0.03	87	0.09
32	Scout	0	0.00	24	0.03
33	Peace	82	0.10	192	0.20
34	Ideal	1	0.00	32	0.03
35	Springs	0	0.00	27	0.03
36	Children	28	0.03	102	0.11
37	Paralysis	3	0.05	43	0.05

S/N		Word Freq	Fireside Chats Freq (%)	Radio Address Freq	Freq (%)
38	Warm	0	0.03	30	0.03
39	Birthday	1	0.04	38	0.04
40	Scouts	0	0.00	32	0.03
41	Community	17	0.02	92	0.10
42	Infantile	0	0.00	42	0.04
43	Democracy	29	0.04	128	0.14
44	Rubber	0	0.00	46	0.05

news): prices, wages, labor, production, and the like. (In fact, these were precisely the kinds of topics that also predominated in the messages to Congress; a traditionally dreary genre directed less at the public than at Congress.) And further, such subject matter did not automatically recommend an orator to his audience, either emotionally or socially (that is, help him achieve intimacy by assumed or cultivated familiarity, as per definition C)—one would not normally expect or find a speech about money and prices to be "intimate." In contrast, the radio addresses dealt with just such matters, often focusing on softer and more personal themes: faith, peace, children, and community.[36]

This essay has no quarrel with the claim that the radio addresses were "intimate"; in fact the various indicators we use here and below point to just that. But it is at least a very curious thing that the Fireside Chats—given that they were not focused on the orator's inmost thoughts nor directed at subject matter that was conducive to establishing an emotional or social rapport between speaker and audience—should have been remembered as such.

Readability Analysis

Writing about the Fireside Chats, scholars have noted FDR's use of "simple terms"[37] and "simple language."[38] One chief brain-truster and speechwriter went so far as to assert that the first Fireside Chat was "as simple and moving as any presidential utterance in the history of this country."[39] The underlying argument behind these claims is that the Fireside Chats were effective precisely because FDR was able to speak the language of the masses, and in so doing convey the impression that he was "one of us." (This argument maps onto definition B of "intimacy," understood as a relationship of association.)

To properly quantify the readability of the Fireside Chats, I calculated their Flesch Readability scores. This is a standard test of readability, calculated by the following formula:

206.835 - (1.015 x ASL) - (84.6 x ASW)

where ASL = average sentence length (the number of words divided by the number of sentences) and ASW = average number of syllables per word (the number of syllables divided by the number of words).[40]

The resulting scores typically range on a 100-point scale, with a higher score indicating greater accessibility or simplicity. Absolutely considered, the average Flesch readability score for the 27 Fireside Chats, at 57.5, is below the standard recommended writing score of 60 to 70.

Even when the Flesch score for the chats is considered relatively, the claim that the Fireside Chats were simple and accessible is neither true between FDR's rhetorical genres, since his public addresses were, at 59.4, more readable than the chats; nor is it true between presidents, since President Truman's radio addresses (his closest comparable genre) scored 63.8.[41]

Further, it cannot even be said that the Fireside Chats were more *audibly* accessible than the radio addresses of other speakers, because the chats clipped along at the rate of 117 words per minute, rather than at the prescribed standard of 100.[42]

The results here suggest that the Fireside Chats were not intimate in our second sense (as per definition B). The chats did not exactly speak the language of the people that would help endear FDR to his audience as their equal or comrade. In fact, on several occasions, his linguistic constructions reflected a witting and an unapologetic facility with words. It is in these chats that the president spoke of "the inevitable vicissitudes of life" (FC8); where he described the departments of government as "a higgledy-piggledy patchwork of duplicate responsibilities" (FC10); where he called Hitler the "mystic master of strategic intuition" (FC23). These are all savvy phrases compact with meaning, but this should not deter us from the fact that they are remarkably unusual constructions that were used, at least in part, to insinuate a patrician authority and capacity to lead.[43]

Certainly, FDR stressed time and again the simplicity of his chats—characteristically (and rather ironically), he called his first chat an "elemental recital" of governmental policy—as if verbal affirmations of the simplicity of his rhetoric had the magical effect of making it so. The present analysis shows that the alleged simplicity of the Fireside Chats has been overstated. To be sure, the perception of simplicity, like the illusion of intimacy it helps to sustain, has its reality and unreality. The paradox of FDR's rhetoric was that it conveyed, by its clarity and clever word choice, the impression of simplicity even though it was seldom prosaic or commonplace.

Categorical Analysis

Categorical analysis allows us to discern broader trends that can be missed as we confront the multitude of words (n ≅ 950,000) typical of a study of this scale. By including four genres of FDR's rhetoric and the radio addresses of presidents Hoover and Truman, the present analysis examines the distinctness of Fireside

rhetoric both across genres and across presidents. This relative assessment is important (and must be tested), because history *uniquely* remembers the Fireside Chats (not FDR's public addresses, and certainly not Herbert Hoover's radio addresses) as "intimate."

The categories I use here are taken from the Harvard IV-4 psychosociological and DICTION dictionaries.[44] I take my categories from two independently constructed dictionaries to reduce the chance that any particular dictionary biases my findings in any direction. Each dictionary, in turn, has been independently constructed and found to be useful in a variety of other settings and scholarship. To distinguish the categories from each dictionary, those taken from DICTION are title-cased. Appendix III provides descriptions of the categories used here. Their scores as a percentage of the total word count per genre are listed in Table 2, in the order by which they appear in the text here.

