

“How Do You Argue? Let Us Count the Ways”

The Ontario Provincial Election, 2011

REPORT ON A PILOT STUDY
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HANS V. HANSEN & DOUGLAS WALTON
CRRAR Fellows
SAM ATKIN, DILLON FOWLER, LAURA NICOLA & SHANE PERRON
FASS Students

1. Purpose of the study; 2. How the study was done; 3. Schemes and other categories; 4. Reports sorted by source and political party; 5. Arguments that fit the list; 6. Arguments that don't fit the list; 7. Frequency: argument kinds and dialectical roles; 8. Summary of findings; 9. Recommendations for future studies; 10. Acknowledgments.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

During a political election campaign the candidates tell the public what measures and policies they propose to adopt and put in place if they are elected. Presumably, the candidates have reasons for their views and thus they have *arguments* for their positions. Candidates also engage in criticism of their opponents and their views during election campaigns and, again, these criticisms are accompanied by reasons. Thus, more *arguments*. However, since very few voters come in direct contact with the candidates during a campaign, the public depends to a great extent on the media to convey the views and criticisms of the candidates and the supporting reasons they give. Hence, the reportage by news reporters of arguments made by candidates during an election campaign is extremely important for the democratic process, if it is to be a reasonable one.

The purpose of our study is to investigate what *kinds of arguments* candidates for political office use during election campaigns. The recent Ontario provincial election presented an opportunity to put the question. We approached our topic indirectly by narrowing the scope of our study to the arguments reported by print news media, in particular, *The Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, the *National Post*, and *The Windsor Star*. We would monitor these four papers daily during the election period, September 7 to October 6, 2011, for arguments reported that could be attributed, directly or indirectly, to candidates. We would not include arguments in editorials (by editors) or opinion pieces (by columnists). We would focus on two questions: (i) what kinds of arguments – or arguments schemes – are used by the candidates, and (ii) what is

the relative frequency of the use of the different schemes.

2. HOW THE STUDY WAS DONE.

Altogether there are four distinguishable stages of the study: the planning stage, the collecting stage, the analysis stage, and the reporting stage.

*The planning stage.*¹ Since the date for the Ontario provincial election had been fixed in advance as officially beginning on September 7, we began during the summer to make plans to study the arguments used in the upcoming election. The planning included (a) making contacts with the four newspapers to be followed during the election, (b) preparing a list of argument schemes to be used as a basis for classifying arguments (see 3.1), (c) seeking out student volunteers to help with the collecting, (d) setting up an argument collection site with the help of the University's Information Technology Services (see (3.2). (Later, after we had begun the review of the data, we decided to add a classification of the dialectical roles of arguments. This should have been done included in the planning stage.) Five students initially volunteered to help Hansen and Walton gather the arguments (but only four of them eventually participated). Each of the six argument collectors was assigned one or more of the four newspapers to follow daily throughout the election, and collect any arguments by candidates they found.

The collecting stage. Collectors made entries on the argument collection site whenever they had arguments to enter and time permitted. We only collected arguments for the official election period which was from September 7 to October 6, 2011.

The analysis stage. When the election was over (October 6) copies of the collected data were printed and given to each of the collectors. We then held meetings in which we reviewed all the entries and tried to come to agreement about how each of the arguments should be classified. In particular we sought agreement on whether the *argument in standard form* was a fair reading of the *argument text*, and then whether the *classification* was in sync with the *standard form* of the argument. Altogether six meetings were held over a period of three weeks.

¹ In the winter term of 2011 at the University of Windsor students in 01-34-261 ("Informal Logic: Argumentation") collected and classified arguments reported during the Canadian Federal Election. (H. V. Hansen, "Report on pilot study of students' success in classifying arguments given by candidates in the federal election, March 26 to May 2, 2011". June 2011 – unpublished).

The reporting stage. Drafts of the report were distributed to members of the argument collection team and revisions were made in response to comments and suggestions.

3. SCHEMES AND OTHER CATEGORIES.

3.1. *Classifying by argument schemes.* Our method was to try to fit all the arguments we found into one of the schemes on the following list taken from Doug Walton's *Fundamentals of Critical Argumentation*.² We anticipated that some of the arguments we found might not well fit one of the schemes on the list, and so we added that as a possible classification option.

1. Argument from Position to Know; 2. Argument from Expertise; 3. Argument from Popular Opinion; 4. Argument from Commitment; 5. Argument from Appeal to Ignorance; 6. Circumstantial ad hominem argument; 7. Character ad hominem argument; 8. Argument from Correlation to Cause; 9. Argument from Positive Consequences; 10. Argument from Negative Consequences; 11. Slippery Slope argument; 12. Argument from Analogy; 13. Argument from Sign; 14. Argument from (Verbal) Classification;³ 15. None of the above.

