

THE IDEALISTIC PRESIDENT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE WEST WING: SEASON 4
USING METAPHORIC CRITICISM

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis project focused on the verbal and visual metaphors found in Season 4 of *The West Wing*. This American political drama follows President Jed Bartlet and his staff as they fight the good fight in the name of American democracy. Because of the time restraints in episodic television series, metaphors are used to connect viewers with sometimes unfamiliar political jargon and ideas. Recurring metaphors are a roadmap to understanding politics by connecting prior knowledge and experiences. This study used metaphorical analysis to examine what verbal and visual metaphors were used in Season 4. Verbal and visual metaphors were divided into major and minor tenors. Major tenors focused on President Bartlet and his administration. Minor tenors examined storylines or issues involving the staff. Major verbal tenors were integrity, sports, humility. Minor verbal tenors were sacrifice, grief, and time. Major visual tenors were foreshadowing of danger and the Walk and Talk camera angle. Minor tenors were connections to voters and fresh starts. Tenor and vehicle were analyzed for both verbal and visual metaphors. The use of dark and light was examined in visual metaphors. The study determined that the verbal and visual metaphors found in Season 4 connected viewers to how the president and his staff handle daily affairs. It also supports those metaphors did help the audience to understand complex political ideas through prior knowledge and experience.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With this wonderful political drama, the writer Aaron Sorkin has created a cast of 'savvy operatives' who you could not only want to run the country but wouldn't mind letting into your life. The sense of brilliant people behaving honorably cannot fail to be moving in the George Dubya age, we need this more than ever. -

The Times (Sorkin, 2003)

In the age of instantaneous access to information, the public is inundated with news on all things government. Coverage of the president is extensive. The executive in chief is covered by news organizations that mainly focus on how he presents his daily activities through press conferences, speeches, and meetings with heads of states (Holbert et al., 2005). The public does not glimpse what daily life is for the American president through the media (Fineman & Brandt, 2001). As the world admires and wonders at how the government works, it seldom sees the daily toil and grind of the White House. In this chapter, *The West Wing's* conception by Aaron Sorkin and the show's reception are discussed.

Political Dramas About the American Presidency

In the fall of 1999, a new political drama premiered that changed the lens through which this genre of dramas was viewed. Instead of focusing on the *what*, the show focused on the *who*. The focus was not on the events, but rather the people in the White House. Each episode allowed viewers to catch a glimpse of what happened each day at the White House. “This fictional show offers something to the American public that it cannot get from any other source, an insider’s view of what it is like to be president on a daily basis” (Holbert et al., 2005, p. 506). *The West Wing* became a series about those who tried to valiantly conquer the quests the president faces while maintaining their morals and sanity. No matter which political party was in charge, viewers connected to the likeability and honesty of the beloved *West Wing* characters.

President Bartlet and his staff worked each episode to make America better. The series played on viewers’ sense of nationalism to create bonds between audience and the series. The popularity of many political dramas can be attributed to nationalism. Nationalism is how one identifies with one’s own country and focuses on its success. The bonds the audience feels toward the country are exemplified through metaphors used throughout Season 4.

Dramas depicting presidents were not new in 1999. Films tried to respect the office of the presidency by depicting him in an honorable way. One recurrence was the lens used to define the office: the reverence for the man, whether it be before, during, or after his term in office (Grierson & Leitch, 2021). The president’s roles are essential in that the public expects the president to take the higher ground to fulfill their duty. Their actions are more important than the average citizens; the public looks for character clues

to reassure them this leader has everyone's best interest at heart (Grierson & Leitch, 2021). Films like *Dave* and *Air Force One* idealized the president as a man with compassion, loyalty, and high moral fiber that makes him heroic and unable to be defeated. These characteristics were important to young screenwriter Aaron Sorkin.

Aaron Sorkin, Creator of *The West Wing*

The mastermind behind the series was Aaron Sorkin, a well-established screenwriter. Sorkin's critically acclaimed *A Few Good Men*, *Malice*, and *The American President* established him as a master craftsman of political drama. Surprisingly, television had previously had no appeal for him (Press, 2019). Whether it was his desire to delve into the world of television or not, Sorkin became the mastermind behind the series. The core of the show revolved around Sorkin as series creator, executive producer, and writer (Challen, 2010). No one questioned that *The West Wing* was in his total control. "*The West Wing* has its 'own supreme being' and from whom all episodes, characters, and energy flow" (Challen, 2010, p. 10). With Sorkin at the helm, the series seemed destined for success.

