Communication and Debate in a Public Environment: An Analysis of Obama–McCain Presidential Debates

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on political communication as information source in decision making. The biggest exponent of information can be found in presidential debates in which strategies for future governmental decision are located. Models of communication and debate in a public environment are presented, focusing on the types of communication associated with criticism and countercriticism manifested in political debates and public management. The paper proposes: (i) a normative model showing how communication can be conducted, including a criticism development process and alternative strategies; (ii) a model of organizational excellence and rational criticism in public management; and (iii) an analysis of three Obama–McCain presidential debates. The causes of the economic crisis and solution strategies were found. This research provides value information for prospective in actual uncertain situations.

KEYWORDS: COMMUNICATION; DEBATE; CRITICISM; PUBLIC MANAGEMENT; OBAMA; MCCAIN; PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE; ECONOMIC CRISIS

Introduction

Communication related to criticism and countercriticism development in the realm of political confrontation has been neither sufficiently explained nor clearly researched in the literature. At the moment, politicians use communicative elaboration processes although they do not have sufficient knowledge of them. This situation generates inconsistent and incoherent arguments, reducing politicians' effectiveness by basing the criticism construction process on their own ability, and experience as communicators.

Criticism is fundamental as a control mechanism of governmental action. The objective of the present work is to analyse the communicative elaboration process, including criticism and countercriticism, by proposing diverse models that show their elements, relationships, and formulation. Criticism and countercriticism constitute a type of interpersonal communication, that is to say, instruments related to verbal interaction among people. Debates in which such interaction is used lead to votes, results, images, orientations, and decisions of diverse political, social or economic import. Criticism is understood to be a type of communication, a judgment (or set of judgments) formulated after a process of examination and comparison, that is deemed to establish the truth of the qualities and defects in different forms of behaviour. Countercriticism is understood to be a type of communication that, after an analysis of the foundations of criticism, is generated as an answer to the judgments inherent in criticism. An understanding of the foundations of criticism and countercriticism communication allows an audience concerned with public policy and management to analyse them to establish the strategies behind their use.

Authors like Donmoyer (1993), Lakatos & Musgrave (1970), Shapiro (1992), McGee (2001), and others have developed meanings of criticism over the course of many years in different fields. This paper proposes models from a pragmatic perspective, considering persuasion (Easton & Araujo, 1997; McCloskey, 1985), human interaction (Mey, 1993) and successful communicative action (Habermas 1998).

In political debate, categories are ideological. Ideology distorts the possibility of reaching an agreement. There are four forms of criticism in scientific theory: (i) objectivity, rigor, and investigator rationality (Descartes, 1649); (ii) criticism as antidogmatism (Kant, 2005), which refuses to grant validity to any judgment without first verifying that it agrees with our knowledge, experiences, and values; (iii) criticism

as an alternative to reality (Marx and utopian thought, 1992); and (iv) criticism as a paradigm (Bueno, 1992) or criticism inside, rather than outside, a paradigm.

In the public sector, criticism is formally established on two levels: external and internal (Salanti, 1989). On the *internal level*, critical functions are carried out by certain bodies within the organizational structure of the state, autonomous administrations, or local entities. On the *external level*, critical functions diverge into three fields: (i) the jurisdictional (external control institutions); (ii) the political (national parliaments, parliaments of autonomous provinces, and assemblies of local organizations); and (iii) the judicial (justice tribunals). In addition to the functions of these formal bodies, criticism in the external sphere of the public sector is ultimately the responsibility of citizens, the media, opinion leaders, political parties, and employees and employer associations. We have considered the external level of criticism as a type of public management control.

This paper focuses on communication, including criticism and countercriticism, within political debate and public management. The paper proposes: (i) a normative model showing how communication can be conducted, including criticism development processes and alternative strategies; (ii) a model of organizational excellence and rational criticism in public management; and (iii) an analysis of the Obama–McCain presidential debates.

Theoretical background

Two important aspects of the communication process, in which the development of criticism is included, should be kept in mind: first, the presence of persuasion, argument, and motivation, and second, that of verbal, nonverbal, and literary communication components. These are the communicative aspects and impact or effectiveness components intended to influence, motivate, criticize, or cause psychological damage to an audience (using positive, negative, singular or collective criticism), affecting beliefs, culture, values, attitudes, and behaviours.

Although communication research has enjoyed great popularity in recent years, its origins can be traced back to ancient Greece and Rome, where it was discussed by philosophers and scholars. One of the precursors of research into the communication process is found in the works of Marco Tullius Cicero (first century B.C.). Cicero described the perfect speaker's qualities, the styles of speech in function to rhetorical

purposes, the techniques of speech, and their parts. Cicero analysed how to sustain one's own arguments in the face of contrary arguments, as well as considering disposition and order, the way in which one speaks, and the relationship between verbal and nonverbal communication. Other authors who have more recently taken up the study of oratory and rhetoric include Studer Jürg (1999), Lassus, (1992), von Wartburg (1998), Ortigueira & Ortigueira (2001), Ortigueira (2008), Gallo (2008), Den Hartog & Verburg (1997), Gronbeck (2004), Fischer (2006) and Gottweis (2006).

Diverse authors have employed a policy analysis perspective on public management; Hajer (2003) "presents an original analysis of the relationship between state and society, and new possibilities for collective learning and conflict resolution", whereas Fischer & Forester (1993) write, "Public policy is made of language. Whether in written or oral form, argument is central to all parts of the policy process".

As for verbal communication, the types of criticism and countercriticism examined here are located in the framework of an oral intervention process that can be structured into several interrelated stages. However, Cicero considered the necessity of coherence between verbal and nonverbal communication (Pease, 1994; González, 1998), and the same should be applied to criticism and countercriticism. Nonverbal communication is understood by Sheppard (1986) to be communication that takes place through actions and human behaviours and not by means of words. Ekman & Friesen (1969) categorized different nonverbal behaviours, and other authors such as Mehrabian (1971) researched the influence of verbal, phonological, and facial components on message interpretation.

The aspects relating to persuasion and communication have been broadly researched in cognitive psychology. Examples of theories relevant to persuasion research are Social Judgment Theory (Sherif & Hovland, 1961), which explains how a person accepts or rejects the communicated messages after comparing those messages and his/her values; Inoculation Theory (McGuire, 1961), which explains how the order in which information is presented influences perception and how information given to the receiver before communication increases his/her resistance; Balance Theory (Heider, 1946), which establishes that people attempt to persuade themselves or others when tensions arise to reduce these tensions; Rank's Persuasion Model (Rank, 1976), which establishes two strategies that persuaders use to achieve their objectives; Source Credibility Theory (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953), which concerns the relationship between persuasion and credibility; Congruity Theory (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955),

which concerns the sensation of pressure on a person with regard to a judgment between two contradictory postures that are presented; Belief Congruency (Rokeach & Rothman, 1965), which concerns the relationship between beliefs and a person's values; Cognitive Dissonance (Festinger, 1962), which concerns a person's attitude when he/she acts on the margin of his/her beliefs; Reinforcement Theory (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1967), which concerns attention, comprehension, and acceptance; Information Manipulation Theory (McCornack, 1992), which considers the relationship between information and a person's expectations regarding its quantity, quality, relation, and channel; the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Baxter, 1988), which concerns the routes to persuasion and their relationship to attitude change; and Attribution Theory (Heider, 1958), which seeks to explain the causes of behaviours. As previous research has indicated, communication processes act on beliefs, culture, values, attitudes, and behaviours—concepts that this study seeks to elucidate below.

