Kandidatuppsats 15hp
Statsvetenskap

Bickering, Insults and Interruptions
Describing the US Presidential Election Debates
2016 using a Deliberative Democratic perspective.
Abstract

This essay studies the climate of discussion during the US Presidential election debates 2016 from a perspective of Deliberative democratic discussion criteria. It uses a statistical analysis to examine and describe the climate of discussion during the debates. The criteria are based on the theoretical work of James S. Fishkin and Robert C. Luskin, which closely points out five components/factors needed to get a healthy and reasonable climate of discussion. The essay suggests that the climate of discussion during the US elections has taken place on two different “battleground” (Outside and Inside formal debating forums). It further suggests that outside climate of discussion has been dominated by ugly tricks and “dirty talking” and the inside formal debating forums climate of discussion has been reasonable and healthy. The results of the analysis show that the US Presidential election debates have broken this pattern, mainly due to the republican presidential candidate Donald J. Trump.

Keywords
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1 Introduction

1.1 The general notion on the US Presidential Election 2016

Has sound and honourable political discussions ceased to exist in the United States? The US presidential election of 2016 has been described as one of the dirtiest in a long time.¹ The tone of the political debate has been focused on personal attacks against other candidates, verbal abuses and discrediting one’s opponents. The American political climate has been sliding into a polarized position during some years, something that comes into broad daylight during presidential elections. But difference in opinion should not inhibit constructive discussion. There are many ways to discuss and debate on matters in which two or more persons do not agree with each other. Most of us learn from an early age how to talk when discussing topics and subjects in which someone else disagrees with us. In an ideal society, everyone would learn this and never forget it. Unfortunately, that is not the case. But there are theories and practices to encourage such behaviour, trying to convert hostility and ignorance into constructive discussion and understanding. One of these practices are deliberative democracy.

Much of the blame concerning the last US presidential election has been put on republican candidate (now president) Donald J. Trump, the real estate mogul/Reality TV-star turned politician. He has attracted much attention, in part to his proposals and agenda, but also because of his personal style in speeches and interviews. This in turn, gave him a broad media attention and wider coverage than most other candidates during the primary and general elections.² By interrupting his opponents, adding small remarks when people speak and constantly being on the rhetorical offensive he attracted the full attention of the media. Countless experts and media personalities has discussed the climate of discussion during the debate, especially in combination with putting the focus on Donald trump. But one cannot restrain from asking the question “is this really the case?”. By “this” one means the notion that the last presidential election was uncommonly “dirty” in the sense of how the candidates spoke to one another. How could the climate of discussion during the US presidential election be described?

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² Cillizza, Chris. This Harvard study is a powerful indictment of the media's role in Donald Trump's rise. The Washington Post. June 14, 2016.
1.2 Deliberative Democracy and public political dialog
The concept of deliberative democracy is often connected to voters, opinion polls and the populous engaging in the democratic process through conversations and dialogs. Coming to an agreement and understanding the other is vital for deliberative democratic structures to work. According to James Fishkin and Robert Luskin, two senior theorists in the area, deliberative democracy and its operational requisites can be narrowed down into five distinct factors. Arguments used in a conversation, discussion or debate should be informed/informative, balanced, refrained from contentiousness, substantive and comprehensive. It is according to proponents of deliberative democracy, that this kind of surrounding political and consultative climate brings good conditions for healthy democratic societies. However, as though focusing on the voting population is a valid approach, there should perhaps be other approaches as well. The foundation in deliberative democratic conversations is not confined to voters. It is in its core, a foundation to healthy political discussion, whether this might be between a focus group of citizens or the absolute top of political matters. This also includes the two political candidates in the 2016 United States presidential election.

The word “dialog” is often misunderstand as “a conversation between two agents”. That is not the case. “Dialog” according to the Oxford English dictionary is defined as:

“a conversation between two or more persons, in which opposing or contrasting views are imputed to the participants.”

Although one might not think about it, a dialog, as well as a debate, could and often do involve more than two participants. There might be two persons doing the bulk of the discussion, but in almost all debates there is a third party; the listeners. Deliberative democracy could as such involve both the speakers and the listeners of a political discussion. A resulting conclusion one could make of this fact is that one could examine the US presidential debates of 2016 in the eye of deliberative democratic ideals, specifically from the factors presented by Fishkin and Luskin.

4 Fishkin, James S. Luskin, Robert C. Experimenting with a democratic Ideal: Deliberative Polling and Public Opinion.
1.3 Presumptive scenarios

The climate of discussion during the presidential debates could probably be described in many different ways. That is why one might propose some scenarios that describes the climate. Therefore, the three most likely scenarios will be presented below.

The first scenario is basically that a closer look at the debates will show a normal and, according to Fishkin/Luskin, “good” climate of discussion. This would mean that the talk and media circulation around the debates are exaggerated and blown out of proportion.

The second scenario is that the climate of discussion is “bad”. This scenario could include two different variations. Scenario 2.1 is that the climate of discussion is “bad” largely due to one of the participants, which break the deliberative criteria on multiple occasions on each debate. Scenario 2.2 could be that the climate of discussion is “bad” due to both participants breaking the deliberative criteria on multiple occasions in each debate.
2 Theoretical Perspective

As deliberative democratic theory focuses primarily on how citizens interact in deliberation with each other (via pooling, discussion-groups etc.) most of deliberative democratic theory concerns this subject. However, deliberative democracy also features core arguments on what is a good political discussion. This study is intended to analyse the political discussion between the two main US presidential candidates of 2016, viewing the Presidential debates as “deliberative focus groups” of sort. Therefore, most of the theoretical analysis will aim to explain what proponents of deliberative democracy finds to be a “healthy discussion” and thereby analyse the climate of discussion during the debates according to these criteria.

2.1 The foundation of Deliberative Democracy
Deliberative democracy is in its essence the fusion of political equality and deliberation. It focusses on consensus decision-making, discussion and finding an understanding of one’s opponents arguments to release the political climate from misunderstandings. The two parts of deliberative democracy, seen above, essentially proposes two separate ideas which then is merged into the concept of deliberative democracy. The part of deliberative democracy focusing on political equality has many links and similarities to those of participatory democracy and direct democracy, although deliberative democracy is both compatible within representative democracy and direct democracy. Where participatory democracy stresses active action (participation) deliberative democracy stresses dialog and discussion. As proponents of participatory democracy/direct democracy wants an equal participation over the voting populous, proponents of deliberative democracy want an equal deliberation and discussion over the voting populous. By political equality, proponents of deliberative theory also includes that each voice and opinion within a debate or discussion should be heard and taken into consideration.

- By “political equality” we mean equal consideration of everyone’s preferences, where ‘everyone’ refers to some relevant population or demos

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and ‘equal consideration’ means a process of equal counting so that everyone has the same ‘voting power’.