Sorkin was deliberate in his style and structure. According to Martin Sheen, Sorkin's writing was disciplined, structured, and almost musical. He inspired actors to fall in love with words much like musicians fall in love with a musical score (Jackman & Ruditis, 2002). Previous experience in past political dramas created an avenue to pursue on television. Sorkin reportedly wrote the screenplay for *The American President* in the Four Seasons Hotel. Three important revelations resulted from his time of seclusion. The story of the widowed president who falls in love showed the personal and softer side of the presidency; it also introduced Sorkin to Sheen. Writing a movie about the president

gave him great insight into the office of the president. While holed up writing the screenplay, ESPN's *SportsCenter* caught his attention for the comfortable but well-informed banter between the hosts (Challen, 2010). All these experiences created the eventual background for the series. Sorkin used these experiences to create a series not just about the office of the presidency, but also about the people who support the president.

The American public does not generally have a positive view of the government, politicians, and the process used to run the country. Polls indicate a decline in the public's confidence in the presidency, Congress, legal system, education, and news media among other important institutions (Moy & Pfau, 2000). In a 2015 study, over 80% of the American public reported that they distrusted the government. Distrust of American officials was over 50%; most polled believed the average American could do a better job solving national problems (*Beyond Distrust*, 2015). There are long-term effects of this distrust. As a common theme among both Republican and Democrats, it creates lasting issues. "Efforts to generate, build on, and use distrust in government can have far-reaching implications for government legitimacy, capacity, and stability" (Fried & Harris, 2020, p. 528). Distrust in government leads to cynicism in that society no longer believes those elected have shareholders' best interests at heart. This cynicism runs deep as mistrust of the government, politics, and the nation's leaders seems more common each year (*Beyond Distrust*, 2015). Therefore, many turn to fiction to fill the void the actual government and its officials create.

Reception by Viewers

From the beginning, *The West Wing* resonated with viewers. As the show portrays the president and his personal and professional relationships with his staff, it demonstrated the influence it had due to its immense following (Holbert et al., 2003). Viewers encountered a White House they could be proud of and believe in compared to the real-world situation. It was the first that featured high-powered politics in prime-time television (*The West Wing*, 1999). After the scandals following President Clinton's administration and the unrest and uncertainty in the election of President George W. Bush, the nation wished for an idealistic president. *The West Wing* was a vision of the country's political soul that outshined the scandal-addled, impeachment-scarred, election challenged government (Lehmann, 2001). During George W. Bush's administrations, *The West Wing* "served as a fantasy bubble for battered Democrats—an addictive weekly dose of idealism, collegiality, gravitas, and quasi-Shakespearean speeches delivered on a dime" (Press, 2019, p. 1). Due to technological advancements in streaming and online services, the series continues to garner new fans. A new fan base unhappy with the Trump presidency connected with the series by watching on streaming services like Netflix or enjoying podcasts like *The West Wing Weekly* (Press, 2019). Its relevance still resonates today in the fact that two decades later, the name Jed Bartlet brings about strong emotions of what an American president can be.

Another draw to the series was how the White House was portrayed. Many fans were in awe of the fast pace the staff worked and the intricate problems they tried to solve (Challen, 2010). It is never a dull day as Leo and his staff try to manage and control each crisis. The series gave a face to those who usually work behind the scenes. Although

Bartlet is the world leader, his staff are the necessary parts of the machinery. Fans connect to these characters because they seem more attainable than becoming president. Even after the show concluded, its fan base remains loyal. One reason is the fictional era portrayed a time when all branches of government illustrated integrity, intellect, and wit (Lyall, 2019). Early on, many saw how humanizing politics made for good television. By creating a touching drama that illuminated what facts cannot, critics realized the power the series contained (James, 2001). As fans fawned over the series, critics saw how in-depth themes would make the show a longstanding favorite.

Many critics praised the series from the beginning. They approved of the cast, production quality, writing, especially its smart tone (Challen, 2010). One component highly praised was the inspiring rhetoric, especially of President Bartlet. Although considered neoliberal by many, the eloquent discourse impacted fans and critics alike (Logan, 2019). Many wished for a president who said the right thing at the right time. Critics believed that the series' focus on an individual's character rather than on issues made it revolutionary. Bartlet is loved by many not because of the position he holds but because of the man he is. Deemed the people's president, Bartlet portrays core values Americans desire in their political officials (Muir, 2000). By characterizing him as smart, funny, hopeful, and heroic, Bartlet often outshines the actual commander in chief (Holbert et al., 2003). Critics and fans alike connected to the fact that the series focused so heavily on character since character is a primary objective in a president. This new concept was exciting to audiences because it was something they had never experienced.