Values—justice, sincerity, freedom, solidarity, loyalty, generosity, responsibility, honour, etc.—have been continually discussed. In 1994, McGregor researched beliefs and leaders' values. The concept of values refers to the subjective importance that people place on things or on people's conduct and behaviour. Thus, for example, for some people, love is more important than sincerity, whereas for others, the reverse is true. This situation results in the first group's being more willing to forgive or reward lies told for the sake of love, also known as "white lies". In contrast, those who place sincerity over love will condemn white lies and probably be offended by those who defend them. The great majority of human confrontations or disagreements between people are due to contradictions between acts or behaviours and their scales of values, which is to say that values are positioned as a function of the importance that each person confers on each value.

There are people who consider human life to be the supreme value. Obviously, they never cease to fight, penalize and punish those who attempt to take human life: terrorists, abortionists, and so on. However, there are people who regard, for example, love at the top of his/her scale of values. Situations exist in which suicides take place for love or in which people become martyrs (such as those who die for love of God), etc. For these people, love is even more important than their own lives.

Those who die in place of others comprise a frequent example. When doctors tell a mother she must choose between her own life and that of her son, she will respond that her son's life must be saved. Here, the clear priority is the loved one rather than the

self. Doctors sometimes delegate the responsibility for this tremendous dilemma to husbands and/or parents. This raises another problem of the hierarchy of values: the love for a wife versus the love for a son. The decision is usually made in favour of the wife. However, in this process, the doctor's values are also relevant: when a doctor chooses whether to ask the mother or the father, he/she is clearly manifesting of the importance of the choice between the mother's and the son's life.

Thus, values are the organizing principles of people's behaviour. There are different theories on behaviour, some depending on organizational variables. Maslow (1954) researched behaviour based on acquisition necessities. Herzberg (1966) outlined the factors that guide people's behaviour. McGregor (1994) compared antagonistic styles of management in relation to considerations related to worker's behaviour. Likert (1961) studied the influence of administrative styles on behaviour; others have examined his work from the viewpoint of psychology.

When behaviours stray from values, remorse and uneasiness arise in people. When behaviours are coherent with values, it is more difficult to feel grief and negative sensations. Behaviour refers to what a person says or does not say and what he/she does or does not do. For example, a doctor who refers a decision to a mother (having been able to ask the father) can be severely criticized for this behaviour by those who believe that such a decision should be made by the father. A student who insults another student in class and in the professor's presence will be penalized by many people, but perhaps not by all students. Everything depends on the importance each person confers on the value called "respect". The professor will also be criticized for his/her behaviour if he/she does not act with the level of rigor appropriate to the level of the insult: if he/she says nothing or says something excessively weak or even if he/she says something so severe that it surpasses the level of the insult. This raises another value called "justice", that is to say, the constant will to give each person his/her due. This concept of values is vastly complex, and it becomes more complex when one considers how values are made and their environment. Thus, different values are found in different environments, such as schools, the military, universities, and sporting environments.

In the business environment, justice is developed as part of the theory of organizational justice (Greenberg, 1987). Sometimes, when a person's daily life is examined in various environments, the relative importance of values is not the same in each environment. For example, courage has a very high value in the military environment and a low value in the academic world, where it is even difficult to specify

its meaning. On the other hand, rationality (studied by Taylor, Fayol, and Weber as part of the classic organization theories) and thinking have a very high position in an academic environment and perhaps a much lower one in a military environment. Rationality has also been studied in decision-making models (March & Simon, 1958; Pfeffer, 1981; Simon, 1989; Elster J., 1989; Hodge, 1998; Elster J., 1998; Ferejohn 2002; Hill & Lynn, 2003; Andrews 2006; Griggs 2006).

Another important concept is belief. Beliefs are aspects of reality for which experimental knowledge has not been achieved. Beliefs are knowledge people incorporate into their models of the world (Robbins, 1987) based on the credibility that we grant to other people's experience. Most people are limited in their realizations by their beliefs.

Culture is another concept to specify. Culture can be defined as a group of principles, beliefs, values and symbolic representations (language, dress, music, myths, rites, rituals, heroes, metaphors, legends) shared by a community. People who share values and beliefs share the same culture.

Naturally, inside this shared culture, subcultures can exist. Furthermore, what is organizational culture? It is a significant system shared by organization members that determines the way its employees act (Robbins & Coulter, 2000) and allows the organization to distinguish itself from other organizations. In all organizations, values, symbols, ritual patterns, and myths exist that determine the image the organization members have of the company and of the world in general.

Ethics, as a branch of philosophy, facilitates the knowledge of some superior values and favours the positive attitude of wanting to do good in freedom and employ personal responsibility.

The philosopher Wagensberg (1985) affirms, "I understand ethics to be that type of knowledge dedicated to establishing a moral system, to distinguish among what men should do and what they should not do, to choose between bad habits and virtue, among good and bad. Ethics is the science that avoids the consequence of substituting the objective world for men, true or false for good or bad, theory for ideology and description for the prescription."

On the other hand, Fromm (1947) offers statements full of trust in the human condition and in their vital possibilities: "Good in ethics is the statement of the life, the unfolding of human powers. Virtue is humans' responsibility for their own existence. Bad things constitute the mutilation of human forces; bad habits are irresponsibility

toward oneself."

Kant (2005) establishes a maxim of the categorical imperative as conscience related to duty and dignity: it "works in such a way that the maxim of action can be worth its own time, like a universal norm of behavior."

An ethical person has three attributes, without which he/she cannot fully act in the community; these are freedom, autonomy, and responsibility. Only free people are responsible and can decide with autonomy among alternative good actions. This is the concept of personal ethics, which are not subject to the power of religious, political, social, or economic structures.

Morals (Catholic, Protestant, Islamic, communist, anarchist, bourgeois, socialist, etc.) are different from ethics. Morals lack personality if they are the same. The statement by Etkin (1993) is of interest in this analysis: "Morals implies a contextualization and refers, fundamentally, to certain values, uses and customs in the community. Through morals in organizations, adhesion is looked for, but now in certain projects, credos or specific values". That is to say, the possibility of handling moral codes for political power is established here. The difference between ethics and morals resides in the fact that morals are static, that is, they do not change with time (e.g., laws of the church), whereas ethics are dynamic, that is they suffer modifications for a multitude of interacting factors (e.g., business opportunities, corruption).