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF DICTION AND HARVARD IV-4 CATEGORIES

	FDR Fireside Chat (n = 27)	FDR Msg to Congress (n = 203)	FDR Radio Address (n = 83)	FDR Public Address (n = 473)	Hoover Radio Address (n = 23)	Truman Radio Address (n = 52)
Familiar	137.51	154.38	144.12	146.09	147.95	139.40
Satisfy	2.92	1.79	5.38	4.26	5.14	3.67
virtue	2.83	3.10	3.90	3.09	4.44	3.87
Praise	5.81	5.12	8.25	8.05	8.37	7.3
Embell	0.61	0.78	1.11	0.90	1.23	1.28
passive	3.74	3.91	4.11	3.86	3.88	4.01
hu	4.97	6.02	5.94	5.32	6.95	6.61
abs	3.38	3.65	4.26	3.77	4.46	3.62
pstv	5.40	5.93	7.90	6.34	7.12	7.39
Optimist	50.31	50.61	52.76	52.16	53.40	51.24
ngtv	2.94	2.16	2.51	1.82	2.65	2.82
Hardship	6.23	4.13	5.51	4.15	6.94	5.63
Concrete	22.75	26.31	18.04	18.82	18.68	24.32
Present	13.58	9.78	11.45	11.77	8.85	12.94
affil	3.05	2.99	4.79	3.17	4.74	5.73
Aggress	8.78	5.64	5.59	4.39	4.06	7.92
hostile	1.90	1.07	1.33	0.39	0.88	1.53
Blame	1.56	1.04	1.14	1.02	0.81	1.97
Denial	6.17	3.83	5.14	5.07	4.01	4.12

The categorical analysis shows that the Fireside Chats tended to use very unfamiliar language. Compared to all other genres, DICTION's measure (*Familiar*) shows that the chats were in fact *least* likely to use the most common words in the English language. It is clear, once again, that FDR did not exactly speak the language of the people: his Fireside language was, contrary to conventional wisdom, both more complex (as the Flesch scores above show) and more unusual than the language of his other speeches and the comparable speeches of other presidents.

Further, the chats in general did little to cultivate a rapport between the rhetor and his audience (definition C). Except for the messages to Congress, which were not, in any case, addressed to the general public, the chats did not pander (*Satisfy*), congratulate (*virtue*), or flatter (*Praise*) the people as much as the other genres did. In fact, the chats scored the lowest on the textbook ingredients of intimate rhetoric: they exhibited the lowest level of embellishment (*Embell*), passivity (*passive*), human interest (*hu*), and rhetorical abstraction (*Abs*) among all the genres.

Instead of good news (*pstv, Optimist*), the chats highlighted hardship (*ngtv, Hardship*) and urgent realities (*Concrete, Present*) more than most other genres did. They were very conservative in the expression of affect (*affil*), and liberal in their expression of hostility (*Aggress, hostile*). In fact, of all the genres compared, only Truman's radio addresses were, as a whole, more castigatory than the Fireside Chats (*Blame, Denial*). The next section will elaborate on this neglected aspect of the Fireside Chats.

The results in this section show that, in an all-words-considered sense, it cannot be plausibly said that the predominant tone of the Fireside Chats was one of "intimacy," in *any* of the three ways in which the word is normally used. If they have been perceived as such, the perception has proceeded *in spite* of the antithetical indicators here reported.

FDR's Use of Declamation

The value of computer-aided, quantitative content analysis is that it brings to the surface patterns that exist across vast quantities of text that cannot be discerned by the unaided human mind. There are, of course, limitations to the method that we must now overcome with more traditional methods. One is that frequency of word occurrence is not the only way of measuring the intensity of rhetoric. "Dislike" and "loathe," for instance, convey different intensities of emotion that only a very elaborate and nuanced content analytic dictionary would discriminate. And intensity was a signature trait of FDR's rhetoric. Here was a president, like his cousin Theodore Roosevelt, who did not like "weasel" words, but words that were filled with meaning and emotion. The other limitation of quantitative content analysis is that because each speech is not examined *in situ,* it is sometimes difficult to see or understand concrete and specific instances of such patterns. In this section, we

delve into the minutiae of FDR's words, and I shall corroborate the global findings of the above section with concrete examples.

While the methodological focus here is more specific, the argumentative move I make is more general and perhaps more intuitive. I argue that *regardless* of which definitions of "intimacy" we adopt, a rhetorical genre replete with declamatory statements simply does not lend itself to description as such. A declamatory style, if it were to be truly effective, would arrogate unto a speaker an objectivity and right to denounce that runs counter to the inherent subjectivity of a personal exposé (not consistent with definition A); it assumes a better-than-thou and even a pompous tone in order to soundly denigrate (not consistent with definition B); and like the biblical prophets that practiced this style, it inevitably sets the orator apart from both the victims of his verbal assault and the lay audience because of his assumed moral authority to castigate (not consistent with definition C).

The first thing that must be said is that the Fireside Chats were intended not only for "friends." FDR assailed his opponents in his Fireside Chats as often as he greeted his friends. Some of these attacks were indirect and implied. For instance, in his Fireside Chat of October 12, 1937 (FC10), he commended the contributions of radio and the newsreels in educating the public, and deliberately omitted the newspapers (because he felt that they propagated biased opinions rather than facts about the New Deal). FDR explained his strategy of indirect attack in his 12th Fireside Chat: "For in nine cases out of ten the speaker or the writer who, seeking to influence public opinion, descends from calm argument to unfair blows hurts himself more than his opponent." The president, however, was not always consistent on this point and did, on many an occasion, descend from calm argument. For instance, he ridiculed those that wanted to avoid war at all costs for singing "soporific lullabies" (FC16) and accused those "living under the illusion of isolationism" of wanting "the American eagle to imitate the tactics of the ostrich" (FC18).