Political dramas of the past did not focus on the character of their players. Most political dramas were fashioned after the industry such as journalists and media outlets;

the competitive nature of cable television gave producers a new avenue that allowed dramas to appeal to political discussion, information, and entertainment (Caldwell, 1995). Ensemble was evident in the series and attracted viewers who were not only interested in understanding U.S. politics but became enthralled in the lives of characters who were relatable and had real life experiences.

The series did meet with its fair share of criticism. Neither of the two major political parties always agreed with it. Conservatives decried the pro-government fantasy where the only cure for society's ills was taxation; liberals criticized its primarily white, hetero point of view that was more modern than liberal (Logan, 2019). As the Democratic party shifted, it left behind the moderate idealism of the series (VanDerWerff, 2019). Many argued that the show was not realistic. Partisanship was not as easy as the characters portrayed. Presidents are not always so eloquent, energetic, or inspiring. For many, the idea that Bartlet was the perfect commander in chief was comical. Bartlet always said the right thing because he was not faced with the real challenges of the office. Regardless of its flaws and political shortcomings, *The West Wing* remains an iconic American political drama that is yet unmatched by any other.

The West Wing is unique in that it not only explores the role of the commander in chief, but also showcases the daily role of the media at the White House. The American president has a love/hate relationship with the media. The president needs the media to advance his agenda, but he often does not like the angle by which he is portrayed by the media. The media desires full accessibility to the president and the happenings within the government. To get the story, the media often tries to pressure the White House to divulge sensitive information. Those two missions often sidetrack the other. One of the

attractions to the series was that although it was fictional, it gave insight into how the White House operates. “The *West Wing* represents the fly on the wall that the media wish they could be” (Holbert et al., 2003, p. 428). No other drama had shown the ups and downs of the president and his daily decisions before *The West Wing*.

The West Wing focused on the media greatly throughout the series. The press secretary and the daily press conferences keep the media in the loop. In the series, most of the episodes include a press briefing. “To watch *The West Wing* is to spend time in a different paradigm—to be whisked back to a moment when news still gave the illusion of orderliness” (Garber, 2019, p. 2). As the series premiered, American media was facing changes. Cable news was gaining strength as media powers since digital news was becoming more powerful (Nielsen, 2012). As the series seemed determined to carry on the traditional media roles, *The West Wing* tried to illustrate how not all change was good; there are consequences for replacing human interaction in the new millennium with digital interactions (Garber, 2019). Fans relished the interactions with the press secretary and press corps. New fans who have watched on Netflix yearn for that kind of rapport between the Trump administration and the media. It was an underlying strength within the series that resonates still today.

The West Wing continues to be a popular series even in 2021. Scholars often use it to analyze its social and political connections to the culture of the day. Metaphorical criticism is the most appropriate method to reveal how popular TV programs exemplify complicated issues and ideas for its everyday citizen.

Metaphorical Criticism

The study uses metaphorical criticism to connect social and political concepts for understanding. Understanding the inner intricacies is not easy to decipher. It is essential that political dramas create ways for viewers to understand the ideas and concepts of government. One way this can be accomplished is through metaphor. Because of the time restraints in episodic television series, metaphors are used to connect viewers with sometimes unfamiliar political jargon and ideas. Recurring metaphors are a roadmap to understanding politics by connecting prior knowledge and experiences. Metaphors act as connectors between the abstract and concrete. Therefore, metaphorical analysis of Season 4 helps reveal complex ideas hidden behind the political drama. Metaphorical analysis determines how metaphors are used to explain, connect, and develop both social and political issues and ideas of the day.

Chapter Summary

This chapter gives a foundation for the basis of the study. Chapter I discusses the basic components of U.S. political dramas, Aaron Sorkin's creation of *The West Wing*, how the series was received by viewers, and defined metaphorical criticism.

In Chapter II, an intensive look at the artifact, *The West Wing* Season 4, includes description of the overall series, characters, and episodes. An analysis of both prior and past presidencies brings to light how the show related to the country. I also examine how political dramas convey edutainment messages to their viewers. Filming innovations and nationalism is also explored.