Public administrations are complex organizations and are formed by people who conduct very diverse functions, such as politicians who come from electoral systems where political parties are in opposition. In addition, these parties and organizations are created and run by people. Organizations can have different ideological systems, different cultures, and different morals. For diverse reasons, these organizations have still not been able to build homogeneous shared morals, culture, and values for all. That is to say, the view of what is good and bad in politics is not something that all individuals share.

Many people consider that when a member of an organization steals from the public, it is bad. Honesty in such a case is defended. Here, Aristotelian morals are consecrated with the principle of keeping common above individual interests and general above particular interests in mind. This value can be shared by a great majority of people. However, this same value, when it comes to the concept of not stealing to finance a political party, seems no longer to enjoy as much support. This is a problem to be solved to avoid contaminating the nonpolitical structures of administration.

In the area of public management, ethical issues have been broadly analysed (Frederickson & Ghere, 2005; Dovel, 2007); however, apart from ethical or moral problems, there is also an infinite number of cases in which injustices, violations, outrages, mistreatment, infidelity, and thousands of strictly administrative bad habits or politico-administrative lapses occur. In this environment, it is also necessary to introduce mechanisms that avoid negativity, inequity, lack of transparency, the interpretive distortion of legality, excessive waste, poor allocation of resources, etc.

Proposed models

Figure 1 presents a model showing the communication process through which judgmental criticisms are formulated based on Ortigueira (2008). Previous models were developed by Vahidov & Elrod (1999); Vahidov & Fazlollahi (2004) and Silverman (1992). This type of communication and the arguments generated are influenced by environmental factors, while at the same time, the arguments used produce the influence of economic, political or social order on the environment depending on the arguer's credibility.

Panel A includes the criticism elaboration process. This panel represents the people criticized, his/her actions, and the results generated by those actions (direct or indirect). Also, we consider the critic's intentions or objectives, which include supporting the criticized (constructive), harming the criticized (destructive), or expressing neutral or mixed sentiments in relation to the criticized. Then the critic elaborates the strategy (which might be favourable, unfavourable, neutral or mixed), choosing the references from which the actions and results of the criticized can be evaluated. Later, these actions and results are analysed with the references used. Finally, a conclusion is reached that may be completely favourable or unfavourable, neutral, or mixed. As a result, the criticized can accept the judgment, reject it, or both.

Panel B shows the countercriticism elaboration process. First, intentions or objectives are analysed with a view toward lack of legitimacy (when general interests and other principles that govern public life diverge) and criticism clearly bound to a particular interest. Later, the absence of criticism references and/or criticism references inappropriate, unsuitable, unfounded, incoherent or inconsistent with respect to the actions and results to be criticized (in the reference used by the critic) are analysed. With respect to the actions/results of the criticized, one may espouse ignorance of the

actions and their results or partial, insufficient, or distorted knowledge of the actions and their results. Finally, there is the element of respect for the judgment formulated by the critic:

- Criticism based on gratuitously highlighted topics, without a profound and serious analysis of the judged reality.
- Criticism with deficient interpretation of the actions and their results.
- Critical judgments lacking consistent logic, specificity, and rationality; those that fail to avoid contradictions or ideological factors and seek exaggerated support from emotional and imaginary factors.
- Lack of an informational foundation based on references, facts, results etc.
- Deficiencies in the interpretation of facts and information.
- Lack of coherence, intelligibility.
- Lack of a consistent, firm, solid, and logical argument.
- Marginalization of certain elements that govern or inspire public service. Conceptual, technical, and methodological errors and deficiencies.
- Vagueness, a mixture of components that are illogical and unsystematic.
- Imagined constructions, those that are unverifiable or uncertain.
- Use of ideological factors in an inappropriate context.
- Disproportionate and/or emotional arguments.
- Use of particular interest in place of general interest.
- Lack of transcendental, operational, or useful contributions.
- Assumptions, generalizations, inappropriate application of rules.
- Use of unethical falsities, lies, and tricks.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

To strengthen the effectiveness of criticism and countercriticism, alternative strategies may be based on principles, facts, another interpretation of the facts, rationality, irrationality, logic, blurring, paradoxes, real-world contradictions, ideological factors, emotional factors, other forms of rationality, or an epistemological approach: substantialist vs. extantialist, externalist vs. internalist, structuralist vs. genetic, functionalist vs. evolutionist (Walliser, 1977). As an example, criticism that has been based on sound principles (such as efficiency and economy as essential factors) could oppose countercriticism supported by the principle of equity. In a similar way, criticism

that is fundamentally based on established facts (such as the national inflation rate) could neutralize countercriticism using other facts (such as high wages) or another interpretation of these facts (such as the rate of regional inflation) (see Jorgensen et al., 1998; Gordon & Miller, 2004).

Other strategy examples taken from Obama-McCain first presidential debate are offered below:

Criticism based on **Principles** (Obama, 26 September 08): "Number one, we've got to make sure that we've got **oversight** over this whole process; $700 billion, potentially, is a lot of money" (Principle of efficiency). This could be opposed to countercriticism based on **other principles**: (McCain, 26 September 08) "This package has **transparency** in it. It has to have accountability and oversight" (Principle of transparency).

Criticism based on **Ideological/philosophical factors:** (Obama, 26 September 08) "We also have to recognize that this is a final verdict on eight years of failed economic policies promoted by George Bush, supported by Senator McCain, **a theory that basically says that we can shred regulations and consumer protections and give more and more to the most,** and somehow prosperity will trickle down. It hasn't worked…. But we're also going to have to look at, how is it that we shredded so many regulations? We did not set up a 21st-century regulatory framework to deal with these problems. And that in part has to do with an **economic philosophy** that says that regulation is always bad." This argument could be opposed with countercriticism based on **Rationality/Logic**: (McCain, 26 September 08) "But there's also the **issue of responsibility**… But somehow in Washington today -- and I'm afraid on Wall Street -- greed is rewarded, excess is rewarded, and corruption -- or certainly failure to carry out our responsibility is rewarded. As President of the United States, people are going to be held accountable in my administration. And I promise you that that will happen." This argument might oppose a criticism based on **Paradoxes:** (Obama, 26 September 08) "Well, I think Senator McCain's absolutely right that **we need more responsibility, but we need it not just when there's a crisis**. I mean, we've had years in which the reigning economic ideology has been what's good for Wall Street, but not what's good for Main Street…. Ten days ago, John said that the fundamentals of the economy are sound." And this argument, in turn, could be opposed using countercriticism based on **Emotional factors:** (McCain, 26 September 08) "So there's no doubt that we have a long way to go. And, obviously, stricter interpretation and consolidation of the various

regulatory agencies that weren't doing their job, that has brought on this crisis…. But I have a **fundamental belief in the goodness and strength of the American worker**. And the **American worker is the most productive, the most innovative**. **America** is still the **greatest producer, exporter and importer**…. But we've got to get through these times, but I have a **fundamental belief** in the **United States of America**. And I still **believe**, under the right leadership, our best days are ahead of us."