Even more of this vitriol can be detected in the speech drafts. Speechwriting for FDR was, among other things, a therapeutic exercise used to vent his anger at his opponents in passionate and caustic language (usually in earlier drafts that his advisors eventually convinced him to supersede). An examination of the speech drafts allows us to understand history by studying "unhistory." For instance, on the fifth page of the first draft of the 14th Fireside Chat of May 26, 1940, the italicized portion of the following extract was deleted:

> In the past two or three weeks all kinds of stories have been handed out to the American public—*especially by some commentators and by some self-constituted experts on military subjects and by some politicians, who, regardless of party, think more in terms of publicity than of patriotism.*[45]

And again, FDR deletes this entire (italicized) passage that occurs in the second draft of the 18th Fireside Chat of February 23, 1942:

Does any American with red blood in his veins or even a modicum of decency in his soul dare to assert that this government could have sent more succor to those brave men than we have sent? . . . I am not a blood-thirsty person but anyone who says that we could have done the impossible deserves to be delivered up to the Japanese themselves for further treatment.[46]

Not all of this vitriol, however, has escaped into the dusty folders of unhistory. In fact, it is probable that no president since FDR has ventured to summon half the bellicosity that FDR did in the brief space of 27 speeches. The Fireside Chats exhibit FDR's remarkable talent and appetite for name-calling. In these chats he inveighed against "money-changers" (FC4), "doubting Thomases" (FC5), "Copperheads" (FC12), "poison peddlars" (FC18), "bogus patriots" (FC19), "cheerful idiots" (FC25), among other epithets.

Table 3 details the full array of sobriquets FDR deployed in his Fireside Chats.[47] It should further be noted that these appellations were all directed against FDR's domestic opponents, and not to Hitler or some other universally hated (and easily denigrated) opponent.[48] And these were not exactly defenseless victims. At least one group, the print media—the "typewriter strategists"—made occasional efforts to retaliate. Note, however, that even they were at times enrapt by the illusion of intimacy.[49]

TABLE 3: FDR'S NAME-CALLING

FC3	"a few selfish men"
FC4	"money-changers," "prophets of evil," "big chiselers," "petty chiselers"
FC5	"Plausible self-seekers," "theoretical die-hards," "doubting Thomases," "chiselers," "timid people," "prophets of calamity"
FC6	"reactionary lawyers," "political editors"
FC7	"chiselers," "cynical men"
FC12	"calamity-howling executive," "Copperheads," "'yes, but' liberals"
FC13	"enemies of American peace"
FC14	"calamity howlers," "war millionaires," "Trojan Horse," "Fifth Column," "Spies, saboteurs and traitors," "undiluted poison"
FC15	Hitler's "secret emissaries," "trouble breeders," "defeatists," "bottlenecks"
FC16	"obstructionist organization," Hitler's "dupes among us," "hair-splitters"
FC18	"fifth columnists," "selfish men, jealous men, fearful men," "rumor-mongers," "poison peddlars," "summer soldier," "sunshine patriot"
FC19	"self-styled experts," "bogus patriots," "noisy traitors," "betrayers of America," "betrayers of Christianity," "would be dictators"

FC21   "typewriter strategists"
FC25   "cheerful idiots"
FC27   "amateur strategists"

Here, then, is the cumulative case against the claim that the Fireside Chats were an intimate genre. In this section on FDR's use of declamation, we confronted graphic evidence of the hostility in the Fireside Chats that has escaped many analyses, and argued that to describe the chats as "intimate," by any of our definitions, is to accept an innocuous connotation of the genre that seems to fly in the face of the textual evidence. Previously, our keyword analysis (principally) rejected one use of the word *intimate* by showing that the chats were not about a confession of FDR's inmost thoughts (in fact, they were focused entirely on the serious matters of government that did not lend themselves to such a personal exchange); the readability analysis revealed that FDR really did not make a notable effort, when compared to the other rhetorical genres, to speak the language of *le peuple* (in fact, he sustained his patrician authority to lead by an eloquent admixture of the colloquial with the arcane); the categorical analysis suggested that FDR did not make sustained efforts to ingratiate himself to his audience (in fact, the comparative genre statistics reveal not only that FDR consistently eschewed rhetorical terms of endearment, but that he minced no words in his phlegmatic assessments of the national condition). The accumulated evidence of this and the previous section strongly suggests that the burden of proof should significantly shift to those who would continue to defend the Fireside Chats as an intimate rhetorical genre.

Misreading the Fire

If the Fireside Chats contained more fire than has previously been supposed, we are left with a curious question. How was the illusion of intimacy created and sustained? Why, in particular, has the fire in the Fireside Chats been overlooked?

One explanation will not work. Some might argue that the findings of this essay are unsurprising because the Fireside Chats were spoken in moments of crisis. The perception of intimacy, the objector will continue, is both real and understandable given the even harsher and more hostile tone that would normally be expected of crisis rhetoric. The objection, however, can be turned on its head. Why should we have lower standards for what counts as intimate in crisis rhetoric? It is precisely in moments of crisis that the people look to the president for comfort and succor. Nevertheless, the real weakness of this objection lies in the fact that some Fireside Chats were not delivered in moments of crisis. Or at least, the circumstances in which they were delivered were seldom more serious than those of any other speech delivered in the tumultuous 1930s and 1940s. For instance, the seventh Fireside Chat on April 28, 1935, occurred in relatively mundane circumstances. The *New*

York Times reports: "[T]here is little in it which everybody did not know before. Hence the expressions of wonder why he made the speech at this time."[50] The *Times* did not even bother to publish the full text of this Fireside Chat, which was the practice for every other chat before and after. In fact, of the 26 full texts of the Fireside Chats that the *Times* published after each broadcast, over half began on the front page of each edition.[51]

A better explanation lies in an error theory. It will now become clear why I have stressed the genre distinction between the Fireside Chats and the radio addresses. By considering the Fireside Chats as a distinct rhetorical genre, we can now see how some of the anger and urgency evident in the chats were a hangover from the days when the only way to address crowds was to shout and enunciate from a platform. In effect, it is precisely the conflation of the Fireside Chats and the radio addresses that has allowed the softer, intimate tone of the latter (as revealed in the keyword and categorical analyses above) to cancel out perceptions of the "fire" in the former. Understandably, the conflation has occurred because both genres were transmitted to the American public via the same medium. Contemporaries of FDR—those living "in these days of the marvels of the radio" (FC17)—saw first and foremost the difference between platform oratory and the Fireside Chats *qua* radio address. Presidential speechwriter Robert Sherwood writes:

> [T]he very fact of a "chat" was in itself surprising and immeasurably stimulating: traditionally, when a President spoke to the people, it was an "address," which might be intended as an exhortation, or an elaborate apologia, or a stern lecture. But Roosevelt spoke simply, casually, as a friend or relative, who had figured a way to prevent foreclosure of the mortgage.[52]

Those that were captivated by the new medium of radio were driven to accentuate the contrast between old-time platform rhetoric and radio rhetoric, and were therefore less inclined to see the Fireside Chats as an evolution rather than a transformation of old-time oratory. But the conclusion is clear: a shared medium cannot define a genre.