3.2. *The Argument Collection Form.* The collection form contained the following fields:

Collector: (e.g., Laura)

Media: (e.g., *National Post*)

Date: (e.g., 2011 10 23)

Name of Journalist: (e.g., Billy Newshound)

Name of speaker: (e.g., Tim Hudak)

Political Party:(e.g., Progressive Conservative)

Context: (e.g., the Liberals' promotion of green energy)

Argument text: (e.g., examples below)

Argument in Standard form: (e.g., examples below)

Classification: (e.g., Argument from Negative Consequences)

Remarks: (e.g., Could it also be seen as Practical Reasoning?)

3.3. *Dialectical roles.* After the review of the data was begun we decided to add another classification, namely the roles that arguments were given to play. Arguers have purposes they

² Cambridge University Press, 2006.

³ This list differs from Walton's original list in that it omits Inconsistent Commitment – we thought it was not significantly different from circumstantial *ad hominem* arguments.

want to achieve by the use of their arguments beyond the establishment of those arguments' conclusions; thus the arguments become instruments used in the pursuit of those further ends. Given the context of elections, we will suggest four kinds of purposes for which political candidates may use arguments. Depending which of the purposes an argument is used for we will say it has a dialectical role.

The first dialectical role we identified is the one wherein arguments are used to introduce or support a candidate's or a party's policy, or proposed course of action. For example, the argument that <wind turbines are a good thing because "they have helped wean the province away from burning coal">⁴ was used to support the Liberal party's green-energy initiatives. When an argument is given this kind of role to play and it only incidentally, or indirectly, is a criticism of an opponent's position or argument, we say the argument has a *positive (dialectical) role*.

The second role identified is when arguments are used to criticize an opponent's position or argument. A member of the Liberal party, for example, made the argument that <a "Buy Ontario" policy should not be adopted since it would close off foreign investments.>⁵ The argument was used to criticize the NDP position that there should be a "Buy Ontario" policy. When the purpose of an arguer is to be critical of an opponent's position or proposal – and they are only indirectly or incidentally making a criticism of the view-holder or argument-maker – we say that the argument has been given a *policy-critical (dialectical) role*.

The third role we noticed for arguments was also a critical one. We distinguish using an argument for the purpose of criticizing an opponent's policy or argument (the policy-critical role) from using it for the purpose of criticizing an argument-maker or argument-agent, or person who holds a view or espouses a position. The leader of the Progressive Conservative party, Tim Hudak, used an argument for this kind of purpose against Dalton McGuinty, the premier of Ontario and the leader of the Liberal party, saying <he couldn't be trusted not to raise taxes if he was re-elected "given that he had promised not to raise taxes before the last two Ontario elections [and] then did so both times.">⁶ Here the immediate purpose is to disparage McGuinty's

⁴ *Toronto Star*, 2011/09/10. "Wind turbines churn rural vote." (Reporter: John Spears.) Data # 32.

⁵ *The Globe and Mail*, 2011/09/16. "Touting job creation, Horwath unveils expanded 'Buy Ontario' plan." (Reporter: Anna Mehler Paperny.) Data # 96.

⁶ *Toronto Star*, 2011/09/10. "Grit candidates defend immigration tax credit." (Reporter: Canadian Press.) Data # 39.

character more so than his or her arguments, positions or views. Uses of arguments such as this we classify as having a *person-critical (dialectical) role*.

Finally, another use of arguments was thought worthwhile recording. That use is when arguments are used to reply to misinterpretations, misrepresentations, or accusations, either against an arguer, or their views or arguments. An example of this occurred when the leader of the New Democratic Party, Angela Horwath, answered the accusation that because she said different things in northern and southern Ontario, she was inconsistent. In reply Horwath used the argument that <“the various parts of the province have unique challenges” and therefore it is appropriate to say different things in different places>⁷ to dissipate the appearance of being inconsistent. We classify such uses of arguments as having a clarifying role, or more broadly, a *defensive (dialectical) role*.

It is important not to mix up argument kinds, as individuated by schemes, with dialectical roles. Most of the of the arguments kinds can on different occasions be put to anyone of the four purposes and thus have a positive role, a policy-critical role, a person-critical role, or a defensive role. Therefore, to say that an argument plays a defensive role is not to classify the argument by kind, but rather to say how a kind of argument is used on a particular occasion. So, arguments kinds, and their purposes, or roles, are not the same. It is true that it is sometimes hard to say what the role of an argument is, whether the speaker is more concerned to criticize a proposal or a proposer, for example. And it is not uncommon that an arguer has used a single argument to accomplish two dialectical purposes at once, e.g., to criticize an opponent’s view and to bolster his own. Much more will have to be said about the dialectical roles of arguments, and also about the four particular dialectical roles distinguish here. However, we think the idea of dialectical roles is far enough along for now to give us a useful classification in the present study.