Due to this factor, deliberative democracy has had an overwhelming aim on focus groups and studies examining voting citizens engaging in collective discussions and the political process. However, as there must be a core definition on what is a good discussion, a view into the second part of deliberative democracy is needed.

The second part of deliberative democracy have the focus on actual discussion, dialog and decision-making practices. This includes exercising deliberation as a part of a discussion or debate, but also includes being the spectator/listener of one. Joshua Cohen stresses the distinction between deliberation and bargaining/market-type interactions when two or more agents basically “deal” with each other about a subject. Deliberation in this sense become a sort of “weighing” of arguments against each other, between two or more agents in its most ideal sense. This view is applicable on political debates as those who take part should not haggle or deal with each other, they ought to reveal their view on certain problems and issues. From this perspective, it becomes possible to analyse the debates held during the US Presidential Election 2016 and to examine its climate of discussion.

To create a climate were political discussion can flourish on equal terms, proponents of deliberative theory have tried to distinguish key elements of a healthy climate of discussion. James S. Fishkin and Robert C. Luskin propose five distinctive criteria on which this is possible, whereas Joshua Cohen have a more complex discussion on how a deliberative discussion should work. These could however also be narrowed down to some key principles.

2.2 Deliberative democratic practices as discussions and debates
Beginning with Fishkins and Luskin, they as mentioned present their criteria in a list without any particular order of importance. These are as follows:

Informed (informative): Any argument put forward during a debate or discussion should be supported by accurate facts and claims. These should also be appropriate and

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8 Fishkin, James S. Luskin, Robert C. Experimenting with a democratic Ideal: Deliberative Polling and Public Opinion.
reasonable as to the subject which is discussed. The reason for this is to not create any confusion, vagueness or diversion into other subject which lies outside the subject matter discussed.\textsuperscript{10}

**Balanced:** Arguments put forward should be met with counter-arguments if present. Both sides within a discussion should get the same amount of time or the proper time needed to elaborate on their point of view in a question.\textsuperscript{11}

**Conscientious:** Those engaging in the discussion should talk at their given turn, and listen when others speak with civility and respect. Put forward clearly, participant should not interrupt, disturb or dismiss ones’ opponents within others speaking time.\textsuperscript{12}

**Substantive:** Any arguments put forward during a discussion or debate should be “weighed” and considered exclusively by their merits and contextual content. They should therefore not be considered or judged by how they are made or who is making them.\textsuperscript{13}

**Comprehensive:** All opinions within the debated subject held by a significant portion of the public should be lifted if possible or at least receive attention. Fishkin and Luskin does not explicitly explain what “a significant portion” of the public should contain.

Seen above, the first four conditions which Fishkins and Luskin outline to be a good deliberative discussion are in very straight forward and simple to understand. The fifth one is a bit harder to apply as there is a judgement needed to be done. It is uncertain what is meant by “a significant portion” of the population as there is no exact number or quantity that could be applied to that statement. However, the general idea of the criteria is still relevant and applicable to the study. As the subject of this study is to examine a debate containing only two persons, both candidates could agree on certain issues although portions of the public do not. In these cases, it is common for the moderator to present other views (held by the public) and ask question on their behalf.\textsuperscript{14}

Fishkins and Luskin’s criteria could be compared to the arguments put forward by Cohen. Cohen argues strongly on advocating rational arguments and facts during a

\textsuperscript{10} Fishkin, James S. Luskin, Robert C. Experimenting with a democratic Ideal: Deliberative Polling and Public Opinion.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Fishkin, James S. Luskin, Robert C. Experimenting with a democratic Ideal: Deliberative Polling and Public Opinion.
discussion. He also has a general notion that deliberation and debates should focus on the “common good”, an argument we will return to later in this chapter. His key themes could be narrowed down to some general principals.

- Those who participate in a debate (speaking or listening) should only counter arguments based on their actual “weight” in a rational context. Participants are thusly accountable for stating reasons behind their suggestions and policies (or counter-arguments), which will be pre-empted by their opponents (or by listeners) according to their factual status.¹⁵
- Any argument should be allowed to be questioned, and given the proper time/spotlight to be addressed as long as it follows the above-mentioned principals. Discussions should essentially be balanced in the time given to each speaker, giving all participants an equal opportunity to express and expand their views on the subject.¹⁶
- Participants in a discussion should respect each other’s views, let the each other speak on their given time and not interrupt each other in mid-sentence.¹⁷

As one can clearly see, both Fishkin, Luskin and Cohen have different ways to express the same core meaning in what is considered a good discussion. It is easy to see the similarities from Fishkin/Luskin’s five criteria in Cohens general principals.

2.3 Why use a deliberative democratic perspective?
As deliberative democratic theory has been target for some critique in academic discussion, some common objections will be presented. As this study contains an analysis from the ideal status of a deliberative discussion, the following points will be directed towards deliberative democracy as an ideal.
One of the major points of critique on deliberative democracy is the objection to the idea of a “common good” which both Fishkin, Luskin and Cohen attribute as the importance of a deliberative democratic perspective and practise. It goes together with the perception of “justice” which is often based in John Rawls two principals of justice

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¹⁶ Ibid.
¹⁷ Ibid.
(justice as fairness). Critics of deliberative democracy emphasise the relative failure to pinpoint an objective perspective of a “common good” and “justice”. This is an old philosophical discussion which continues onto this day. Basic critique of this could be found in Robert Nozick Anarchy, State and Utopia which is partly a response to Rawls A Theory of Justice. The critique is based on the classical feud between positive contra negative freedom where Nozick holds that persons are ends in themselves, needing next to no intervention from institutionalized checks to achieve political equality. Rawls on the other hand mean that people (and so forth, certain minority groups etc.) have different abilities to get their voice heard and influence the political climate. Institutionalized checks and balances, such as deliberative democratic practices, is therefore needed to give everyone the same level of abilities. Arguments concerning the “common good” are in its principal core an argument between proponents of utilitarianism and its critics. What constitutes a “common good” is often hard define with an objective criteria and definition.

One would therefore make it clear that deliberative democracy is not used as a normative perspective, but as an operational one. Refraining from taking a stand in the above mentioned philosophical arguing, deliberative democratic theory has a somewhat precise definition of what constitutes a “healthy climate of political discussion”. This study therefore use it as something to “measure” real debates and discussion against.