Of course, the illusion of intimacy was more powerful than that caused by the genre conflation of passive agents, since people did evidently think that the Fireside Chats were an intimate genre. Indeed, recognizing the distance between the content analytic indicators in the previous sections and popular perception of the Fireside Chats brings us to the heart of FDR's oratorical genius. Roosevelt's central role can be discerned from an examination of the quantity and nature of the public reaction letters received at the White House after each Fireside Chat. Many people felt so personally touched by the president's words that they felt compelled to write to him to say:

Having just heard your most loving, clear voice . . . I cannot but help to try and express my feeling;

I cannot resist the impulse to tell you that . . . ;

it is indeed a strange impulse that came over me to write to you, because I assure you it is the first one I have ever written to a president in my life;

this is the first time in many years I have been moved to write to a man in public life;

I have voted since 1896 and have never before felt the urge to give expression to my feelings;

I cannot refrain from writing to tell you of my and my family's deep emotions;

Immediately at the conclusion of the radio address, to which I have just listened, I am impelled to drop you a line in long-hand to tell you how thrilled I was. [53]

It is evident that the writers of these letters had taken little notice of the vitriol in the Fireside Chats. More accurately, they did not think that any of it was directed at them. Roosevelt, the "sphinx," was able to convey this impression by identifying his opponents as a minority on one hand, and by scrupulously affiliating himself with everyone else on the other. The latter he most distinguishingly achieved via clever and painstaking use of salutation. All of FDR's Fireside Chats began with some variant of "My Friends." In fact, the importance Roosevelt placed in these salutations is revealed by the fact that when the words did not appear on the final reading copies of his speeches, he often inserted the words *in his own hand.*[54]

By these salutations, FDR convinced his audience that the objects of his fulminations were selfish minorities standing outside of his true circle of "friends" to whom he was really speaking. Roosevelt made this distinction even clearer in the text of his chats. He marginalized his opponents by consistently characterizing them as a selfish and obdurate minority; for instance:

a few of them who might thwart this great common purpose by seeking selfish advantage (FC3);

a selfish minority . . . will always continue to think of themselves first (FC5);

those, fortunately few in number, who are frightened by boldness and cowed by the necessity for making decisions (FC6);

the few who seek to confuse . . . (FC7);

that small minority which . . . is always eager to resume its control over the Government of the United States (FC12);

There are some among us who are persuaded by minority groups that we could maintain our physical safety by retiring within our continental boundaries (FC14);

the attitude of the small minority who want to see no evil and hear no evil (FC15);

a few people . . . will tell our people that we are safe once more (FC21).

Because a little mudslinging against one's enemies among "friends" is entirely appropriate, and even an occasion for bonding, FDR's declamations against his enemies seldom came back to haunt him. In this way, the majority of FDR's audiences remained powerfully inoculated against the fire in these chats.

CONCLUSION

It is fitting that the oft-noted Janus-like quality of FDR reveals itself even in his Fireside Chats. FDR's masterful admixture of intimacy and declamation in the Fireside Chats suggests, perhaps, that a more suitable subtitle to James MacGregor Burns's biography of FDR should read: "The Lion and the Lamb." As Pascal once said, if there is any art at all in politics, the greatest of them all must be the art that conceals art. In these Fireside Chats, FDR was able to project both strength and meekness—that was his cunning. We do not know if the strategy of the lion and the lamb will work for all time and all purposes, but we do know that it worked for Franklin Roosevelt in his Fireside Chats.

As we become cognizant of the illusion of intimacy that shrouds the Fireside Chats, we can note a few important implications that previously lay largely unexplored, and which can serve as areas for further research.

First, because we see more clearly now that the Fireside Chats were not merely exercises of explanation, but also of declamation, we can infer that the extent to which FDR used these speeches to decry his political opponents reveals the extent of opposition he faced. "An inflammatory rhetoric," David Green argues, "often indicates a defensive attitude, and Roosevelt's later rhetoric suggests that he himself came to perceive growing resistance to his policies and their ideological implications."[55] That Roosevelt's Fireside style harked back to the style of the famous stump speakers tells us something about the magnitude of his reconstruction effort and the opposition he faced during the tumultuous 1930s and 1940s. The interesting point of commonality between the classic stump speakers was that all were, at one time or another, failed presidential candidates—Bryan (in 1896), Theodore Roosevelt (in 1912), La Follette (in 1924) and Long (in 1936, had he not been assassinated the year before). All of them felt excluded from the political mainstream (three were leaders of third-party movements), and all, therefore, felt the need to castigate and declaim the system and its lieutenants with especial vitriol. The contrast to Franklin Roosevelt is illuminating. Here was a man who was a veritable linchpin of the system, at the center of the innermost circle of government, and yet, at least in his Fireside Chats, he exhibited the same signature style of the stump speakers. It seems clear that Roosevelt in confronting the mammoth challenges of leadership of his time felt the same feelings of inhibition, indignation, and reaction that motivated these other men.