Criticism based on **Facts**: (McCain, 26 September 08) "Now, Senator Obama, you wanted to know one of the differences. He has asked for $932 million of earmark pork-barrel spending, nearly a million dollars for every day that he's been in the United States Senate. …I suggest that people go up on the Web site of Citizens Against Government Waste, and they'll look at those projects…That kind of thing is not the way to rein in runaway spending in Washington, D.C. That's one of the fundamental differences that Senator Obama and I have." This argument could be opposed by countercriticism based on **Other facts/another interpretation of the facts:** (Obama, 26 September 08) "Senator McCain is absolutely right that the earmarks process has been abused, which is why I suspended any requests for my home state, whether it was for senior centers or what have you, until we cleaned it up…. And he's also right that oftentimes lobbyists and special interests are the ones that are introducing these kinds of requests, although that wasn't the case with me…But let's be clear: Earmarks account for $18 billion in last year's budget. Senator McCain is proposing -- and this is a fundamental difference between us -- $300 billion in tax cuts to some of the wealthiest corporations and individuals in the country, $300 billion. Now, $18 billion is important; $300 billion is really important. And in his tax plan, you would have CEOs of Fortune 500 companies getting an average of $700,000 in reduced taxes, while leaving 100 million Americans out….." This argument could be opposed by criticism based on **Rationality / Principle of Efficiency and Economy:** (McCain, 26 September 08) "Maybe to Senator Obama it's not a lot of money. But the point is that -- you see, I hear this all the time. 'It's only $18 billion.' Do you know that it's tripled in the last five years? Do you know that it's gone completely out of control to the point where it corrupts people? It corrupts people….. Now, Senator Obama didn't mention that, along with his tax cuts, he is also proposing some $800 billion in new spending on new programs…Now, that's a fundamental difference between myself and Senator Obama. I want to cut spending. I want to keep taxes low. The worst thing we could do in this economic climate is to raise people's taxes".

Criticism based on the **Substantialist Approach** ("The solution you proposed for the public problem that concerns us reveals your inability to separate the problem from its context") could be opposed using a countercriticism based on **the Extantialist Approach** ("Certainly, it is impossible to use a Substantialist epistemological approach, since the problem cannot be separated from its context. We have opted therefore to define a conventional boundary, typical of an extantialist approach, bearing in mind that this problem has very blurred boundaries").

Criticism based on **Externalist approach** ("The bill you propose to curb the increase of variable X in our country has focused exclusively on internal means or factors, when the existence of external causalities is extremely likely. While we remain ignorant of the identity and magnitude of these causalities, the effectiveness of your policy will be very limited") could be opposed using countercriticism based on the **Internalist approach (**"The internal causalities were the only ones we were able to evaluate with reliable, objective, and precise data. Managing external causalities without any quantified assessment of them will not make our task easier. We are trying to find a solution, as soon as possible, to this problem, for which we have just created Unit M in Department K").

Then there is criticism based on the **Structuralist approach** (the existence of relatively stable characteristics in the system): "The policy that you propose to achieve the objectives of economic industry X has been formulated without taking into consideration the existence of characteristics that could reveal themselves to be relatively stable in the industry." Such an argument could be opposed using countercriticism based on a **Genetic approach** (the existence of continuous transformations in the characteristics of the system): "In the absence at this time of reliable forecasts regarding the possible future evolution of the industry, we have started from a hypothesis that takes into consideration an evolution made up of continuous transformations. We acknowledge that this position is very protectionist, but it is the most suitable." This argument, conversely, could itself be opposed by criticism based on the **Structuralist approach:** "Yes, and as a consequence, budgetary investments could reach colossal figures. It would be more reasonable to work with both approaches, offering two hypotheses: one for those characteristics that seem more stable and another for those characteristics that could prove to be highly dynamic".

We should also consider criticism based on a **Functionalist approach** (the system has ways of operating that determine its overall evolution): "In the design of your policy

for the X sector, you have established its evolution without taking into account the peculiarities of how it operates, which are important." Such an argument could be opposed using a countercriticism based on an **Evolutionalist approach** (in which the long-term evolution trends of the system determine how it operates): "We have focused on what we believe to be most important, that is to say, on the long-term evolution trends of the industry. Because, among other reasons, we believe these trends to be the decisive factors in how the industry operates." Then, one might see opposition from an argument like this: "Both approaches are complementary and encourage success in the direction of the X industry policy."

Given that the activities of public-sector services have expanded to unexpected levels, much of the critical political debate has centred on questions of organizational excellence. Efficiency and effectiveness in public management have become topics of widespread interest and concern. Poister (2003) "offers a comprehensive resource for designing and implementing effective performance measurement systems at the agency level", whereas Wholey, Hatry and Newcomer (2004) "[offer] managers, analysts, consultants, and educators in government, nonprofit, and private institutions a valuable resource that outlines efficient and economical methods for assessing program results and identifying ways to improve program performance." Hatry (2007) McDavid and Hawthorn (2005) "[offer] a conceptual, as well as practical, introduction to program evaluation and performance measurement for public and non-profit organizations", whereas Holzer, Yi and Lee (2004) suggest, "Its coverage of new and systematic management approaches and well-defined measurement systems provides guidance on correct utilization of human resources that ensure improvements in productivity and performance", and Callahan, K. (2006) "explore[s] the basics of performance measurement, and provide[s] an integrated discussion of performance measurement, accountability, and citizen participation and demonstrate[s] how the strategic alignment of these critical concepts can lead to more effective governance".

The terms 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness' are used with such frequency by practitioners that they are often taken lightly and employed gratuitously. The criticism that a service is 'not efficient' or 'not effective' has become commonplace in everyday conversation, in the media, in business, and in government. The present study addresses this debate by contributing some approaches that demonstrate the critical processes that are involved, with a view towards providing a normative model that in turn can provide a critical base for a more informed debate than is presently occurring.

In Figure 2, organizational excellence and rational criticism in a public management normative model are proposed. Figure 2 provides a brief summary of the terms and concepts of the model. As the figure shows, four methods are used to measure the success or excellence of a productive public-sector organization:

Efficiency (relation between inputs and outputs in the system): the input and the output are "cognitive" indicators, which is to say that they express the real observed values (effectiveness ex-ante) or probable futures (effectiveness ex-post) of the company.