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3 Purpose

The main purpose of this study is to examine the climate of discussion regarding the US Presidential election of 2016. Consensus, rationality and the willingness to compromise has been important characteristics and tolls for American presidents and politicians. This is a natural development and condition for a de-facto two-party system to work efficiently. As the United States is a country were the rhetorical tradition spans over a century, and rational discussion in the eyes of the public has been a principal factor during elections, it is therefore reasonable to examine the current state of the rational discussion during the past presidential election. One could also argue that a theory such as deliberative democracy, which applies to the voters and citizens of a state, should be applied to its leaders. The prime reason of purpose could be formulated thusly: Deliberative democracy uses a perspective that examines and proposes a healthy discussion within a political climate. It is of vital importance that a democracy can involve its citizens in the political process. To achieve this, political discussions should for example be structured around the five different criteria mentioned above by Fishkins and Luskin. But one of the requisites for achieving these goals in themselves is that those who wield power start following them. As the political frontrunners of a state, a person acting as or with the ambitions to act as president of the United States should show as an example to other political actors and citizens in the state. By this, these persons set the tone and norm by which others adhere and adapt their behaviour to. Regarding the above-mentioned explanation behind this study, the purpose ought to be clear. Using this line of thought, an examination of the last US presidential election is an effective way to examine if the candidates for the top political position in the United States actually are good role-models in this case. The aim and purpose of the study is thusly to describe the climate fo discussion of the three televised debates in depth from a deliberatively democratic perspective.
4 Scientific problem and question

As the topic is very recent (US Presidential election 2016), few studies have been done on the debates analysed in this study. However, this is also one of the reasons to analyse them, giving a descriptive view of the climate of discussion. Although many studies on deliberative democratic practises in focus groups have been done, the combination of using deliberative democratic theory and analysing political leaders in debates is new. Therefore: a good thorough analysis of the subject should focus on a detailed description. Hence a relevant formulation of problem would be:

“Using a deliberative democratic perspective, how could the climate of discussion between the two main candidates during the US Presidential election debates 2016 be described?”

To analyse this, transcripts of the three televised debates between Donald J. Trump and Hillary Rodham Clinton will be used as these are the only times during the election they go face to face against each other. The occasions are also very formal, giving them a grade of seriousness.
5 Method and materials

5.1 Method and operationalisation
The method used during the study is primarily a statistical analysis which will analyse transcript versions of the three televised debates with Donald J. Trump and Hillary Rodham Clinton. To get a good description of these debates, quantitative data defined and specified according to what is relevant from a deliberative perspective is used throughout all three debates. More precisely, the statistical analysis is used to first gather quantitative material such as time spent talking during the debate, number of personal attacks etc. The data is later interpreted to get a qualitative view which is also needed to elaborately describe events and factors during the debates. The method involves analysing the debates for segments when each criterion of the Fishkin/Luskin deliberative discussion criteria is fulfilled, or otherwise is not present. As not only periods of time are relevant for the analysis, different remarks, interruptions and phrases/words will also be accounted for and analysed. The two participants (Trump and Clinton) will be accounted for separately, as they can behave in different ways. The five criteria will be analysed in the following way:

- The “informed” criterion are analysed by counting the times a participant either stays on the subject given by the moderator, or changes subject. This criterion will also be checked against further data on whether the participants’ claims are correct or not.

- The “Balanced” criterion are analysed through simply counting the times one of the participants counters an argument with opposing arguments instead of insults, or vice versa. Both participants will also be clocked to see if there is an equal distribution in speaking time.

- The “Conscientiousness” criterion will simply consist of how many times each candidate interrupts his/her opponent while the other is speaking. An interruption is defined as the other participant breaking in on the other while talking. During for example longer monologs from one of the participants, more than one interruption might occur. If the interruption come with at least 15 seconds apart from each other, they will be counted as two separate ones. The time limit of 15 seconds is based on being the reasonable time to give a participant coming back with arguments which then could be interrupted again.
If each interruption happens below the limit of 15 seconds, it is counted as the “same” interruptive event.

- The “Substantive” criterion will be counted for whenever one of the participants makes a personal attack on the other character. Giving distinctive difference between the insults in the “balanced” Criterion and the personal attacks in the “Substantive” criterion, insults are attacks focused on political matters only, personal attacks are attacks on the participant’s personalities or characters.

- The fifth criterion perspective “comprehensiveness” is a bit harder to implement on the subject of these three debates. However, as it is still relevant, in the case of full agreement between the two participants it will be accounted for if (or if not) the moderator states the opposing view.

- Apart from these five index points, a sixth one will also be accounted for. Sometimes during debates, participants break several criteria and start talking at the same time. During these events, both candidates have interrupted the other and it is unclear on who should talk. To represent this, a sixth index will be used, the “Bickering index”. It will simply say how many times both candidates have broken at least one of the above mentioned criteria and engage in bickering which goes on for at least 15 seconds. The original criteria broken to come to this level will still be accounted for.

By following these five distinct criteria, analysing them as separate factors, it becomes easier to examine different elements of the debates in depth and to describe it in the perspective of deliberative democracy. It therefore follows the purpose and aim of the study. It should be further explained that some events in the debates might touch more than one of the criteria. For example, one of the participants might interrupt the other with an insult, touching both the “Balanced” and “Conscientiousness” criteria. In such a case, it will be counted as disrupting both criteria. Similar events might occur that interrupts for example both the “informed” and “substantive” criteria, in which both will be accounted for at the same time.

**5.2 Materials**
The materials used in the study is primarily the three transcript debates between the two presidential candidates. The first is taken from *The Washington Post* and the two later are taken from *Politico*. They all cover about 90 minutes in video-format, which is about 35-40 transcript pages. The reason to specifically use the debates as the main
empirical material comes down to it being the only time the two candidates meet face to face during the elective process. They are also done under formal conditions where specific questions are asked to both candidates at the same time, which then counter each other’s’ arguments and views directly. The televised debates are also watched by a significant portion of the US voters, with the first one being the most watched in history (84 million watching it live).\textsuperscript{20} Further material such as news articles, documentaries and statistical data is used to extend and complement the analysis. Data concerning the truthfulness and facts are gathered from Politifact.com, which is a U.S. based project operated by \textit{Tampa Bay Times}. Politifact.com won the Pulitzer price on national reporting in 2009 for their engagement in “fact-checking” prominent US political actors during the 2008 elections\textsuperscript{21}, sorting out if these tell the truth or not.

\textsuperscript{20} Stelter, Brian. \textit{Debate breaks record as most-watched in U.S. history}. CNNMoney. 27 September 2016.
6 Background

6.1 A historical perspective on discussion during previous US presidential elections
The United States as a nation, its constitution and its political norms was created in the first decades by prominent, well-educated men who belonged to the commercial and political elite. These men were accustomed to intellectual discussion both in verbal and written form. Notable persons who contributed in large to the creation of the United States political framework are Thomas Jefferson and James Hamilton. The discussions on whether the United States should be an industrial powerhouse or an agrarian “utopia of free men”, through for example *The Federalist Papers*, was in large dealt through vivid debates in both houses of congress and through written pamphlets and literary works outside the newly institutionalised political arena, which back the was experimentally new and under progress of development.22 As the basic political foundation of the state had developed through the first two decades, presidential elections became much more open to the public. The democratic elements necessitated a general participation from the public to take informed decisions when voting for members of congress and presidents. Here lies one of the fundamental reasons to why a deliberative democratic analysis of the United States general elections is needed. If a democratic process should be successful, the voting populous need informed opinions on political matters. Prominent well-educated men of power formed such opinions through their social class and high level of education. The general public lacked this feature on most occasions. Therefore, public discussion and speaking involving the political elite and candidates became a central feature of the elective processes.