Second, the characterization of the Fireside Chats as an intimate genre has led to conclusions that intimacy alone explained their success. That we now strongly

suspect that this conclusion is not accurate may call for a new assessment of what makes for persuasive presidential rhetoric. At the very least, the present study shows that FDR did not hesitate to verbally abuse and denigrate his political opponents, and he also did not shy away from mentioning and explaining the harsh realities that the American people had to confront and overcome. Much of contemporary presidential rhetoric—Reagan and Clinton come to mind—has eschewed both, and in so doing has come much closer to our textbook understanding of "intimacy." If, as William Leuchtenburg argues, modern presidents continue to live in the shadow of FDR, then the contrast between the perceived and celebrated intimacy of the Fireside Chats and that of contemporary presidential rhetoric becomes particularly stark, and leaves possible the explanation that the illusion of intimacy has encouraged an inaccurate comparison and/or imitation of Franklin Roosevelt's oratorical style. This essay suggests that it might be hasty to argue that the casual, conversational, Reaganesque rhetoric of the post-television era took its cue from Roosevelt's Fireside Chats.

Finally, we now have some reason to doubt the prevailing sentiment that radio radically transformed the audience of the political speaker and the nature of presidential persuasion.[56] The keyword and categorical analyses above reveal that, ironically, FDR's Fireside Chats were in fact closer in content and tone to the early-twentieth-century orations than even his public addresses. Radio (technological change) was not responsible for the mollification of presidential rhetoric: on the one hand, FDR's public addresses, which were not broadcast on radio but delivered in person in contexts not unlike those of early-twentieth-century stump speeches, were less castigatory and more intimate than the Fireside Chats; on the other, FDR's Fireside Chats, even though they were broadcast on radio and subject to the alleged imperatives of the medium, nevertheless held on to the fiery elements of platform rhetoric. That is to say, contrary to conventional wisdom, the medium did not become the message. Even as a demi-Atlas among presidents, Franklin Roosevelt was, like all great men, a product of his times. As it turns out, FDR did not inaugurate a new era of "modern" presidential rhetoric with his Fireside Chats; rather, the chats instantiate yet another stage in the evolution of presidential oratory.

NOTES

1. Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), 219.

2. Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt as World Leader: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered Before the University of Oxford on 16 May 1995* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 11–12; John H. Sharon, "The Psychology of the Fireside Chat" (B.A. thesis, Princeton University, 1949), 192.

3. Franklin D. Roosevelt and Samuel Irving Rosenman, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt,* vol. 1 (New York: Russell and Russell, 1969), 60. Henceforth, the shorthand "*Public Papers*" will be used to refer to these volumes.

4. Waldo Braden and Earnest Brandenburg, "Roosevelt's Fireside Chats," *Speech Monographs* 22 (1955): 293.

5. Sharon, "The Psychology of the Fireside Chat," 103.

6. Sidney Milkis and Michael Nelson, *The American Presidency: Origins and Development* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1994), 312, n 17.

7. Sharon, "The Psychology of the Fireside Chat," 106.

8. James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1956), 205.

9. Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Age of Roosevelt* (London: Heinemann, 1957), 2: 541.

10. Patrick Maney, *The Roosevelt Presence: The Life and Legacy of FDR* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 72.

11. Ron Briley, "Don't Let Hitler (or the Depression) Kill Baseball: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the National Pastime, 1932–1945," in *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Shaping of American Political Culture,* ed. Nancy B. Young, William D. Pederson, and Byron W. Daynes (London: M. E. Sharpe, 2001), 122.

12. *The Oxford English Dictionary,* prepared by J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

13. It should be noted that it is least likely that definition A captures the way in which "intimacy" has been used to describe the Fireside Chats. But we must consider it—because we cannot rule it out *a priori*—if only to establish its inapplicability. Definitions B and C are only very subtly different, and these differences are mostly in degree. C defines "intimacy" in terms of familiarity without presupposing association. So it can be said that FDR inspires intimacy as association when he speaks the language of "you and I" to engender feelings of oneness with his audience (for example, FC10); he inspires intimacy as familiarity when he invokes the rhetorical ethos of "you who know me" (for example, FC9) to engender rapport with his audience.

14. Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978); Carl R. Burgchardt, *Robert M. La Follette, Sr.: The Voice of Conscience* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992).

15. Halford R. Ryan, *Franklin D. Roosevelt's Rhetorical Presidency* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 161.

16. Elvin T. Lim, "Five Trends in Presidential Rhetoric: An Analysis of Rhetoric from George Washington to Bill Clinton," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 32 (2002): 330.

17. Ryan, *Franklin D. Roosevelt's Rhetorical Presidency,* 32.

18. Charles Beard, "Roosevelt's Place in History," in *Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Profile,* ed. William E. Leuchtenburg (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 3.

19. Kenneth Yielding and Paul Carlson, *Ah That Voice: The Fireside Chats of Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (Odessa, Tex.: The John Ben Sheppard Jr. Library of the Presidents, 1974); Russell D. Buhite and David W. Levy, *FDR's Fireside Chats* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992).

20. Sharon's seminal study of the chats concentrated on three; Braden and Brandenburg, five; Braden, eleven; and Ryfe, eight. See Sharon, "The Psychology of the Fireside Chat"; Braden and Brandenburg, "Roosevelt's Fireside Chats"; David M. Ryfe, "Franklin Roosevelt and the Fireside Chats," *Journal of Communication* 49 (1999): 81–103.

21. Under the editorship of Samuel Rosenman, the 13 volumes of FDR's *Public Papers* is the official and most comprehensive record of FDR's public rhetoric. The record is not exhaustive, but it does contain "the more significant written and oral utterances of the Chief Executive during this period." (See Roosevelt, *Public Papers,* 6: xviii.) Accordingly, each of the items in the *Public Papers* was categorized into 12 discrete categories that emerge from the labeling system as used in the *Public Papers.*

The miscellaneous category contains telephone conversations, joint statements, and congratulations.

22. Though in the preface of his thesis, Sharon noted that his list of Fireside Chats was "incomplete." See Sharon, "The Psychology of the Fireside Chat," iv.