⁷ *The Globe and Mail* 2011/09/16. “In McGuinty’s footsteps, Horwath takes her pitch to Northern Ontario.” (Reporter: Anna Mehler Paperny.) Data # 102.

4. REPORTS SORTED BY SOURCE AND POLITICAL PARTY

4.1. The total numbers of entries in the data base of arguments collected during the period was 256. Of these, eight were discarded because they were entry errors or because the collected argument fell outside the time frame of the election. A further 15 were eliminated because they were duplicate reports of the same argument event. We thus has 233 reports to study which had been collected during the official election period. Dividing the election period into four weeks, the number of reports collected were distributed as follows.

Sept 7 - Sept 14	68
Sept 15 - Sept 21	70
Sept 22 - Sept 28	36
Sept 29 - Oct 6	59
	total = 233

This shows that in the third week there were significantly fewer arguments collected than in the other three weeks. (The first and fourth weeks have an extra day because they include the day the election was called, and the voting day.)

4.2 Their sources were as follows:

<i>The Globe and Mail</i>	111
<i>National Post</i>	2
<i>Toronto Star</i>	97
<i>The Windsor Star</i>	<u>23</u>
total	= 233

(When duplicate reports of the same argument event were eliminated, it was arbitrary whether it was a *Globe and Mail* or a *Toronto Star* report that was deleted; thus, the ratio of reports from the two papers could be slightly modified.)

4.3. Some of the 233 reports contained more than one argument, and so we found that we had a total of 256 distinct arguments to study. Each of the 256 arguments was given by a member of one of four political parties running candidates in the election: the Green Party, the Liberals, the New Democrats, and the Progressive Conservatives. Thus, we have the following division.

ARGUMENTS COLLECTED PER PARTY		
<i>Political Party</i>	<i>No of arguments</i>	<i>% of total</i>

Green Party	3	1.2%
Liberal Party	101	39.4%
New Democratic Party	47	18.4%
Progressive Conservative Party	105	41.0%
	total = 256	

FINDING 1: The Liberals and Conservatives were found to have about the same number of arguments reported (101 and 105). The NDP had only half as many arguments reported as the other two major parties (47). Only three arguments were found that could be attributed to the Green Party, and no arguments from any of the other parties that fielded candidates.

5. ARGUMENTS COLLECTED THAT FIT THE LIST.

Here are some examples of arguments we found that are instances of the schemes on the list with which we began.

5.1. Horwath used a pithy argument to criticize Premier McGuinty for deciding not to participate in the special debate on Northern Ontario.

She . . . took . . . [a] swipe at Liberal Leader Dalton McGuinty, who has declined to attend a Northern debate in Thunder Bay Sept. 23.

“If you apply for a job and refuse to go to the interview, who the heck would hire you?”⁸

Implicit here is the analogical argument that

An applicant who refuses to attend a job interview is not likely to get the job.

McGuinty has refused to participate in the election debate in Northern Ontario.

So, McGuinty will (should?) not get the voters’ support.

The analogy turns on the similarity of a job applicant’s presence and performance in a job interview with that of a political candidate’s presence and performance in a political debate.⁹

5.2. In this next argument Tim Hudak, leader of the Progressive Conservatives, casts doubt on a commitment by the Liberals to halt construction of gas-fired power plant in a residential area of Mississauga.

⁸ *The Globe and Mail*, 2011/09/16. “Touting job creation, Horwath unveils expanded ‘Buy Ontario’ plan.” (Reporter: Anna Mehler Paperny.) Data #98.

⁹ The purpose of the argument is to criticize McGuinty; so the dialectical role of the argument is the person-critical one.

*“The fact that there is still work going on at that plant makes you question whether Dalton McGuinty is actually being honest here,” he said . . . “Is this just a change for the sake of an election campaign and then 11 days later work will resume? I wouldn’t put it past Dalton McGuinty – he is certainly known for making promises during a campaign and doing the opposite after the votes are counted.”*¹⁰

The argument extracted is as follows:

[McGuinty has promised to cancel the construction of the power plant in Mississauga];
McGuinty is known for making promises during a campaign and doing the opposite after the votes are counted;

So, work on the power plant may well resume after the election is over.

This argument we have classified as an abusive *ad hominem*. It is the alleged duplicity of the premier that is used as a basis for casting doubt on his commitment.¹¹

5.3. Near the end of the election period the Federal Finance Minister, Jim Flaherty, made a speech condemning the Liberal Party’s fiscal record. It is unusual for federal politicians to take an active part in provincial politics, and Greg Sorbara, an Ontario Liberal, made the following argument..

Campaign co-chair Greg Sorbara said bringing Mr. Flaherty to speak before a joint meeting of the Canadian Club and Empire Club was a sign of desperation in the final days of the campaign.