6.2 Historical examples of political debates in US presidential elections
As rhetorical expertise and popular image during debates and speeches has been a keystone in US politics for almost two centuries,23 it is crucial to understand some examples on the matter. Many decisive and notable presidential elections throughout history has been determined outcomes due to this factor. However, most of these elections has also been the battleground for controversies and “foul play” between the

often two main campaigns. Technology has changed how these public speeches and debates have taken place. As suffrage reforms was introduced and expanded, political candidates had to go out in the country to convince people to cast their vote for them. From the early 1800’s and onwards, this was done by taking a train across pre-picked town and communities, speaking from the small balcony at the back-cart. Hence, adept rhetorical skills have been needed since the early days of American presidential elections. A pick of examples is briefly touched on below:

**6.3 Jackson vs Adams**
During Jackson vs Adams 1828, Jackson portrayed himself as the champion of the common man, much like Donald Trump portrayed himself during present times. The election was noted for its harsh tone and personal attacks in paper media, being the prime source of information during the era. The Adams camp accused Jackson of being a ruthless general, killing his own soldiers, a slave trader and of committing adultery since his wife had not divorced her old husband when they became a couple. Jacksons on the other hand, accused Adams of being an elitist whom did not care for ordinary people.

**6.4 Abraham Lincoln**
Abraham Lincoln won the presidential office both in 1860 and 1864 with his brilliance in public speaking, also holding the northern union together during wartimes. Although his win in 1860 resulted in the civil war, his rallying for the abolitionists cause could be one of the strong reasons to why the south seceded as an effect to his victory. The general tone of discussion that spurred during the elections were hard and rough. It should be mentioned that no “general public” debates were held during the presidential race, but Lincoln and Douglas (the later northern democrat candidate in the 1860 election) both came from Illinois. During their race for the senate, they held seven debates in the state of Illinois, one in each voting district, something very new for the time. Countless insults and racist remarks were used although, mostly concerning emancipation and slavery. Debates were though held on the senate floor between the

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party candidates. The atmosphere during and in the aftermath of the election was so hostile that on his way his inauguration, Lincoln had to travel in disguise to avoid assassination attempts. As we know, he succeeded that time, although he 5 years later fell victim to the same cause.

6.5 Kennedy vs Nixon

One of the most important presidential elections on the matter is Kennedy vs Nixon in 1960. This could be considered the birth of modern political debates, as it was the first to contain televised debates (on four separate occasions) which was also broadcasted on radio. A long-standing view of the debates is that Kennedy ultimately won the election in part due to his performance in the first of these debates, or rather that Nixon’s dull performance cost him the victory. Most of those who saw the debate on television claimed that Kennedy won the debate, whilst many of those who followed it on radio claimed that Nixon won it. Those who followed it via television outnumbered those who followed it by radio. This belief has been questioned during the years, but whether it is true or not, the impact of the debates on the voters tuning in to it is a fact. This tradition of voters expecting presidential candidates to go forth onto TV during debates stuck, and even spread into the primary rounds of the two main parties. American voters nowadays not only expect their political representatives to declare their policies via public speeches, but also want them to defend their policies in direct confrontation against their opponents. This has in time, created a high interest in public debates which many voters follow and helps them to make up their mind.

The election campaign also saw some personal attacks and dirty campaigning as well. Most of these accusations came from the Nixon campaign, questioning Kennedy's general health as he suffered from a rare and dangerous disease (colitis) making his general health level fluctuate from time to time. The most notable attack on Kennedy's personal life was regarding his religious beliefs. The Kennedy family was catholic, which no other president had ever been in the history of the United States. Conservative protestants feared that having a roman catholic as president could ultimately mean having a president taking orders from the Vatican and the pope. Kennedy succeed

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though in calming the situation down by attending a conference in which protestant minister could ask whatever question they wanted to him. It went on for 90 minutes during which Kennedy had formally declare that he had no intention to restrict the rights of any religious group in the United States. 33

6.6 Barrack Obama
Jumping a few years ahead, it is of worth to also comment on the presidential election of 2012 between Barrack Obama and Mitt Romney as it was the election preceding the one in 2016. The election of 2012 of course had televised debates, which was widely popular and turned much attention. However, the tone of the debate seemed to have gotten harder than most recent years, with both camps trying to blemish one’s opponent on each occasion that presented itself. The core of the debates was still focused on actual policies though.

During the time preceding the election and after it as well, president Obama came under hard attack from conservative media. He was accused of being a Muslim, a socialist and of not being an American citizen thus not being allowed to become president. Obama was a free target to blemish and to openly mock. Many of these reactions was instigated by the Tea Party movement, which had gained a considerable power within the republican party and the conservative movement over the years. One of the key-controversies during the Obama presidency came from future president Donald Trump, who demanded that Obama should release his birth certificate, proving his American decent. 34

6.7 The climate of discussion during past US Presidential Elections
All the above mentioned former presidents are some of those who were remembered in the collective memory past their time in office. There are other examples from both primary and general elections that could be mentioned (F.D. Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, Clinton vs Bush 1992 etc.), but the above mentioned are those one deems most relevant for the topic and to get a view over ta long period of time. These elections and Presidential candidates/Presidents are remembered because of the strong public appeal, and the fact that they could connect to voters in speeches and debates in such a way that

people could understand them and what they proposed. All the above (one might exclude Jackson though) are also remembered for their strict reliance on rational discussion when debating against opponents. The art of connecting, affecting and winning voters through informed reasoning has thus been an important feature in American presidential elections. However, ever since the election of 1828, strategies such as down talking one’s opponent, fearmongering, personal attacks and general “dirty tactics” have been used during presidential elections. The “tone” of the elections has never really been fully truthful, honest and driven by reason and decency. But some distinctions should be made in this case. While in debates and speeches reason and rational discussion has often been the norm, the “dirty talking” has taken place outside the official battlegrounds of serious discussion. It has in practice and with few exceptions been two different battlegrounds. The personal attacks have also often come from other parts of the parties and campaigns, rather than from the political candidates themselves.