Effectiveness (the level at which the output satisfies the planned objectives): the output is a cognitive indicator, and the objective is a normative indicator; that is, it expresses certain preferences regarding desirable future values for the company. Apart from the others, an objective may be proposed: (i) Efficiency increase (e.g., to achieve in the next year a 10% increase in profitability with respect to the previous year); (ii) Social efficiency increase (e.g., to achieve in the next year a decrease of 12% of unemployment in Zone X).

Social effectiveness (the level at which the output satisfies specific social needs): input and output are both cognitive indicators. The impact of output on the dimension of specific social needs (e.g., employment, literacy, transport, pollution, health, etc.) is contemplated.

Social equity (the level at which the output satisfies specific justice needs): input and output are both cognitive indicators. The impact of output on the dimension of specific justice needs (e.g., racial equality, women's right to vote etc) is contemplated. Rodríguez (2002) understands equity to be "the access in equality of conditions to everything that to what one has right, according to universal norms of social justice". According to Ocampo (2002), "To reach the equity, social policy should influence in the structural determinant of income distribution: education, employment, wealth distribution and demographic dependence, as well as on their ethnic and gender dimensions. These factors are the key of intergenerational transmission of inequality and poverty. Therefore, to break these intergenerational linkages is the key of a successful social strategy. This should be reflected particularly in integrated politicies of support to the poorest". Frederickson (1990) "developed a theory of social equity and put it forward as the third pillar for public administration, holding the same status as economy and efficiency as values or principles to which public administration should adhere".

In the proposed scheme, various aspects of efficiency are presented—output, productivity, and profitability (with special emphasis on some types of productivity). The key concept is the global productivity surplus (GPS) (Vincent, 1968; C.E.R.C., 1980), which has not received the attention that it deserves, as revealed by studies carried out in various French sectors, in particular the energy sector (French Gas and French Electricity). The concept of 'efficiency' specified here is similar to the concept of 'eficacité social' used by the French administration. The GPS can measure efficiency and effectiveness, considering the existence of an open system that would result, in our case, in a system of public policies (Ortigueira 2007).

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Parliamentary criticism alleging 'inefficiency' is frequently directed at the economic management of public-sector organizations in nearly all countries. In many cases, such criticism lacks sound arguments (Gordon & Miller, 2004). To facilitate debate on a more rational basis, the present study proposes a model whereby such criticism might be more solidly based on the public interest, which politicians should endeavour to serve.

Methodology

To facilitate the understanding and applicability of the communication model, a quantitative analysis was carried out to analyse the data structure used in a case study. The sample used in the research consists of three presidential debates conducted between Senators Obama and McCain in 2008 (26 September and 7-15 October). The transcripts of the debates were taken from the commission on presidential debates webpage (www.debates.org). Four issues were central to the debates: security, economy, international relations, and social issues.

In the first step of the quantitative analysis, a content analysis was carried out with the application of "text mining technologies to discover knowledge that is buried in unstructured text" (Leong, Ewing & Pitt, 2004). To examine the emphasis of the communication process through key terms used in debates, the software concordance (www.concordance.com) was used, analyzing the frequency of these key words. Other computer software can be used for the same purpose (Atlas.ti, TextAnalyst, T-Lab, and

others). To perform the analysis, the transcripts of Obama and McCain debates were separated, resulting in six samples obtained for each debater in every debate (Obama 26 September, McCain 26 September, Obama 7 October, McCain 7 October, Obama 15 October, McCain 15 October). In the second step, a multi-dimensional scaling (MDS) (Real, 2001) procedure was made to map out the relative positioning of each debater, the objective being to interpret the data along two dimensions. In this case, we are interested in analysing the association of the messages in debates with debaters and the comparison between their use and the results (communicated through instant polls after each debate).

Results

In the first step in the quantitative analysis, with the application of concordance software to the debates, the frequency of key terms that are listed in Table 1 was extracted. Some of these key terms were weak in defining the MDS dimensions, so they were not considered as part of the attempt to find the best fit of data. In the second step, MDS data fit (Kruskal's stress and squared correlation RSQ) for each issue considered is shown in Table 2, revealing a good fit for all cases (Guerrero & Ramirez 2002).

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

The results of the instant poll after each debate are shown in Figure 3. It can be seen that the value for the question “who won the debate” is higher for Obama than McCain in all three cases and that for the third debate, the difference increases.

INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

Figures 4, 5, 6 and 7 show the result of applying MDS. Figure 4 shows the MDS applied to key terms associated with security. This figure shows a change in key terms used in the debates; Obama keeps to arguments associated with negative key terms for McCain in the first two, whereas McCain seeks to avoid them from the second. Obama continues a strategy of attack and McCain one of defence.

INSERT FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE

Figure 5 relates to economy. The chart represent a unified Obama strategy and a trend toward investment and energy policy (expansive strategy), and McCain espouses a policy of reducing and controlling spending (contractionary strategy). Tax policy as a decision is followed by each debater in a different way, oriented to citizen (Obama) and oriented to business (McCain).

INSERT FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE

Figure 6 shows the MDS applied to key terms associated with International Relations. Several country clusters can be seen: cluster 1 (Venezuela, Japan, Spain); cluster 2 (China and Korea); cluster 3 (Israel, the Ukraine, Georgia); Russia and Pakistan. This highlights the focus on issues related to Russia, followed by those related to Pakistan and Korea.

INSERT FIGURE 6 ABOUT HERE

Figure 7 relates to social subject. In the third debate, there was a greater orientation on the part of Obama toward social issues; this coincides with an improvement in the outcome represented by the instant polls after the third debate.

INSERT FIGURE 7 ABOUT HERE

Conclusion

In summary, effective communication can be formulated in various ways. It can serve to improve actions and results in the public sector. Against this background, the following conclusions are presented. First, in the research presented here, the references correspond to results achieved by a previous administration. The knowledge of the real situation is demonstrated, allowing arguments and criticism to be mounted on the basis of logical argument—this extends to, and includes, the solutions being offered. Second, in this case, the argument of 'inefficiency' or 'ineffectiveness' was used by Obama with an explanation that reinforced his arguments. Third, a defined strategy can be seen in the case of Obama, whereas McCain had to adapt to the arguments of Obama with a defensive strategy. Obama's interest in social subject contributed to his ultimate success in the third debate. Fourth, the main cause of the economic crisis finds its origin in a

previous crisis, a unethical crisis at three levels, at public level (corruption, lack of regulations, lack of transparency and pork barrels), at business level (fraud and golden parachutes) and at educational level (lack of values), leading to internationalize these unethical practices.