*“Today’s speech was full of anger and vitriol,” he said. “I’ve been in a lot of campaigns, and I know desperation when I hear it.”*¹²

Two factors here combine in support of the conclusion that the Progressive Conservatives are desperate. The one is the atypical occurrence of a federal politician involving himself in provincial politics on the side of a party which is losing support in the polls, the other is the tenor of the speech, that is was full of “anger and vitriol”. In standard form the argument takes this shape:

The federal minister’s public support of a provincial PC politician was irregular;

¹⁰ *The Globe and Mail*, 2011/09/26. “Hudak questions Liberal commitment cancel Ontario power plant.” (Reporter: Steve Ladurantaye and Carys Mills) Data # 174.

¹¹ Here the argument has a person-critical dialectical role: it is used not to disagree with the content of McGuinty’s decision, but rather with his commitment to carry it out.

¹² *The Globe and Mail*, 2011/10/01. “Flaherty endorses Hudak, saying Ontario ‘can’t afford’ McGuinty.” (Reporter: Steve Ladurantaye.) Data # 222.

The minister’s speech was full of anger and vitriol [against the Liberals];
 So, the Progressive Conservatives are desperate.

Both of the premises are indications or signs of the truth of the conclusion, so this may be taken to be an Argument from Sign.¹³

5.4. In response to NDP leader Andrea Horwath’s proposal to create “an independent jobs commissioner whose function would be to protect economic opportunities in regions with high unemployment, the Liberal leader, Premier McGuinty, made the following argument,

*“ . . . the last thing a province grappling with a multibillion-dollar deficit should be doing is increasing the size of the public service by creating another level of government bureaucracy.”*¹⁴

In standard form we have:

Creating the position of job commissioner would add to the size of the public service,
 making it more difficult to manage the province’s huge deficit;

So, the position of job commissioner should not be created.

This is an instance of the kind, argument from Negative Consequences. The evidence for rejecting the proposal is that if it were implemented it would lead to additional costs for the taxpayers, something not desirable.¹⁵

5.5. Of the arguments collected that were instances of the schemes on the original list with which we began, we have the following results:

ARGUMENTS CLASSIFIED BY THE SCHEMES ON INITIAL LIST			
	<i>Argument kind</i>	<i>No. collected</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Negative consequences	47	18.4
2	Positive Consequences	27	10.6
3	Sign	21	8.2
4	Ad Hominem Abusive	13	5.1

¹³ The purpose of this argument is to say something negative about the state of the Progressive Conservative party; accordingly, the argument is in the person-critical role.

¹⁴ *The Globe and Mail*, 2011/09/14. “Ontario needs independent jobs commissioner, Horwath says.” (Reporter: Anna Mehler Paperny and Karen Howlett.) Data # 71.

¹⁵ The dialectical role of this argument is to criticize a proposal.

5	Popular Opinion	10	3.9
6	Analogy	9	3.5
7	Commitment	9	3.5
8	Position to Know	9	3.5
9	Ad Hominem Circumstantial	8	3.1
10	Authority	4	1.6
11	Classification	3	1.2
12	Correlation to Cause	1	.04
13	Slippery Slope	0	0
14	Appeal to Ignorance	0	0
15	None of the above	95	37.1
		total = 256	

FINDING 2: Only 63% of the arguments we collected were suitably classified under the initial list of schemes with which we began (see 3.1). Notice that we found no instances of either slippery slope arguments or appeals to ignorance, and that 95 arguments have remained unclassified.

6. ARGUMENTS COLLECTED THAT DO NOT FIT THE LIST.

Having found 161 arguments that were instances of the schemes on the initial list, we attempted to classify the remaining 95 arguments. We were aware that there were other argument kinds and that some of them might have instances among the remaining unclassified arguments. All argument collectors were free to suggest new argument schemes if an argument they found wasn't a good fit for any of the schemes they were aware of.

6.1. One kind of argument that the politicians often reverted to is that of advocating a means to reach a recognized goal. For example, Horwath criticized the Liberal government for giving big manufacturing contracts to companies outside Ontario. She went on to propose setting up a protectionist wall around Ontario by instituting a Buy Ontario policy.

After touring the Bombardier plant where transit vehicles are manufactured, the NDP leader said her Buy Ontario policy would be the rule, not the exception.

*“We will be able to put Ontario workers back to work,” she told reporters. “The rule has to be Buy Ontario.”*¹⁶

Although the goal of creating jobs in Ontario is unstated in this text it is implicit in the context.

The argument may be standardized like this:

Creating jobs in Ontario is our goal;

A Buy Ontario policy will create jobs in Ontario;

So, a Buy Ontario policy should be adopted.