23. Braden and Brandenburg, "Roosevelt's Fireside Chats." The authors also take their number from the *Public Papers*, but include the radio address on "Requesting Cooperation in the Taking of the Unemployment Census" on November 14, 1937, as a Fireside Chat. In a footnote on p. 291, they quote an interview with John Sharon (author of "The Psychology of the Fireside Chat" [1949]), who in turn quotes the editors of the *Public Papers* as explaining that they "made an oversight." This explanation seems ad hoc because it could be as easily applied to many radio addresses that were not, initially, designated as Fireside Chats, but would have had an equal claim to having their statuses so elevated. The radio address announcing a state of "Unlimited National Emergency" on May 27, 1941, and the radio address summarizing the President's State of the Union on January 6, 1945, are examples of such prime contenders whose exclusion from the Fireside genre makes the inclusion of the address of November 14, 1937, seem arbitrary. The same general argument applies to the counts suggested by Ryan, Buhite and Levy, and Ryfe. Since there is no compelling reason to suspect the accuracy of the *Public Papers*, I have chosen to abide by its original genre specifications.

24. Ryan, *Franklin D. Roosevelt's Rhetorical Presidency.*

25. Buhite and Levy, *FDR's Fireside Chats.*

26. Ryfe, "Franklin Roosevelt and the Fireside Chats."

27. As a matter of consistency, I have chosen in all cases to use the version of the texts as recorded in the *Public Papers*. There is a minor drawback in this decision, because the *Papers* reflect only the official prepared versions of speeches and not the extemporaneous changes that the president sometimes made when making a speech. However, such discrepancies (which become statistically insignificant in quantitative analysis) were not deemed sufficient to warrant recourse to other less authoritative compilations.

28. Ryan, *Franklin D. Roosevelt's Rhetorical Presidency,* 28.

29. See for instance, the first draft of the 14th FC, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (FDRL), President's Personal File (PPF) Speeches, box 51 (1283).

30. FDRL, OF 136 Radio, box 5, letter addressed to "Mrs. Baker."

31. Yielding and Carlson, *Ah That Voice: The Fireside Chats of Franklin Delano Roosevelt,* xiii.

32. FDR, quoted in Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt as World Leader,* 333.

33. It should also be said that the radio industry implicitly recognized the genre distinction when it defined the Fireside Chat as a nonpolitical report on the state of the nation. This criterion was used to decide when stations would or would not grant the president's request to preempt regular broadcasting. Unlike some radio addresses that contained political or partisan messages, the Fireside Chats fell within the public events broadcast classification and were not subject to fees.

34. Waldo Braden, "The Roosevelt Wartime Fireside Chats: A Rhetorical Study of Strategy and Tactics," *The Presidency and National Security Policy Proceedings* 5 (1984): 132.

35. One benefit of keyword analysis over categorical analysis is that the keywords emerge "naturally" from the analysis. No potentially artificial categories have been applied to discriminate the texts. Instead, this method allows us to detect fairly coherent and naturally emerging keyword clusters that distinguish the Fireside Chats and radio addresses.

36. And these were the very topics that predominated in another genre, the president's public addresses. We will return to this interesting pattern in my conclusion. For the moment, it is sufficient to note

that the content of the Fireside Chats was closer to that of the messages to Congress than to the more informal, personal, lighthearted content of the radio addresses and public addresses even though intuition would normally suggest just the opposite.

37. Burns, *Roosevelt,* 168; John Thomas Flynn, *The Roosevelt Myth* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1948), 14.

38. Samuel Irving Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Era of the New Deal* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 92; B. D. Zevin, ed., *Nothing to Fear* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1946), 274.

39. Raymond Moley, *After Seven Years: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Era of the New Deal* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), 155.

40. For a discussion on the rationale behind the formula, see Rudolph Flesch, *The Art of Readable Writing* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949).

41. Applying the *t*-test to gauge the likelihood that these differences in scores could have occurred randomly, the *t*-statistic and accompanying probability values are, respectively, $t = -1.586$, $p = 0.120$ and $t = -4.623$, $p = 0.000$.

42. This figure is derived from the data compiled as per Appendix II. Scholars have argued that the intimacy of the Fireside Chats was facilitated by a languid pace of delivery of about one hundred words per minute. See Yielding and Carlson, *Ah That Voice: The Fireside Chats of Franklin Delano Roosevelt;* Betty H. Winfield, *FDR and the News Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

43. In the following section, I will actually quantify and compare the extent to which FDR used "big words" and hence unusual constructions. I will show that the Fireside Chats were not only not an accessible genre (as the Flesch scores above show), but that they also employed language that was awkward and unfamiliar.

44. See, respectively, Philip J. Stone, Dexter C. Dunphy, Marshall S. Smith, and Daniel M. Oglivie, *The General Inquirer: A Computer Approach to Content Analysis* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1966); Roderick P. Hart, *Campaign Talk* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

45. FDRL, PPF Speeches, box 51.

46. FDRL, PPF Speeches, box 66 (1414).

47. Since these are just names, Table 3 does not provide an exhaustive list of declamations made in the Fireside Chats. Many others took a longer, if a less catchy, form. Indeed, the ninth Fireside Chat, which warned against the "hardening of the judicial arteries," was a speech almost entirely devoted to criticizing the Supreme Court and its system of lifetime tenure for judges.

48. Against the Nazis his words were no less incendiary, but far more infrequent. FDR explained his own strategy: "We cannot bring about the downfall of Nazism by the use of long-range invective" (FC16). The obvious implication of these words and as revealed by FDR's actions is that FDR believed that short-range invective directed at his domestic critics *was* equal to the task of vitiating their cause. He was, for the most part, correct. In truth, FDR directed most of his verbal assaults to his domestic opponents. Only in three instances, noticeably in moments of grave crisis—during the banking crisis (FC1 and FC2) and after Pearl Harbor (FC17)—did FDR decline the opportunity to criticize his domestic critics.