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Figure 1: Communication model: How rational criticism and countercriticism can be carried out inside a communication process

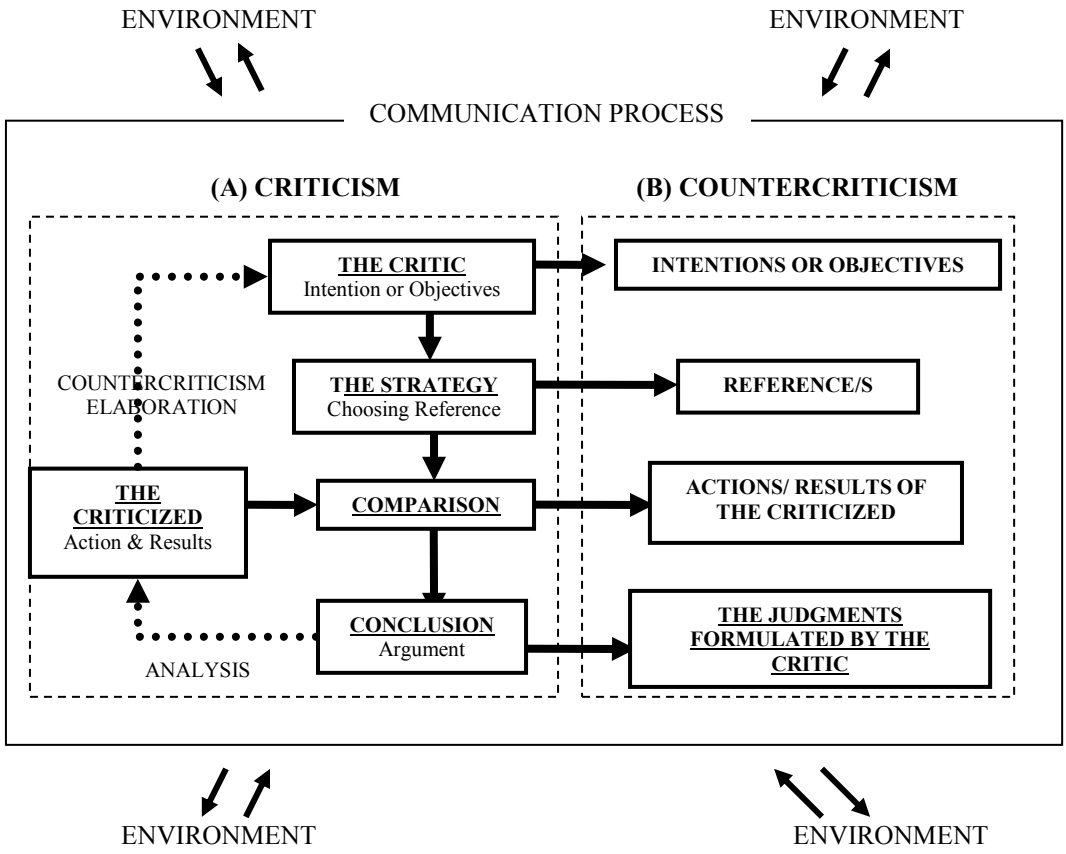


Figure 2: Organizational excellence and rational criticism in public management

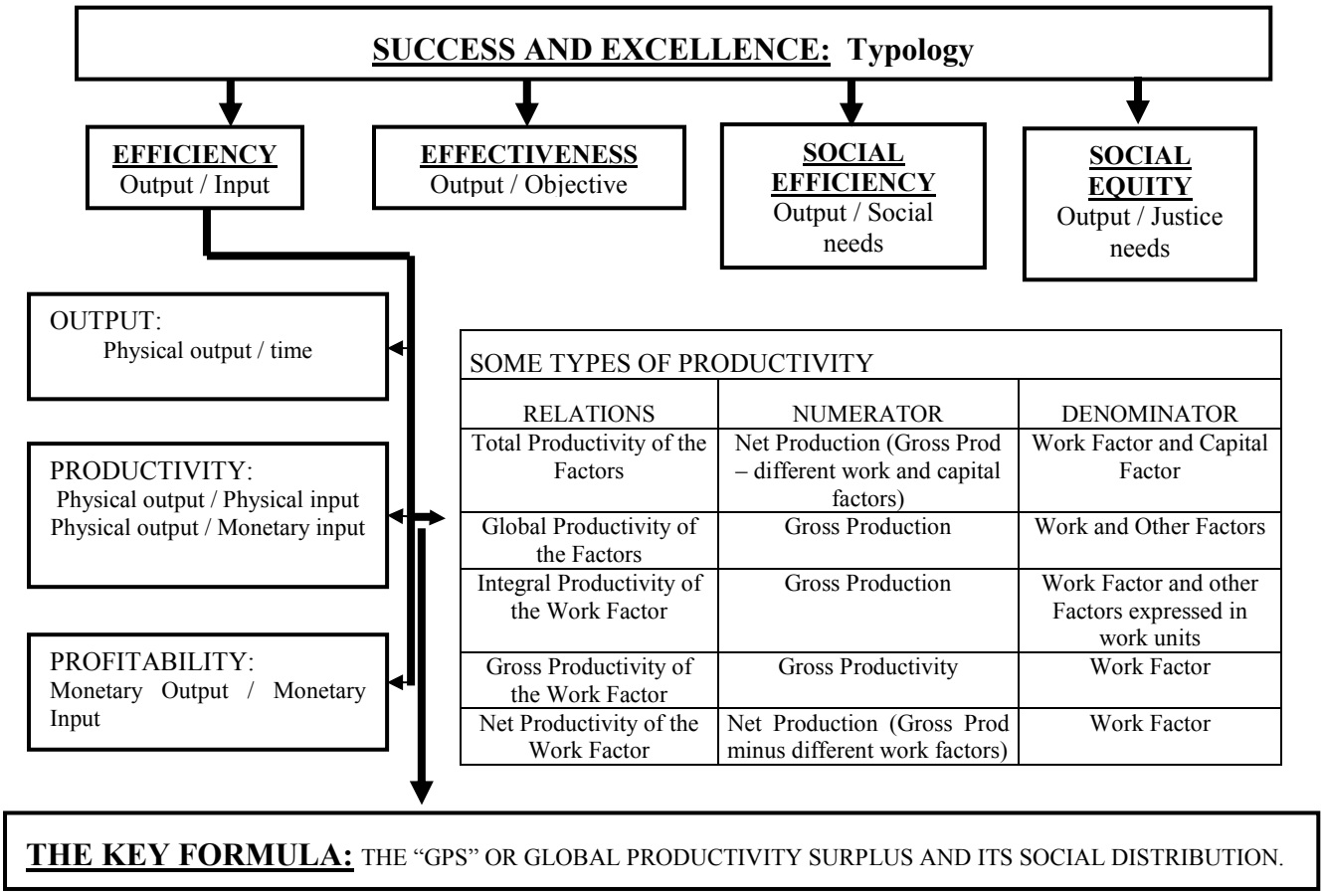
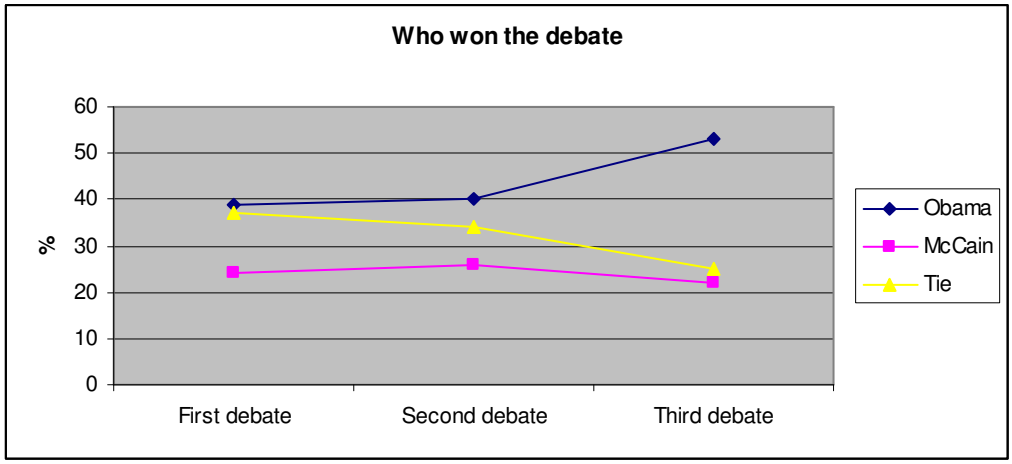