This argument is an instance of one of the Practical Reasoning schemes. It turned out that quite a number of the arguments found fit this scheme.¹⁷

6.2. We also found instances of candidates urging conclusions on the basis of fairness. A Progressive Conservative candidate in Richmond Hill, Vic Gupta, objected to the Liberal promise to give a tax credit to those employers who would hire new Canadians in order to give them professional experience. He gave this argument:

*“The Liberals acknowledge the \$12 million would only aid between 1,000 and 1,200 people. . . . [Today’s] desperate announcement doesn’t fix what is wrong with this policy. It is, and it has always been, unequal and unfair . . .”*¹⁸

When we put this argument in standard form, we get,

The policy of giving a tax credit to employers to hire immigrants will only help between 1,000 and 1,200 people;

[There are many Ontarians (beside the immigrants) who would benefit from such a program];

So, the Liberal policy is unfair.

The reason for rejecting the policy is not that it has negative consequences, but that there is something morally or legally objectionable about it. Arguments like this that turn on justice claims, considerations of fairness, or infringements of people’s rights, may be considered as arguments from fairness, and they should be identified by a separate argument scheme.¹⁹

¹⁶ *Toronto Star*, 2011/09/16. “NDP pledges ‘Buy Ontario’ policy.” (Reporter: Richard J. Brennan.) Data # 103.

¹⁷ The argument has a positive dialectical role; namely that of promoting a policy.

¹⁸ *Toronto Star*, 2011/09/10. “Grit candidates defend immigrant tax credits.” (Reported by the Canadian Press.) Data # 40.

¹⁹ The dialectical role of the argument is that of being policy-critical of an opponent’s policy.

6.3. There was another pattern of argument that recurred with noticeable frequency, and it had to do with priorities. In this next example we find Horwath making a criticism of the other party leaders to the effect that they are missing a more important issue.

“For much of the last week, there’s been talk about a proposal to help a small number of new Canadians compete for a shrinking pool of jobs,” she said. “We can do better than that.”

Of course, that’s a cue to talk about her plan to pay companies to create new, full-time jobs “for all Ontarians.”

“I think they’re both wrong and I think Ontarians are pretty disappointed by the tenor of the conversation so far,” she said. “While they’re hurling insults at each other ... everyday Ontarians are getting lost in the shuffle.”

There are much more important issues to debate. And I hope we can start debating them.”²⁰

We call arguments like this²¹ Arguments from Misplaced Priorities. They involve a comparison of two or more alternatives, and criticize the choice made on the basis that it has less importance or or weight than an alternative course of action. Here Horwath is chastising McGuinty and Hudak for having Misplaced Priorities, spending a lot of time on an issue that affects relatively few Ontarians (and insulting each other), and not enough time on an issue that affects all Ontarians.²² We standardize this argument as follows:

McGuinty and Hudak are spending their time debating the policy of whether a small number of new Canadians should compete for a shrinking pool of jobs;

Another issue is that of paying companies to create jobs for all Ontarians;

The latter issue should take priority over the former;

So, McGuinty and Hudak have misplaced priorities.

Another argument that involves an allegation of misplaced priorities was made by Hudak when he criticized the Liberal government for not making public the list of known sexual predators:

²⁰ *The Globe and Mail*, 2011/09/12. “Horwath weighs in on contentious Liberal tax credit: NDP can do better.” (Reporter: Anna Mehler Paperny.) Data # 50.

²¹ Following a suggestion by Sam Atkin.

²² The argument has a person-critical dialectical role since Horwath is using it to criticise her opponents’ performance rather than one of their policies.

“The right of security for our kids should come ahead of the right to privacy of sexual offenders, of child predators. I just want to know why Dalton McGuinty doesn’t believe the same thing.”²³

Reconstructed, in standard form, the argument will be as follows:

The right to security for our children should come ahead of the right to privacy for sex offenders;

[McGuinty puts the rights of sex offenders ahead of the rights of the children];

So, McGuinty’s priorities are in the wrong order.

This argument can also be seen as an instance of the Argument from Fairness since it turns on rights claims. But it has a special characteristic in that it makes a comparative judgment, ranking the one value (right) higher than the other value (right) and on that basis it concludes that McGuinty’s priorities are in the wrong order. This is one of those uses of an argument that may be seen to have more than one purpose: it is used both to criticize an opponent’s view and to advance the speaker’s own view. It thus has two roles at once: a policy-critical and a positive one.

6.4. With these new schemes added, and the retrieval of some other previously recognized schemes that were not on the original list, we classify the remaining 95 arguments collected as follows:

ARGUMENTS REQUIRING THE INTRODUCTION OF ADDITIONAL SCHEMES (=95)			
	<i>Argument kind</i>	<i>No. collected</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Practical Reasoning	38	40.0 %
2	Fairness	18	18.9 %
3	Inconsistent Commitments	12	12.6 %
4	Don’t know	12	12.6 %
5	Misplaced Priorities	6	6.3 %
6	Explanation	3	3.2 %
7	Values	3	3.2 %

²³ *The National Post*, 2011/09/14. “Allow public access to sex-offenders list, Hudak says.” (Reporter: Joanne Chianello) Data # 82.