Concluding the background of United States Presidential elections, the question is not if it had been dominated by foul play or by rational discussion and reasoning. Both have co-existed in a symbiosis, but on two different arenas during the elections themselves. The primary political candidates have also almost always never attack one another directly in person, the attacks have come from other sources within the parties and the campaigns. This fact returns us to the question, has this changed? Is the norm of the “two battlegrounds” no longer present in climate of discussion during US presidential election?
7 Empirical Walkthrough

7.1 Analytic Scheme and operationalization
The empirical analysis consists of the three debates held with Donald J. Trump and Hillary Rodham Clinton as participants. As the three debates have different set-ups and themes, the different settings are presented before each debate. However, as described in 5.1, the operationalization scheme is based on the first four criteria presented by Fishkins and Luskin, with the added sixth (in this case fifth) factor of the “Bickering index”.

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<th>Hillary Clinton</th>
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<tr>
<td>Informed:</td>
<td>Stay:</td>
<td>Change:</td>
<td>Stay:</td>
<td>Change:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced:</td>
<td>Speak Time:</td>
<td>Argument:</td>
<td>Speak Time:</td>
<td>Argument:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insult:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Insult:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientious:</td>
<td>Interruptions:</td>
<td>Uttering without interruption:</td>
<td>Interruptions:</td>
<td>Uttering without Interruption:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive:</td>
<td>Personal attack:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal attack:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bickering Index:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the table above, the first four criteria are present at the left side together with “Bickering index”. Note that the fifth criterion in 5.1. (Comprehensive) is not present as it will only be commented on in case it appears. Each Criteria has its own column, presenting each index measured in the analysis.

**Uttering Total**: Measures the number of times each participant made an uttering in the debate. An uttering is defined as when the moderator asks a participant which answer it. Follow up questions are included if the subject is changed by the moderator, they are not included if the follow up question is on the same subject.

**Informed**: The “informed” criterion are analysed by counting the times a participant either stays on the subject given by the moderator, or changes subject.

**Balanced**: The “Balanced” criterion are analysed through simply counting the times one of the participants counters an argument with opposing arguments instead of insults,
or vice versa. Both participants will also be clocked to see if there is an equal distribution in speaking time.

**Conscientiousness:** The “Conscientiousness” criterion will simply consist of how many times each candidate interrupts his/her opponent while the other is speaking. An interruption is defined as the other participant breaking in on the other while talking. During for example longer monologs from one of the participants, more than one interruption might occur. If the interruption come with at least 15 seconds apart from each other, they will be counted as two separate ones. The time limit of 15 seconds is based it being the reasonable time to give a participant coming back with arguments which then could be interrupted again. If each interruption happens below the limit of 15 seconds, it is counted as the “same” interruptive event. The number of utterings one candidate have without interruption is also counted in this segment.

**Substantive:** The “Substantive” criterion will be counted for whenever one of the participants makes a personal attack on the other character. Giving distinctive difference between the insults in the “balanced” Criteria and the personal attacks in the “Substantive” criteria, insults are attacks focused on political matters only, personal attacks are attacks on the participant’s personalities or characters.

**Bickering index:** Sometimes during debates, both participants break several criteria and start talking at the same time for at least 15 seconds. During these events, both candidates have interrupted the other on and it is unclear on who should talk. To represent this, a sixth index is used, the “Bickering” index. It will simply say how many times both candidates have broken above mentioned criteria and engage in bickering which goes on for at least 15 seconds. The five original criteria broken to come to this level will still be accounted for. This index is simply shown in number of times this happened during the debate.

### 7.2 The First Presidential Debate September 26, 2016

The first presidential debate was held at Hofstra University in Hempstead, N.Y. September 26, 2016. The debate was sponsored by the Commission on Presidential Debates which also drafted the format and the rules for the debate. Moderator of the debate was Lester Holt, news anchor at NBC. The debate was divided into six segments and three subjects. Each segment was 15 minutes long as every subject was dealt with during 30 minutes. Each participant was asked a question, got two minutes to respond. After each two-minute response from each candidate, there were an open discussion on
the subject. The three subject of the evening was “Achieving prosperity” (National economy/trade, jobs etc.), “Americas direction” (Race, national identity etc.) and “Securing America” (National Security, the middle east, Cyber security etc.). The number of live national viewers via television number 84 million, the highest ever for a US presidential debate. The number excludes viewers watching it in public places (bars, offices, restaurants etc.) and those watching it online.

Starting with the analytic scheme, the results were as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Donald Trump</th>
<th>Uttering Total: 28</th>
<th>Hillary Clinton</th>
<th>Uttering Total: 23</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balanced:</td>
<td>Speak Time: 45 min 3 sec</td>
<td>Argument: 19</td>
<td>Insult: 9</td>
<td>Speak Time: 41 min 50 sec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientious:</td>
<td>Interruptions: 28</td>
<td>Uttering without interruption: 23</td>
<td>Interruptions: 5</td>
<td>Uttering without Interruption: 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive:</td>
<td>Personal attack: 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal attack: 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bickering Index:</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. First Presidential Debate

Comparing the total utterings and the speaking time of both candidates, Donald Trump both had a higher number of utterings and speaking time. Donald Trump simply got more opportunities to talk during the debate.

Both candidates did quite well on keeping to the subject most of the time, although we can see that Donald Trump had a higher tendency to switch subject (Donald: 6 times compared to Hillary: 3 times). All tough both candidates mostly stayed on the subject, the information they based their statements on during their utterings had a big divide in what could be considered “true” or “false”.

Using further information from *Politifact*, we could clearly see that Hillary Clinton’s statements could be considered “mostly true” or “true” while Donald Trump’s statements could be considered “mostly false” or “false” on 66% of occasions. Although both candidates used insult towards each other, Trump stick out with 9 insults instead of arguments during 28 utterings, almost a third of the total compared to Clintons 4 out of 23, which is alight above every sixth. An example of such an occasion is shown below:

(On fighting ISIS) TRUMP: “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.”


A common theme on the insults both candidates throw at each other is the fixation of trying to blemish the others experience and past achieving. This includes both insults

---

and personal attacks on the others character. The statement above (which is false factually) insinuates that Hillary Clinton has fought ISIS for a very long time but has failed due to her lack of leadership according to Trump, a point he also mentioned during the debate.

(On “America’s direction”) TRUMP: “But we have no leadership. And honestly, that starts with Secretary Clinton.”

- First Presidential Debate September 26, 2016.

Although Trump makes more insults than Clinton, she also tried to ridicule Trump in ways that could maybe be considered more “clean” or subtle, however maybe not as effective or cogent as Trumps Remarks. An example taken from the beginning of the debate (about achieving prosperity) Clinton uttered the following statement.

(On economic plans) CLINTON: “I call it trumped-up trickle-down, because that’s exactly what it would be.

- First Presidential Debate September 26, 2016.

The pattern went on during the whole debate, including statements such as:

(On Nuclear weapons) CLINTON: ” ... a man who can be provoked by a tweet should not have his fingers anywhere near the nuclear codes, as far as I think anyone with any sense about this should be concerned.”

- First Presidential Debate September 26, 2016.