49. See for instance (with my own italics): "As a whole, Mr. Roosevelt's latest radio appeal was highly successful both in conception and in delivery. He has an extraordinary skill in placing himself on easy and *intimate* terms with his listeners-in" (*New York Times,* July 26, 1933, 16); "The President's decision to outline again to the public in an *intimate,* informal manner his legislative program was believed to have been prompted by Congressional delays." (*New York Times,* April 28, 1935, 1).

50. "Mr. Roosevelt's Address," *New York Times,* April 30, 1935, 16.

51. To say that the chats were exemplars of crisis rhetoric is further to miss the point that the act of packaging or presenting a speech as such *is* a strategy of rhetoric. What is true is that FDR sought to make all of his chats and the conditions that necessitated them *sound* urgent. It is telling that he never used the word "crisis" in undisputed conditions of national emergency—not in his first Fireside Chat in the midst of the banking crisis, nor after Pearl Harbor in his 17th Fireside Chat. But it was in his most controversial Fireside Chat, the ninth (on the reorganisation of the Judiciary), that he repeatedly emphasized to the country that "We are at a crisis. . . . It is a quiet crisis." Hence, "crisis" may have been the circumstance that accompanied many a Fireside Chat, but each crisis was seldom only circumstantial, and very often constructed. To miss this point is to miss an important reason why the Fireside Chats have become the celebrated showpieces of FDR's oratorical legacy.

52. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins,* 42–43.

53. Dorothy Bushman to FDR, March 12, 1933, FDRL, PPF 200, box 8; J. W. Hornor to FDR, March 13, 1933, FDRL, PPF 200, box 9; Morgan Blake to FDR, March 12, 1933, FDRL, PPF 200, box 8; Frederic Drake to FDR, March 15, 1933, FDRL, PPF 200, box 9; A. C. Horn to FDR, March 13, 1933, FDRL, PPF 200, box 9; Thornton Oakley to FDR, May 8, 1933, FDRL, PPF 200, box 12; Joseph E. Davies to FDR, October 1, 1934, FDRL, PPF 200, box 18.

54. This occurred for the 11th ("My countrymen and my friends"), 12th ("My Friends"), 14th ("My Friends"), 18th ("My fellow Americans"), 19th ("My fellow Americans"), 20th ("My Friends"), 21st ("My fellow Americans"), 24th ("My fellow Americans"), and 25th ("My Friends") Fireside Chats. See respectively, FDRL, PPF Speeches, boxes 38 (1129), 39 (1138), 51 (1283), 66 (1414), 68 (1431), 67 (1419), 69 (1435), 74 (1481), 76 (1497).

55. David Green, *Shaping Political Consciousness: The Language of Politics in America from McKinley to Reagan* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), 125–26.

56. Richard J. Ellis, ed., *Speaking to the People: The Rhetorical Presidency in Historical Perspective* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998).

57. In 1973, Mass Communications, Inc. (MCI) released tape recordings of all but three of the Fireside Chats. As a result no records are available for FC3, FC4, and FC5.

	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	Total
Exec Order	38	17	20	2	5	2	2	4	23	19	13	4	0	149
Fireside Chat	4	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	4	4	2	0	27
Letter	29	48	58	46	66	59	38	28	16	26	20	22	6	462
Inaugural	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	4
Msg to Congr	15	26	19	7	2	11	26	23	23	10	15	7	6	203
Press Conf	13	14	11	10	17	23	19	19	28	25	24	17	3	223
Proclamation	11	7	6	3	6	4	11	9	4	3	1	0	0	65
Public Address	30	43	32	126	25	40	37	28	31	18	24	36	3	473
Radio Address	4	3	3	6	8	10	9	14	9	6	2	7	2	83
Statement	36	39	46	26	19	9	24	21	20	22	29	31	4	326
Veto	0	4	2	2	5	2	1	5	1	2	4	3	0	31
Miscellaneous	30	5	8	10	3	4	7	2	2	5	9	4	2	91
Total	210	207	205	238	184	165	174	154	159	139	144	132	26	2,137

APPENDIX II: LIST OF FDR's FIRESIDE CHATS

FC	Date	Title	Duration (min: sec)
1.	Sun., 3/12/33	On the Bank Crisis	13:42
2.	Sun., 5/7/33	Outlining the New Deal Program	22:42
3.	Mon., 7/24/33	On the Purposes and Foundations of the Recovery Program	NA[57]
4.	Sun., 10/22/33	On the Currency Situation	NA
5.	Thu., 6/28/34	Review of the Achievements of the third Congress	NA
6.	Sun., 9/20/34	On Moving Forward to Greater Freedom and Greater Security	27:20
7.	Sun., 4/28/35	On the Works Relief Program	28:08
8.	Sun., 9/6/36	On Drought Conditions	26:49
9.	Tue., 3/9/37	On the Reorganization of the Judiciary	35:28
10.	Tue., 10/12/37	On Legislation Recommended to the Extraordinary Session of the Congress	27:42
11.	Thu., 4/14/38	On Economic Conditions	40:42
12.	Fri., 6/24/38	On Party Primaries	29:02
13.	Sun., 9/3/39	On the European War	11:25
14.	Sun., 5/26/40	On National Defense	31:32
15.	Sun., 12/29/40	On National Security	36:53
16.	Thu., 9/11/41	On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas	28:33
17.	Tue., 12/9/41	On the Declaration of War with Japan	26:19
18.	Mon., 2/23/42	On Progress of the War	36:34
19.	Tue., 4/28/42	On Our National Economic Policy	32:42
20.	Mon., 9/1/42	On Inflation and Progress of the War	26:56
21.	Mon., 10/12/42	Report on the Home Front	29:25
22.	Sun., 5/2/43	On the Coal Crisis	21:06
23.	Wed., 7/28/43	On Progress of War and Plans for Peace	29:11
24.	Wed., 9/8/43	Opening Third War Loan Drive	12:38
25.	Fri., 12/24/43	On Teheran and Cairo Conferences	28:29
26.	Mon., 6/5/44	On the Fall of Rome	14:36
27.	Mon., 6/12/44	Opening Fifth War Loan Drive	13:02

Appendix III: Description of DICTION (D) and Harvard IV-4 (H) Categories

D *Familiar* Consists of a selected number of C. K. Ogden's "operation" words, which he calculates to be the most common words in the English language. Included are common prepositions (*across, over, through*), demonstrative pronouns (*this, that*) and interrogative pronouns (*who, what*), and a variety of particles, conjunctions and connectives (*a, for, so*). See C. K. Ogden, *Basic English: International Second Language* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968).