8	Argument from Alternatives	1	1.1 %
9	Cause to Effect	1	1.1 %
10	Sympathy	1	1.1 %
		total = 95	

FINDING 3: By bringing in other recognized schemes that were not on the original list and by introducing two new schemes (Argument from Fairness and Argument from Misplaced Priorities) it was possible to classify most of the arguments that were not identified according to the initial list. Only twelve of the 256 now remain unclassified.

7. FREQUENCY: ARGUMENT KINDS AND DIALECTICAL ROLES.

7.1. The following table shows the frequency with which the argument kinds occurred within the total 256 arguments.

FREQUENCY: ARGUMENT KINDS			
	<i>Argument kind</i>	<i>No. collected</i>	<i>Per cent of total</i>
1	Appeal to Negative consequences	47	18.4
2	Practical Reasoning	38	14.8
3	Appeal to Positive Consequences	27	10.6
4	From Sign	21	8.2
5	Appeal to Fairness	18	7.0
6	Ad hominem Abusive	13	5.1
7	Don't know (Can't tell)	12	4.7
8	Inconsistent Commitments	12	4.7
9	Appeal to Popular Opinion	10	3.9
10	By Analogy	9	3.5
11	From Commitment	9	3.5
12	From Position to Know	9	3.5
13	Ad Hominem Circumstantial	8	3.1
14	From Misplaced Priorities	6	2.3
15	From Authority	4	1.6
16	From Classification	3	1.2
17	Explanation	3	1.2
18	From Values	3	1.2
19	Argument from Alternatives	1	.04
20	Cause to Effect	1	.04

21	Correlation to Cause	1	.04
22	Sympathy	1	.04
		total = 256	

FINDING 4: The distribution of argument kinds for the total of 256 arguments shows that Appeal to Negative Consequences was by far the most widely used kind of argument in the Ontario provincial election (18.4%). Practical Reasoning was the kind of argument that occurred with the second most frequency (14.8%). The argument from Positive Consequences was next (10.6%). We found no schemes to match 4.7% of the arguments. See list above for further results.

7.2 This division of kinds of arguments given during the campaign (shown immediately above) can be indexed to each of the three main political parties. Thus, in the following table we record which argument kinds were used most frequently by each of the parties, identifying just the first five kinds per party.

TOP FIVE KINDS OF ARGUMENTS USED BY THE POLITICAL PARTIES					
	1	2	3	4	5
Liberal (101)	Neg Conseq (23.8%)	Prac Rsng (15.8%)	Pos Conseq (8.9%)	Commitment/ Inconsistent Commitment / Can't tell (5.9%)	
PC (105)	Neg Conseq (18.1%)	Pos Conseq (12.4%)	Prac Rsng/ (11.4%)	Sign	Ad hominem abusive/ Fairness (9.5%)
NDP (47)	Prac Rsng (19.1%)	Fairness (14.9%)	Pos Conseq (10.6%)	Analogy / Neg Conseq/ Pos to Know (8.5%)	

Reading the rows we find a great similarity between the Liberals and the Conservatives. They both used Appeal to Negative consequences most frequently, and they put Practical Reasoning and Appeal to Positive Consequences in the second and third positions. However, the Liberals, showed a marked preference for Practical Reasoning arguments over Appeal to Positive Consequence arguments. The Conservatives balance Positive Consequence and Practical Reasoning arguments almost equally, but next in order they have arguments from Sign and abusive *ad hominem* arguments. Also in the fifth position the Conservatives have Arguments from Fairness.

In contrast to the Liberals and the Conservatives, the NDP prioritized Practical Reasoning arguments, Fairness arguments and Positive Consequence arguments ahead of Negative Consequence arguments.

FINDING 5: The kind of argument that the Liberals and PCs used the most was Appeal to Negative Consequences. Second- and third-most they used Practical Reasoning and Appeal to Positive Consequences. The kind of argument that the NDP used most often was Practical Reasoning, second-most was Appeal to Fairness, and third-most Appeal to Positive Consequences.

Looking again at the chart above, we can compare the parties to see each in terms of the kinds of arguments they used by considering the columns.

FINDING 6: Percentage-wise, Appeals to Negative Consequences was used by the Liberals with greater frequency than it was by the other parties. Practical Reasoning and Appeals to Fairness was used most frequently by the NDP than by the other parties. Appeals to Positive Consequences was used more often by the PCs than by the other parties.