Noting on the number of times the candidates interrupted each other, Trump interrupted Clinton on 28 separate occasions (with at least 15 seconds apart), while Clinton only interrupted Trump 5 times. The number shows that Clinton let Trump speak on 23 out of 28 utterings without interrupting him, while same figure for Trump against Clinton is 11 out of 23. This clearly shows Trumps aggressive tendency towards his opponent.

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40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
These attacks and interruptions the participants throw at each other comes together with a common theme, one which also was a key theme from both candidates during the whole debate. Both participants try to speak against each other’s personalities and history, rather than debating future policies and bills. Most of the interruptions and insults from both sides came under some particular subjects. Right at the start of the debate, during the “achieving prosperity” segment, the question of Trumps past Business tax records and endeavours came up. During this segment, Clinton criticised Trump on several remarks, in which Trump went on the “aggressive defence”. The same could be said for the finishing subject on the “securing America” segment, where Trump was criticised for his temperament. During the same subjects, Trump heavily criticised Clinton on both her and her husbands (Bill Clinton) inconsistent voting record/failures on trade deals and for her time as Secretary of State. This also explains the “Bickering index” showing 3 instances of bickering. An excellent example of this taken from one of the longer sessions of bickering is shown below:

(On NAFTA) TRUMP: “Nothing will ever top NAFTA.”

CLINTON: “Well, that is just not accurate. I was against it once it was finally negotiated and the terms were laid out. I wrote about that in...”

TRUMP: “You called it the gold standard.”

(CROSSTALK)

TRUMP: “You called it the gold standard of trade deals. You said it's the finest deal you've ever seen.”

CLINTON: “No.”

TRUMP: “And then you heard what I said about it, and all of a sudden you were against it.”

CLINTON: “Well, Donald, I know you live in your own reality, but that is not the facts. The facts are -- I did say I hoped it would be a good deal, but when it was negotiated...”

TRUMP: “Not.”

CLINTON: “… which I was not responsible for, I concluded it wasn't. I wrote about that in my book...”

TRUMP: “So is it President Obama's fault?”

CLINTON: “… before you even announced.”
TRUMP: “Is it President Obama's fault?”

CLINTON:” Look, there are differences...”

TRUMP: “Secretary, is it President Obama's fault?”

CLINTON: “There are...”

TRUMP: “Because he's pushing it.”

CLINTON: “There are different views about what's good for our country, our economy, and our leadership in the world.”

- First Presidential Debate September 26, 2016.42

It should firstly be clarified that the term (“CROSSTALK”) in the above segment shows where both candidates are speaking at the same time and it is not possible to interpret what anyone is saying. The segment also shows Trumps’ debating tactics in fervently interrupting with different questions without giving his opponent any time to give a clear answer.

Concluding the First presidential debate, it is clear that both candidates spend much time on blemishing the other. When personal subjects get debated, the participants lose the ability to debate on the given terms and rules, in which the discussion turns sour the climate of discussion loses decency and reason. Although a part of the debate was spent discussing their different policy ideas, much of the debate was spent trying to disqualify each other as trustful, professional and good candidates for the role as President of the United States.

7.3 The Second Presidential Debate October 9, 2016.

The Second presidential debate was held at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. October 9. 2016. The debate was sponsored by the Commission on presidential debates, which also drafted the format. Moderators of the debate were ABC News anchor Martha Raddatz and CNN anchor Anderson Cooper. The debate was structure as a “Town Hall-format” which means that the candidates takes questions from members of the audience, consisting of American voters. The moderators then askes follow-up question to the candidates after the initial questions from the voters. Each candidate had two minutes to respond on each question. The debate went on for 90

minutes. The voters in the audience were chosen from a Gallup poll, all from the St. Louis area and had not committed to a candidate during the night of the debate. During the debate, eight questions on different topics were touched on; The candidates view on each other as role models for children, Healthcare, Islamophobia, Taxes, Devoted presidency for all American, the Supreme Court, Energy policy and finally if the candidates could mention one trait they like about the other.\textsuperscript{43} 66,5 million viewers watched the debate live via television, excluding people watching it in public spaces and online.\textsuperscript{44}

The analytic results from the second debate are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Donald Trump</th>
<th>Uttering Total: 22</th>
<th>Hillary Clinton</th>
<th>Uttering Total: 22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informed:</td>
<td>Stay: 20</td>
<td>Change: 2</td>
<td>Stay: 21</td>
<td>Change: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced:</td>
<td>Speak Time:</td>
<td>40 min 10 sec</td>
<td>Speak Time:</td>
<td>39 min 5 sec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Argument: 22</td>
<td>Insult: 0</td>
<td>Argument: 22</td>
<td>Insult: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientious:</td>
<td>Interruptions: 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interruptions: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uttering without interruption: 21</td>
<td></td>
<td>Uttering without Interruption: 16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive:</td>
<td>Personal attack: 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal attack: 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bickering Index:</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Second Presidential Debate

The first thing that becomes apparent comparing the results from the second debate to the first is by the relative decency both candidates performed during this debate in relation to the first. Both candidates made 22 utterings, with Donald Trump getting the most speaking time once again, although with approximately one minute more than Clinton compared with about three minutes in the first debate. Both candidates also made it far better in terms of using arguments instead of insults and committed to the subject in most occasions. However, Trump continues to interrupt his opponent in on multiple instances. Ten interrupting segments were recorded, showing Trumps aggressive debating style once again. Looking closer on the candidate’s performance in telling the truth, additional fact checking information from \textit{Politifact} is shown below.

\textsuperscript{44} Littleton, Cynthia. Schwindt, Oriana. Trump-Clinton Second Debate Ratings Fall 21% With 66.5 Million Viewers. Variety. October, 10. 2016
The data show that there is once again a substantial difference in the truthfulness from the candidates. Both candidates produced results which are worse since the first debate. While Clinton spoke “true” or “mostly true” in 66% of the cases, Trump’s statements were “mostly false” or “false” in 58% of the time. 5% of Trump’s statements even classified as “pants on fire”, meaning the statements are complete lies.

The debates initial segment was dominated by a discussion concerning a leaked tape-record from 2005 were Donald Trump made inappropriate comments about touching women’s private body parts. This in turn made the debate quite hostile in large segments were the candidates once again tried to talk down and blemish the other as unfit for the presidency. Although the candidates often responded to questions with their own policy proposals on different issues in their first minute of speaking, the other were often used to dirty talk the opponents background and policy ideas in the second. This tactic was used to a lesser degree by Clinton, but was very common from Trump as he often tried to shift the focus towards Clintons failures as a politician. An excellent example of this is the below quote from Trump where he changes the subject from taxes to middle eastern security issues:

---

(On his income taxes) TRUMP: “No. but I pay tax and I pay federal tax too. But I have a write off, a lot of it is depreciation, which is a wonderful charge. I love depreciation… With her, it's all talk and no action. 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. Her and Obama whether you like it or not, the way they got out of Iraq, the vacuum they left, that's why ISIS formed in the first place.”