D *Satisfy* Terms associated with positive affective states (*cheerful, passionate, happiness*), with moments of undiminished joy (*thanks, smile, welcome*) and pleasurable diversion (*excited, fun, lucky*), or with moments of triumph (*celebrating, pride, auspicious*). Also included are words of nurturance: *healing, encourage, secure, relieved.*

H *virtue* Words indicating an assessment of moral approval or good fortune, especially from the perspective of middle-class society (*adorable, honest, generous, patient*).

D *Praise* Affirmations of some person, group, or abstract entity. Included are terms isolating important social qualities (*dear, delightful, witty*), physical qualities (*mighty, handsome, beautiful*), intellectual qualities (*shrewd, bright, vigilant, reasonable*), entrepreneurial qualities (*successful, conscientious, renowned*), and moral qualities (*faithful, good, noble*). All terms in this dictionary are adjectives.

D *Embell* A selective ratio of adjectives to verbs based on Boder's (1940) conception that heavy modification "slows down" a verbal passage by deemphasizing human and material action. Embellishment is a score derived from six DICTION variables with the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Praise} + \text{Blame} + 1}{\text{Present Concern} + \text{Past Concern} + 1}$$

See David Boder, "The Adjective/Verb Quotient: A Contribution to the Psychology of Language," *Psychology Record* 3 (1940): 310–43.

H *passive* This category reflects one of Charles Osgood's semantic differential findings regarding basic language universals; specifically, words indicating a passive orientation (*accept, conform, depend, request*). See Charles H. Osgood, W. H. May, and M. S. Miron, *Cross-Cultural Universals of Affective Meaning* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975).

H *hu* General references to humans, including roles (*farmer, leader, people, soldier*).

H *abs* Words reflecting tendency to use abstract vocabulary (*beauty, democracy, destiny, faith*).

H *pstv*   This category reflects one of Charles Osgood's semantic differential findings regarding basic language universals; specifically, words of positive outlook (*comfort, favor, happy, progress*).

D *Optimist*   Language endorsing some person, group, concept, or event or highlighting their positive entailments. This is a calculated score derived from six DICTION variables with the following formula:

[Praise + Satisfaction + Inspiration] - [Blame + Hardship + Denial].

H *ngtv*   This category reflects one of Charles Osgood's semantic differential findings regarding basic language universals; specifically, words of negative outlook (*adverse, disaster, miserable, sickness*).

D *Hardship*   This category contains words indicating natural disasters (*earthquake, starvation, tornado, pollution*), hostile actions (*killers, bankruptcy, enemies, vices*), and censurable human behavior (*infidelity, despots, betrayal*). It also includes unsavory political outcomes (*injustice, slavery, exploitation, rebellion*) as well as normal human fears (*grief, unemployment, died, apprehension*) and incapacities (*error, cop-outs, weakness*).

D *Concrete*   A large category possessing no thematic unity other than tangibility and materiality. Included are words representing sociological units (*peasants, African Americans, Catholics*), occupational groups (*carpenter, manufacturer, policewoman*), and political alignments (*Communists, ongressman, Europeans*). Also incorporated are physical structures (*courthouse, temple, store*), forms of diversion (*television, football, CD-ROM*), terms of accountancy (*mortgage, wages, finances*), and modes of transportation (*airplane, ship, bicycle*). In addition, the category includes body parts (*stomach, eyes, lips*), articles of clothing (*slacks, pants, shirt*), household animals (*cat, insects, horse*) and foodstuffs (*wine, grain, sugar*), and general elements of nature (*oil, silk, sand*).

D *Present*   A selective list of present-tense verbs extrapolated from C. K. Ogden's list of "general" and "picturable" terms, all of which occur with great frequency in standard American English. The dictionary is not topic-specific but points instead to general physical activity (*cough, taste, sing, take*), social operations (*canvass, touch, govern, meet*), and task performance (*make, cook, print, paint*).

H *affil*   This category reflects one of Charles Osgood's semantic differential findings regarding basic language universals; specifically, words indicating affiliation or supportiveness (*approve, collaborate, friend, neighbor*).

D *Aggress*   A category embracing human competition and forceful action. Its terms connote physical energy (*blast, crash, explode, collide*), social domination (*conquest, attacking, dictatorships, violation*), and goal-directedness (*crusade, commanded, challenging, overcome*). In addition, words associated with personal triumph (*mastered, rambunctious, pushy*),

excess human energy (*prod, poke, pound, shove*), disassembly (*dismantle, demolish, overturn, veto*) and resistance (*prevent, reduce, defend, curbed*) are included.

H	*hostile*	This category, a subset of *ngtv*, reflects one of Charles Osgood's semantic differential findings regarding basic language universals; specifically, words indicating an attitude or concern with hostility or aggressiveness (*accuse, conspiracy, malice, opponent*).
D	*Blame*	Terms designating social inappropriateness (*mean, naïve, sloppy, stupid*) as well as downright evil (*fascist, bloodthirsty, repugnant, malicious*) compose this dictionary. In addition, adjectives describing unfortunate circumstances (*bankrupt, rash, morbid, embarrassing*) or unplanned vicissitudes (*weary, nervous, painful, detrimental*) are included. The category also contains outright denigrations (*cruel, illegitimate, offensive, miserly*).
D	*Denial*	A category consisting of standard negative contractions (*aren't, shouldn't, don't*), negative functions words (*nor, not, nay*), and terms designating null sets (*nothing, nobody, none*).