Figure 3: Instant poll after each presidential debate



Source: Own Elaboration based on information of CBS instant poll (www.cbsnews.com).

Table 1: Frequency of key terms

Security

Debate\Key Term	Nuclear	Troops	fghanista	Iraq	Iran /Ahmadineja d	War	Military	National Security	Weapons	Qaida/Ter rorism/Bin laden	Taliban	Nato	Active margin
Obama 26 September	17	18	19	16	19	14	8	6	8	20	3	3	**151**
McCain 26 September	11	11	11	18	19	10	6	6	4	6	3	2	**107**
Obama 7 October	6	7	7	8	10	3	5	4	3	14	2	0	**69**
McCain 7October	11	2	2	7	6	6	6	8	3	5	3	2	**61**
Obama 15 October	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	2	0	1	**7**
McCain 15 October	2	1	0	7	0	4	2	2	0	2	0	0	**20**
Active margin	**47**	**39**	**39**	**56**	**54**	**38**	**29**	**27**	**18**	**49**	**11**	**8**	**415**

Economy

Debate\Key Term	Tax	Spending	Control	Oil	Crisis	Energy	Economy	Job	Corruption	Regulation	Freddie/Fannie	Invest	Active margin
Obama 26 September	27	13	0	12	6	13	12	5	0	5	0	8	**101**
McCain 26 September	17	28	13	6	5	6	3	11	4	0	2	1	**96**
Obama 7 October	23	11	0	9	4	20	6	8	0	3	3	9	**96**
McCain 7october	27	10	0	6	4	6	13	12	2	0	8	1	**89**
Obama 15 October	26	6	0	6	10	11	9	8	0	0	0	10	**86**
McCain 15 October	28	15	2	3	1	7	7	14	2	0	2	1	**82**
Active margin	**148**	**83**	**15**	**42**	**30**	**63**	**50**	**58**	**8**	**8**	**15**	**30**	**550**

International relations

Debate\Key Term	China	Russia	Korea	Venezuela	Spain	Ukraine	Israel	Japan	Pakistan	Georgia	Active margin
Obama 26 September	3	14	7	1	3	1	1	1	9	6	**46**
McCain 26 September	2	17	6	0	0	6	6	0	3	10	**50**
Obama 7 October	1	6	5	1	0	0	1	1	10	4	**29**
McCain 7october	2	13	0	0	0	4	1	1	7	5	**33**
Obama 15 October	3	0	4	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	**9**
McCain 15 October	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**2**
Active margin	**12**	**50**	**23**	**3**	**3**	**11**	**9**	**4**	**29**	**25**	**169**

Social Issue

Debate\Key Term	Education	Health	people	family	Active margin
Obama 26 September	3	10	12	7	**32**
McCain 26 September	0	4	21	3	**28**
Obama 7 October	1	25	23	9	**58**
McCain 7october	0	17	26	3	**46**
Obama 15 October	12	28	35	14	**89**
McCain 15 October	7	17	22	9	**55**
Active margin	**23**	**101**	**139**	**45**	**308**

Table 2: Kruskal's stress and squared correlation

Kruskal's stress and squared correlation (RSQ) in distances		
	Stress	RSQ
Security	,075	,995
Economy	,086	,994
International Relations	,069	,996
Social Subject	,020	1,000

Source: MDS analysis with SPSS 15.