- Second Presidential Debate October 9, 2016.46

There was only one direct personal attack recorded during the whole debating session. It came from Donald Trump at the start of the debate during the segment concerning their views as role models for children were the subject of capability came into light.

CLINTON: “Last time at the first debate, we had millions of people fact checking so I expect we will have millions more fact checking because, you know, it’s just awfully good that someone with the temperament of Donald Trump is not in charge of the law in our country. “

TRUMP: “Because you would be in jail."

AUDIENCE: [Applause]

- Second Presidential Debate October 9, 2016.47

As demonstrated above, the tone of the second debate had not changed much from the first. The results of the analysis however show that these kinds of events were less frequent than during the first debate. There were for example no instances of bickering during the debate, although it got close. At the subject of Clintons deleted e-mail scandal, Trump repeatedly interrupted Clinton, which refrained from answering the question given by trump on the subject a second time.

TRUMP: ‘‘Hold on, wait a minute, if a member of the private sector did that, they’d be in jail. Let alone, after getting a subpoena from the United States Congress. “

COOPER: “Secretary Clinton, you get to respond then we have to move on to a audience question.”

47 Ibid.
CLINTON: “It’s just not true.”

TRUMP: “You didn't delete them?”

CLINTON: “They were personal e-mails and not official. We turned over 35,000.”

TRUMP: “What are about the other 15,000.”

COOPER: “Please allow her to respond. She didn't talk while you talked.”

CLINTON: “Yes, that's true. I didn't.”

TRUMP: “Because you had nothing to say.”

CLINTON: “I didn’t in the first debate and I’m gonna try not to on this debate because I would like to get to the questions people brought to us tonight.”

TRUMP: “And get off this question.”

CLINTON: “Okay, Donald. I know you are into big diversion tonight, anything to avoid talking about your campaign and the way it’s exploding, and the way Republicans are leaving you, but – “

TRUMP: “Let’s see what happens.”

COOPER: “Let her respond.”

CLINTON: “Let’s get to the issues that people care about tonight. Let’s get to their question.”

COOPER: “We have a question here from Ken Karpowitz, it’s a question about health care.”

TRUMP: “I’d like to know Anderson, why aren't you bringing up the e-mails? I'd like to know.”

COOPER: “We brought up the e-mails.”

TRUMP: “No it hasn’t, it hasn’t and it hasn't been finished at all.”

COOPER: “Ken Karpowitz has a question.”

- Second Presidential Debate October 9, 2016.

The above citation shows very clearly how Donald Trump tries to be the dominant part of the debate, questioning both his opponent and the moderators. Using the analyses one can clearly see that the bad climate of discussion during this particular debate was largely due to the actions and behaviour of Donald Trump.

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One interesting perspective concerning the format of the second debate is the decision to let ordinary voters ask their questions directly to the candidates. It is an excellent way to include people and let them come closer to the actual political discussion. The fifth criteria based on Fishkins and Luskins Theory makes formats such as this very desirable from a deliberative point of view.

7.4 The Third Presidential Debate October 19, 2016.
The third and final presidential debate was held at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas, Nevada. October 19, 2016. The debate was sponsored by the Commission on Presidential Debates. Moderator for the debate were Chris Wallace of Fox News. The debate went on for 90 minutes and had roughly the same format as the first presidential debate, divided into six segments with six subjects (apart from three during the first). Each segment went on for 15 minutes. Each participant was asked a question, got two minutes to respond. After each two-minute response from each candidate, there were an open discussion on the subject. The subjects of the debate were tackling the national debt, immigration, economy and trade, the Supreme Court, the Middle East, and fitness to be president. 71.6 million viewers watched the debate on live television, excluding people watching in public places and online.

The results of the analysis looked as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Donald Trump</th>
<th>Uttering Total: 33</th>
<th>Hillary Clinton</th>
<th>Uttering Total: 31</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informed:</td>
<td>Stay: 33</td>
<td>Change: 0</td>
<td>Stay: 30</td>
<td>Change: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced:</td>
<td>Speak Time: 35 min 41 sec</td>
<td></td>
<td>Speak Time: 41 min 46 sec</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results above show that both candidates were allowed more utterings during the last debate. They both kept to the subject on all occasions, apart from Clinton trying to avoid answering about the Clinton Foundations taking money from Qatar on one instance. However, during the final debate Clinton got a majority of the speaking time, talking slightly 6 minutes longer than Trump. Looking at the number of interruptions/utterings without interruption however, the Trump trend continues as he once again interrupted Clinton far more than Clinton did in return (Trump 20/Clinton 3). Trump also made a personal attack against Clinton during the debate. One instance of bickering was recorded during the debate.

As this was the final debate, both candidates had to do their best to win over voters. One could say that the debate was divided into two parts. During the first half both candidates refrained from interrupting the other and rarely spoke directly towards each other. It could be thought that the first debate (which also received the worst results in this analysis) got the voters upset and angered at the two candidate’s behaviour. One thing that strengthens this claim is the first question asked by a member of the audience during the second debate.

**PATRICE BROCK:** "The last presidential debate could have been rated as MA, mature audiences per TV parental guidelines. Knowing that educators assign viewing the presidential debates as students’ homework, do you feel you are modelling appropriate and positive behaviour for today’s youth?"
This fact seems to have made the candidates more reluctant to engage in verbal argumentation during the first half of the debate, as most interruptions, the bickering and the personal attack were all recorded during the second half. Starting as a debate were both candidates answered their questions with their policy ideas and within the time limit, as the debate went on both candidates began to fall back into their old patterns.

As mentioned, the second half of the debate gradually spun out of control and into the climate of discussion we saw in the previous debates. It all started with some events of interruptions from Trump, which was followed by an event of bickering were Trump started to argue with both Clinton and the moderator:

(On alleged Russian involvement in the election) CLINTON: “…these cyberattacks, come from the highest levels of the Kremlin and they are designed to influence our election. I find that deeply disturbing.”

WALLACE: “Secretary Clinton...”

CLINTON: “And I think it’s time you take a stand...”

TRUMP: “She has no idea whether it’s Russia, China, or anybody else.”

CLINTON: “I am not quoting myself.”

TRUMP: “She has no idea.”

CLINTON: “I am quoting 17...”

TRUMP: “Hillary, you have no idea.”

CLINTON: “... 17 intelligence -- do you doubt 17 military and civilian...”

TRUMP: “And our country has no idea.”

CLINTON: “... agencies.”

TRUMP: “Yeah, I doubt it. I doubt it.”

CLINTON: “Well, he’d rather believe Vladimir Putin than the military and civilian intelligence professionals who are sworn to protect us. I find that just absolutely...”