Chapter III defines metaphors, in particular the impact of political metaphors. This chapter accompanies a review of scholars' observations and findings on

metaphorical criticism. Chapter IV identifies steps needed to conduct metaphorical criticism. Analysis includes examination of the artifact, sorting and identifying the metaphors, and the explanation of metaphors throughout Season 4. Chapter V concludes by discussing the effectiveness of metaphors in the series. It discusses theoretical implications, limitations, and further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The West Wing is an iconic political drama that exemplifies the idealistic hopes and dreams of an American presidency. In the series, President Jed Bartlet and his staff fight the good fight to protect and prosper the country they dutifully serve. During the seven-year television series, audience members cheered on an administration who put justice and equality above self-serving agendas and partisanship. Although the series ended in 2006, *The West Wing* remains a popular-streamed series that connects with audiences of all ages and backgrounds (Lyll, 2019). As the nation faced a volatile election process in the past, the hopeful *West Wing* gave Americans hope for a government that could be productive, inspirational, and meaningful. This metaphorical analysis examines how metaphors in Season 4 of *The West Wing* explain and identify words, both spoken and written, and visual images to form connections that create deeper meaning and understanding. A description of *The West Wing*, its characters, and overview of Season 4 will be followed by an analysis of how political arenas and edutainment impact viewers both past and present.

Description of Artifact

The West Wing first aired in 1999 as the fictitious Democrat President Jed Bartlet, played by Martin Sheen, took office. Bartlet is hailed as an intellectual liberal whose wit

and charisma often belie his determination and take-no-prisoners attitude (Topping, 2002). Each episode gives a glimpse of the daily obstacles faced by White House staffers during the administration. Originally, Bartlet's character was a minor role (Topping, 2002). The goal of the series was to focus on those who keep the White House running smoothly. After the first episode, Sheen's charisma and bravado won him more screen time and eventually the series was written around him.

Bartlet is an impressive commander in chief. He has a natural charm that can put others at ease, but his superior intellect is sometimes his downfall. He can be smug and condescending (Epps, 2002) and acts childlike at times when he does not get his way or when things are not working out (Rollins & O'Connor, 2003). Despite his flaws, he endears himself to both the staff and the viewers with his ability to recognize his own bad behavior. He often heeds the advice of others and is willing to apologize for his mistakes (Pincus-Roth, 2018). In sum, Bartlet is highly respected by both his loyal followers and his opponents.

Martin Sheen, who played Bartlet, believed the ensemble of characters forged the connection audiences needed to understand the complexity of the White House. Many believed Bartlet would be the pivotal character, but much of the focus of the series was on the West Wing players; Bartlet was no more important than the other characters (Jackman & Ruditis, 2002). "If an audience does not care about these people, they will not get the series" (Jackman & Ruditis, 2002, p. 2). The allure of the series rested in the investment viewers would make in the lives of the staffers. The focus was on the White House Staff instead of just on the president, although much of the action seemed to revolve around the commander in chief (Challen, 2010).

Due to the number of viewers, the series had a powerful impact on how American politics is viewed (Armstrong, 2020). Because of its popularity, *The West Wing's* political impact is important to note, as it showcases an idealistic view of how the government conducts itself (Holbert et al., 2005). For example, President Bartlet's first term is chronicled in seasons one through three, and Chief of Staff, Leo McGarry, is ambitious to change both the country and the world. However, they endure hard lessons in understanding how government works. In Seasons 1-3, viewers are drawn into both the professional and personal tragedies the staff must experience. As Bartlet and his staff learn to navigate how the White House and government work, their personal lives are intertwined. Staffers learn the importance of give and take within their own party and when dealing with the opposing one. Bartlet's spunk and charisma sometimes hinder his relationship with the military, cabinet members, and other foreign leaders. In Season One, romance blooms between Sam (Deputy White House Communications Director) and Leo's daughter. Charlie (Bartlet's personal aide) and Bartlet's daughter Zoey's budding relationship results in racist remarks, and President Bartlet struggles as a father to like anyone his daughter dates. The season ends with an assassination attempt where President Bartlet is shot in the back and Josh (Deputy Chief of Staff) has a serious wound to the stomach.

In Season 2, as the president and staff become more comfortable in their positions, the president's health becomes an issue, as it is discovered he has not disclosed that he has multiple sclerosis. Facing scrutiny from both inside and outside the White House, Bartlet questions if he should run for re-election. Season Two ends with the tragic

loss of Bartlet's beloved secretary, Mrs. Landingham. Bartlet questions God, his past, and re-election.

In Season 3, Bartlet ultimately does decide to run for re-election. As the staff faces many ups and downs in the campaign, Bartlet must survive congressional investigation for election fraud. C.J. Cregg, White House Press Secretary, receives death threats and needs protection. Many root for C.J. to find love with Secret Service Agent Simon Donovan, played by Mark Harmon. When Simon is murdered while trying to stop an attempted robbery, viewers mourn with C.J. and the rest of the staff. The season concludes with Bartlet promising to crush his opponent. These three seasons create a connection between the characters and the viewers and form relationships that bring fans back for more.