Figure 4: Security

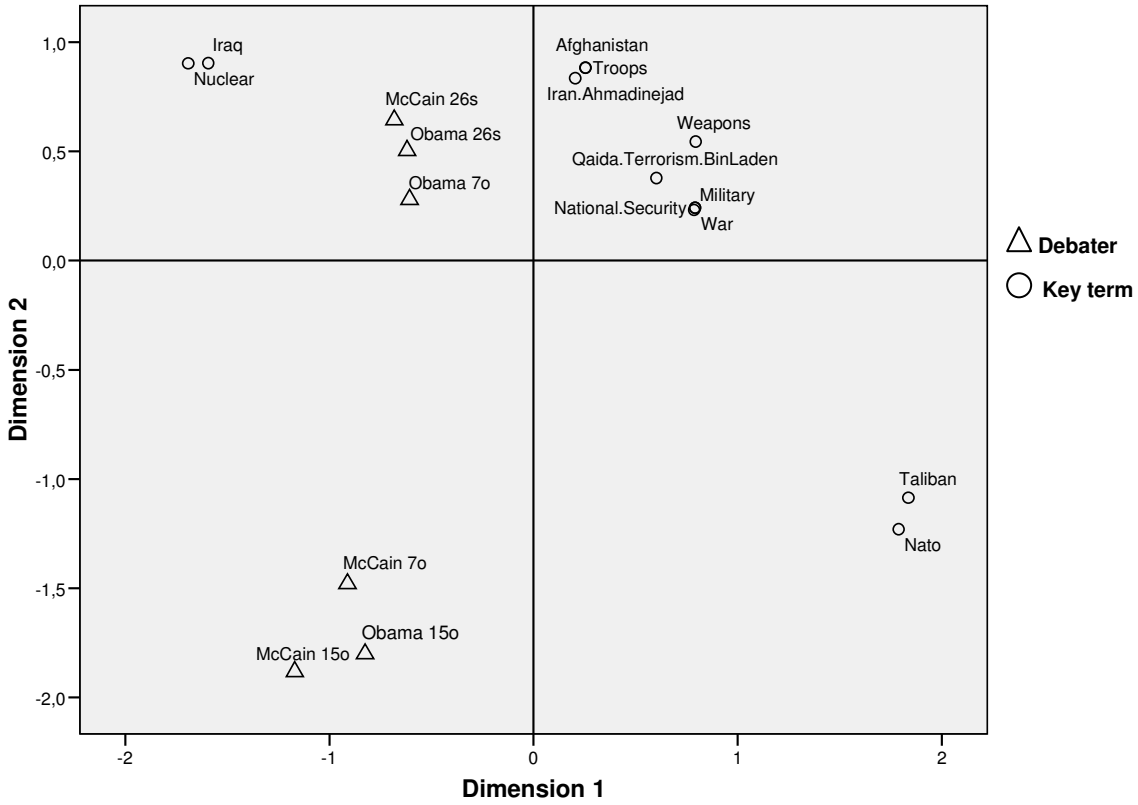


Figure 5: Economy

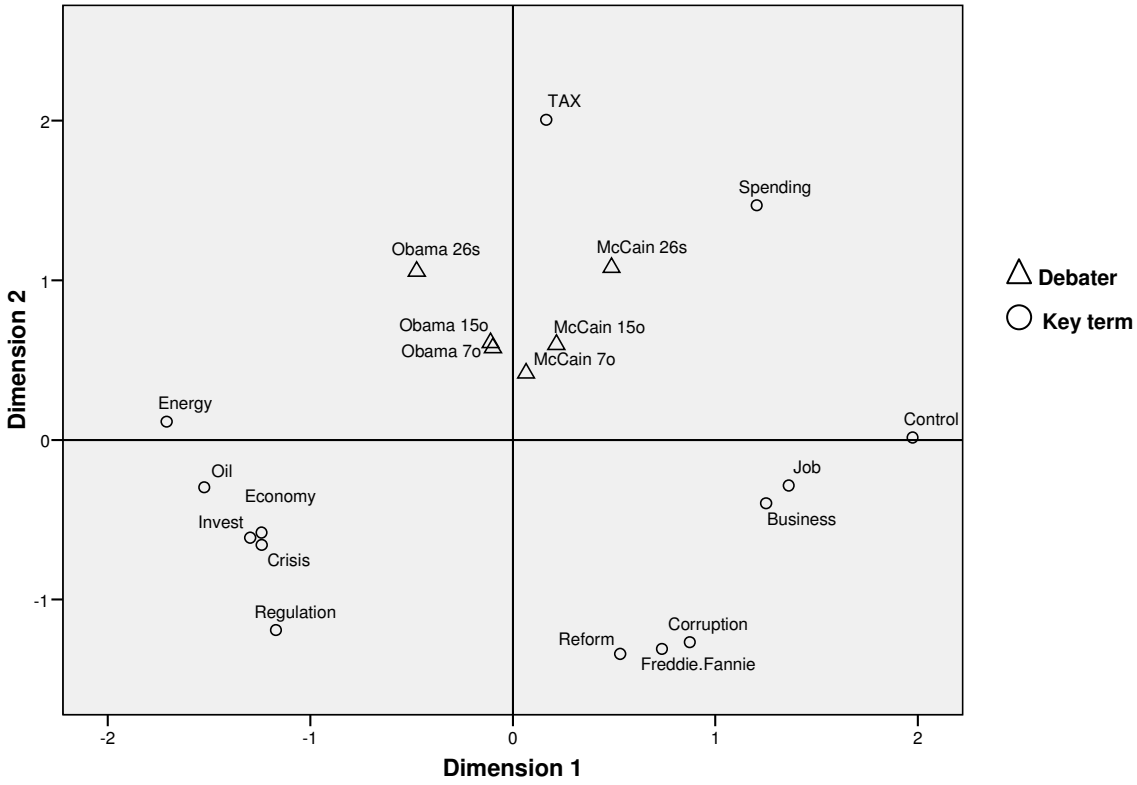


Figure 6: International Relations

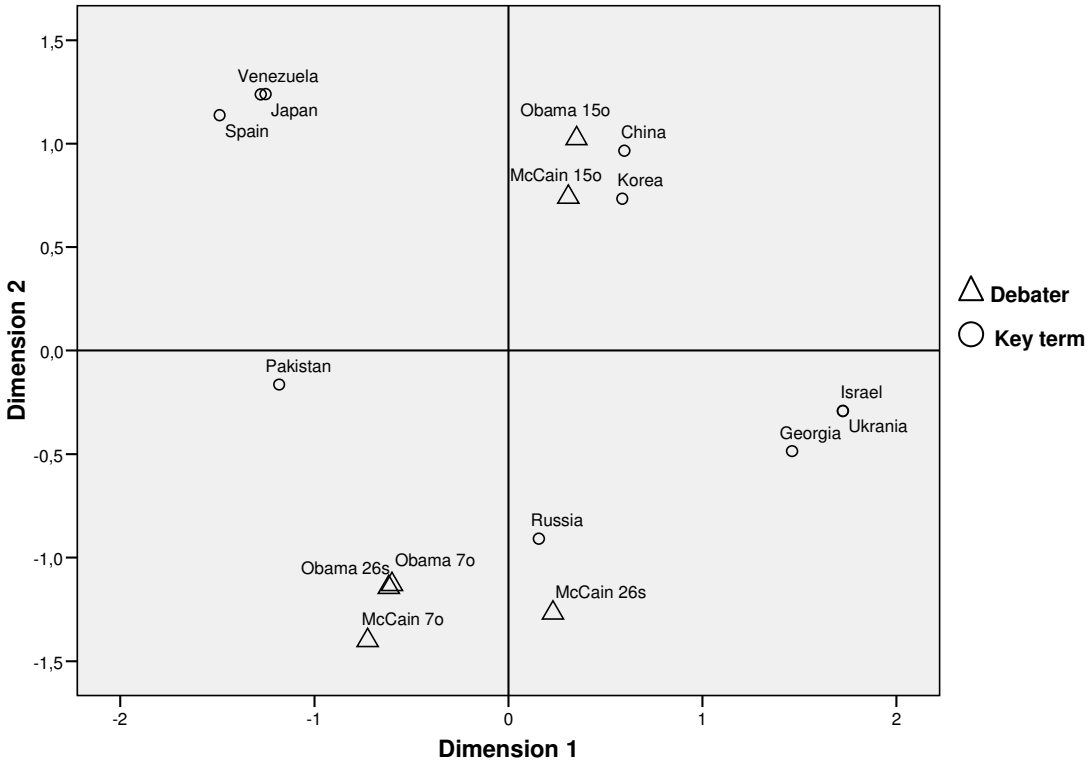


Figure 7: Social Subject