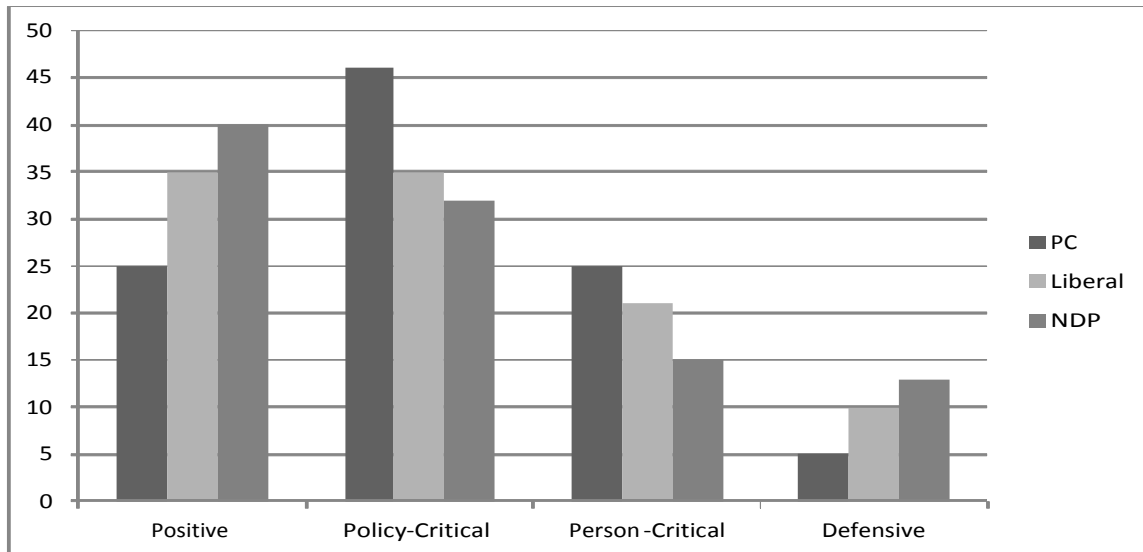
7.3 Turning now to the question of dialectical roles, we first have a summary which ignores party distinctions and simply tells us about the classification of roles for all the arguments analysed.

DISTRIBUTION OF DIALECTICAL ROLES FOR ALL ARGUMENTS				
<i>Dialectical role</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Policy-Critical</i>	<i>Person-Critical</i>	<i>Defensive</i>
Number (256)	81	99	55	21
Per cent of 256	31.6	38.7	21.5	8.2

FINDING 7: The policy-critical role for arguments is the one that was used most often, nearly 40% of the time by politicians in this election. The positive role for arguments is next in terms of frequency, being used just over 30% of the time. In general, politicians spend most of their argumentative efforts (70% of them) supporting and criticizing policies of opponents and backing their own proposals with arguments. Person-critical arguments were used about 20% of the time and the defensive role for arguments was used approximately 10% of the time.

Next, we report on the use of dialectical roles by political party:

COMPARATIVE USE OF DIALECTICAL ROLES				
	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Policy-critical</i>	<i>Person-critical</i>	<i>Defensive</i>
Prog Con (105)	26 (24.8%)	48 (45.7%)	26 (24.8%)	5 (4.8)
Liberal (101)	35 (34.7%)	35 (34.7%)	21 (20.8%)	10 (9.9%)
NDP (47)	19 (40.4%)	15 (31.9%)	7 (14.9%)	6 (12.8%)



Given this information we can observe the priority each of the three parties gave to their own use of arguments. The PC party used arguments in the policy-critical role most often. Less frequently but just as often, it used arguments in the positive and person-critical roles. The Liberals gave priority to a balanced use of the positive and policy-critical roles for arguments, and used the person-critical role third-most often. The NDP used arguments for a positive purpose the most, for a position-critical purpose next most, and for a person-critical end third-most. All the parties used the defensive role for arguments the least often.

FINDING 8: The PCs used the policy-critical role for arguments more than any of the other roles. The Liberals used the positive and policy-critical roles for arguments more than the other roles. The NDP used the positive dialectical role more than any of the other roles for its

arguments.

We can also compare each parties use of arguments to that of the other parties. Here we find that the NDP gave arguments a positive role more frequently (40 per cent of its argument uses), than the PC party (25 per cent of its arguments uses). However, the policy-critical role for arguments was used most frequently by the PCs – 45 per cent of the time – but only 35 per cent of the time by the NDP. Similarly, the PCs also led in the use of the person-critical role for arguments, using it with a quarter of all their arguments, while the NDP used it less at 15 per cent. As for the defensive use of arguments, it was the NDP that employed this mode the most, percentage-wise, compared to the other parties, and the PCs the least (13 percent compared to five percent). Where were the Liberals in all this? Just where me might have expected them to be. Smack-dab in the middle. They used arguments to play a positive role less frequently than the NDP did but more frequently than the Conservatives. They used position-critical and person-critical arguments more often than the NDP but not as much as PCs and, in the defensive category, they were in the middle too, using it less frequently than the NDP but more often than the PCs.