---

TRUMP: “She doesn't like Putin because Putin has outsmarted her at every step of the way.”

WALLACE: “Mr. Trump…”

TRUMP: “Excuse me. Putin has outsmarted her in Syria.”

WALLACE: “Mr. Trump…”

(CROSSTALK)

TRUMP: “He's outsmarted her every step of the way.”

WALLACE: “I do get to ask some questions.”

TRUMP: “Yes, that's fine.”

WALLACE: “And I would like to ask you this direct question.”

- Third Presidential Debate October 19, 2016.52

The above “conversation” shows once again how certain issues pushes the candidates, mostly Trump, to divert from the conversational norms and to go on the offensive. Issues that lies near Trump personally (his family, business etc.) and those which reflect the core subjects or his campaign (immigration, trade, law and order etc.) are instances where he wants to make a stand and present himself as “in control” and dominant. Looking on how the candidates performed in being informed and supporting their arguments with facts, the trend from earlier debates continues as a majority of Trump’s statements are considered “mostly false”, “false” or “pants on fire”. Clinton on the other hand made it through the whole debate without saying something outright false.

Concluding the third and final debate, it resembles the first in some ways. As the format was the same as in the first, apart from more subjects being touched on in the third, both candidates got into argumentation between them. Once again, the focus of the debate shifted from being about the different policies each candidate stood by to denouncing and blemishing the other. The third debate was not as harsh as the first one, but it was absolutely not a good example of a good climate of discussion.

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Figure 7: Fact-Check Results Third Presidential Debate, Politifact.\(^{53}\)

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8 Results and Summary Discussion

Concluding on all the results from the analysis, an analytic scheme with aggregated recordings from all three debates are presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Donald Trump</strong></th>
<th><strong>Hillary Clinton</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informed:</strong></td>
<td>Uttering Total:83</td>
<td>Uttering Total:76</td>
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<td><strong>Stay:</strong></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change:</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balanced:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speak Time:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Argument:</strong></td>
<td>120 min 54 sec</td>
<td>122 min 41 sec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Insult:</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conscientious:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interruptions:</strong></td>
<td>58</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uttering without interruption:</strong></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Substantive:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal attack:</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bickering Index:</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The aggregated results give a complete picture of the climate of discussion during the debates.

Starting with the “informative” perspective, both candidates performed largely the same in using arguments to persuade their opponent and the audience. Both candidates used insults, which was only recorded during the first debate. In the two later debates, no participant was recorded using insults, although such instances happened on two occasions in the later debates but which were recorded as personal attacks/interruptions. Both originated from Donald Trump. However, the complementary data regarding fact-based statements (shown in 7.2 – 7.4) shows that a significant difference in keeping truthful to facts and figures. While Clinton mostly bases her statements on correct facts and information, Trump continuously makes false claims in his arguments.

Looking from the “balanced” perspective, the difference in speaking time between the two accounts for nearly two minutes. Spread out over three debate last lasting for 4 ½ hours in total, it makes a minor difference from a deliberative perspective. The situation is also balanced up by the fact that Trump got 7 more utterings overall. An explanation
to this could that Clinton speak longer on each uttering, while Trump likes to keep it short.

Judging from the collected data of the analysis, the debates could not be described as “conscientious” according the Fishkin/Luskin criteria. It should be reminded that the “conscientious” criteria do not propose that the candidates should agree with each other on policy issues. It proposes that the candidates should properly listen to each other’s arguments while the other is speaking. This is not the case for any of these debates.

While both candidates interrupted each other on several instances, Trump interrupted his opponent in total on 58 separate occasions. That is nearly one interruption in every two minutes of Clinton’s speaking time. This leaves Clinton with 41 utterings without interruptions, and 35 were she was interrupted. The contrasting figures for Trump is 74 against 9.

The “Substantive” perspective shows us that seven personal attacks were made during the debates, three by Trump and two by Clinton. While there should be preferably no personal attacks, one is surprised by the results as the election campaign was dominated by a nasty use of words from both campaigns. Although both insults and personal attacks were used during the debates from both sides, a possible explanation could be that the hardest and most frequent use of such tactics went on outside the formal debating grounds at rallies and such. However, the results also show that while the second and third debates were relatively clean reasonable on this account, the first one is not.

The “comprehensive perspective” has not been a part of the analytical scheme the criteria is hard to measure between just two people. However, one factor that is relevant from the “comprehensive” perspective is the results and format of the second debate. Apart from the first and the third debate, the second used a “Town Hall” format in which members of the audience asked the primary questions directly to the candidates. As deliberative theory proposes more political equality and in one sense more participation from the general public in political discussions, it would also propose that this would make the outcome of the debate more desirable. And as the analysis show, the second debate was the most reasonable and “calmest” of the three debates. Potential explanations to this could be that during the second debate the candidates answered the
questions directly to the audience member that asked it. The likelihood of a candidate interrupting or heckling a member of the audience seems far lower in contrast to doing the same against one’s political opponent. The candidates would probably lose more support by insulting a general voter compared to doing the same towards the opponent. Further support for this claim is that the second debate was also the only debate without any bickering, as the candidates did not get a chance to properly go against each other. This could incline that the “Town Hall” format is a more desirable format of debate, compared to the “one on one” format were the open discussion following each candidates statement often spiralled out of control during the first and last debate.
9 Conclusion and Further Research

9.1 Conclusion
Returning to the question of this study; “Using a deliberative democratic perspective, how could the climate of discussion between the two main candidates during the US Presidential election debates 2016 be described?”, a clear answer could be given following the completed analysis.

In regard to the results of the five criteria in the former chapter, neither the “informed” or the “conscientious” criteria could possibly be considered fulfilled. Due to the lack of fact-based arguments from Donald Trump and the number of interruptions made by both candidates, especially Donald Trump, the climate of debate was rarely constructive and directed by reason. It is also questionable if the “Substantive” criteria was fulfilled due to the number of personal attacks made by both candidates, which preferably should be zero. The climate of discussion regarding the US Presidential Election 2016 could therefore be describe as poorly reasonable and not in line with the criteria of a healthy climate of discussion according to deliberative democratic theory. It seems as the hard climate described in chapter 6, which has been present in US elections throughout history has also taken step into the formal arena of political discussion. The results also imply that scenario 2.1 described in chapter 1 (1.3) is the most likely description of why the results turned out in the way they did, with Donald Trump being the person who brought the dirty talk into the formal arena of discussion. However, the scenario is not perfect as Hillary Clinton also performed badly on some criteria, although not at the same level as Donald Trump.

9.2 Further Research
Suggested further research on the subject could probably involve using the same analytic scheme on previous US Presidential Debates to get a chronological development analysis on the subject, to further test the results from this study. The same debates could also be tested using other theoretical approaches concerning discussion practises, to compare the results from this study.
Sources

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