FINDING 9: The PCs used the two critical roles more than the other two parties. The NDP used the positive and defensive roles more than the other two parties. The Liberals use of the dialectical roles was intermediate between that of the other two parties in each of the categories.

8. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS.

FINDING 1: The Liberals and Conservatives were found to have about the same number of arguments reported (101 and 105). The NDP had only half as many arguments reported as the other two major parties (47). Only three arguments were found that could be attributed to the Green Party, and no arguments from any of the other parties that fielded candidates.

FINDING 2: Only 63% of the arguments we collected were suitably classified under the initial list of schemes with which we began (see 3.1). Notice that we found no instances of either slippery slope arguments or appeals to ignorance, and that 95 arguments have remained unclassified.

FINDING 3: By bringing in other recognized schemes that were not on the original list and by introducing two new schemes (Argument from Fairness and Argument from Misplaced Priorities) it was possible to classify most of the arguments that were not identified according to the initial list. Only twelve of the 256 now remain unclassified.

FINDING 4: The distribution of argument kinds for the total of 256 arguments shows that Appeal to Negative Consequences was by far the most widely used kind of argument in the

Ontario provincial election (18.4%). Practical Reasoning was the kind of argument that occurred with the second most frequency (14.8%). The argument from Positive Consequences was next (10.6%). We found no schemes to match 4.7% of the arguments. See list “Frequency: Argument Kinds” for further results.

FINDING 5: The kind of argument that the Liberals and PCs used the most was Appeal to Negative Consequences. Second- and third-most they used Practical Reasoning and Appeal to Positive Consequences. The kind of argument that the NDP used most often was Practical Reasoning, second-most was Appeal to Fairness, and third-most Appeal to Positive Consequences.

FINDING 6: Percentage-wise, Appeals to Negative Consequences was used by the Liberals with greater frequency than it was by the other parties. Practical Reasoning and Appeals to Fairness was used more frequently by the NDP than by the other parties. Appeals to Positive Consequences was used more often by the PCs than by the other parties.

FINDING 7: The policy-critical role for arguments is the one that is used most often, nearly 40% of the time by politicians in this election. The positive role for arguments is next in terms of frequency, being used just over 30% of the time. In general, politicians spend most of their argumentative efforts (70% of them) supporting and criticizing policies of opponents and backing their own proposals with arguments. Person-critical arguments were used about 20% of the time and the defensive role for arguments was used approximately 10% of the time.

FINDING 8: The PCs used the policy-critical role for arguments more than any of the other roles. The Liberals used the positive and policy-critical roles for arguments more than the other roles. The NDP used the positive dialectical role more than any of the other roles for its arguments.

FINDING 9: The PCs used the two critical roles more than the other two parties. The NDP used the positive and defensive roles more than the other two parties. The Liberals use of the dialectical roles was intermediate between that of the other two parties in each of the categories.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES.

We have been working with materials gathered for a pilot study. Our data is not as extensive as we would have liked it to be, and our analyses of the arguments collected is tentative and sometimes hypothetical, but the study serves its purpose in that it shows that this kind of research is feasible and potentially informative. Moreover, the difficulties we encountered along the way allows us to see how we could improve our method and delivery for a future study of this kind. The recommendations below are divided according to the relevant stages of the study.

For the *planning stage* it is desirable to have a longer training period for argument

collectors. This could improve understanding of what the subject matter of the study is (arguments given by candidates), and hence of what should be collected. Collectors should be well trained in the categories being used (argument kinds, dialectical roles). Pre-collection training will also improve use of the argument collection web site. Finally, relations and cooperation with sources (e.g., the newspapers) should be initiated and maintained throughout.

At the *collecting stage* of the study it is recommended that the context of the argument always be specified when entering a report on the collection web site; that sufficient argument text be included containing as much of the argument identified as possible; that arguments should be collected evenly throughout the period of the study; and that arguments should be collected as evenly as possible from the different sources. If resources are available it would be desirable to expand to other media, e.g., radio, television, and party web-sites.

Work at the *analysis stage* can be improved in a number of ways. The revised and expanded list of argument schemes should be used (see 7.1). Argument analysts should meet weekly while the arguments are still fresh in their minds, to review the data collected in the previous week and make classifications. This will shorten the post-election analysis period. (Possibly, some people could participate at the analysis stage who were not involved with collecting arguments.) Finally, the arguments that could not be classified should be isolated and efforts renewed to see whether they don't fit some existing scheme, or whether they warrant the introduction of a new scheme.

A number of improvements can also be made at the *reporting stage*. For the sake of public interest, reporting of the results should be as soon as possible after the election is over. To this end possible outlets for the report (web sites, newspapers, journals) could be contacted in advance. Different kinds of reports of the findings can also be written, depending on the audiences that might be interested: the general reading public, political parties, academic scholars. The formats of the various reports can be designed in advance, thereby speeding the process.

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