Beginning in Season 4, President Bartlet is seeking re-election. By Season 4, fans are invested in Bartlet's idealistic plan for the country while caught up in his mistakes and sometimes pompous behavior. Viewers stay connected in this season with hopes of what Bartlet could accomplish if re-elected, allowing them to imagine what could play out with another Bartlet victory. Since the Republican party was in control of the White House and Congress during this season, those who had different viewpoints found comfort in the series. *The West Wing's* vision of liberal, populist President Jed Bartlet (played by progressive mensch Martin Sheen) and his staffers served as a fantasy bubble for battered Democrats—an addictive weekly dose of idealism, collegiality, gravitas, and quasi-Shakespearean speeches delivered on a dime (Poniewozik, 2014, p.1). Though they face numerous obstacles in the quest to be re-elected, Bartlet and his team forge forward in Season 4 with the same bravo and gusto as in previous seasons.

Bartlet is the face of the White House, but he is not the working machine behind it. His staff works nonstop to help the president achieve his goals. Leo McGarry, White House Chief of Staff, played by John Spencer, pushes Bartlet and his staff to do what is right even when it is not what is easy. Considered the second most powerful man in the country, he is the only person allowed to speak one-on-one to the president (Rollins & O'Connor, 2003). McGarry's political prowess and backstreet savvy help him keep his finger on the political heartbeat of the times while also keeping ahead of the president's enemies (Topping, 2002). He is a sounding board for the president and is usually the one who tries to guide and at times reign in the president.

Toby Ziegler is the White House Communications Director played by Richard Schiff. He is the hard-nose realist who does not mind going toe to toe with anyone, including the president. Considered the conscience of the White House, Ziegler pushes for policies that can make real change (Rollins & O'Connor, 2003). Because he has seen it all in the political arena, his cynical humor often lands him in trouble. Ziegler may appear heartless, but he has the most integrity and compassion (Topping, 2002). He holds all to a higher standard due to his desire for justice and a better country (Reid et al., 2014).

Josh Lyman, the White House Deputy Chief of Staff played by Bradley Whitford, is infamous for his wise-cracking demeanor. What saves him in the eyes of McGarry and Bartlet is his gift for strategy (Topping, 2002). Lyman's use of wit and sarcasm both aid and hinder him as he navigates this political world. According to Reid et al., (2014), "Arrogant, blustery and often tragically funny in the early seasons (where often he is undone by hubris), Josh sharpens into a more serious, still manic flag-holder for sharp-

elbowed Democratic ideals” (p.18). Josh often makes rash decisions that impact the administration; however, his loyalty to the president and his country outweighs any mistake he may have made.

Donna Moss, the Senior Assistant to the White House Deputy played by Janel Moloney, has a full-time job keeping Lyman out of trouble. She uses pithy remarks to keep Josh grounded while being instrumental in keeping the peace between Lyman and McGuire (Topping, 2002). Viewers noticed the sexual tension between Lyman and Moss and many secretly hoped for their relationship to blossom (Topping, 2002). Donna was easy to connect to because she was optimistic and hopeful.

Sam Seaborn, Deputy White House Communications Director played by Rob Lowe, is sincere and uses his good looks and charisma to do good for the president. As a gifted speech writer, Seaborn authors the moving address President Bartlett gives after an attack and is both humble and sincere in his abilities. Seen as an idealist and a romantic, no one can dispute Seaborn’s eloquence and patriotism (Topping, 2002).

C.J. Cregg, who is one character fans especially connected with, is the White House Press Secretary and is played by Allison Janey. She spends most of her time deflecting questions the administration does not wish to answer (Topping, 2002). As she faces both professional and personal battles throughout the series, she has that girl-next-door charm that endears her to the press corps. According to Rollins and O’Connor (2003), she is the glue that holds both the White House and the show together since she is the liaison between the president and the press. Audiences today yearn for that type of relationship with a press secretary. She is smart, sexy, and can hold her own in most situations.

Charlie Young, played by Dule Hill, is a breath of fresh air as he brings youth and racial diversity to the cast. As a fresh new voice, he often brings issues the others overlook to light (Topping, 2002). He is like a little brother to many and considered a surrogate son to the president. As the president's aide, Charlie has a unique relationship that is more personal than professional with Bartlet (Reid et al., 2014). He becomes romantically involved with the president's daughter, Zoey.

Zoey, played by Elizabeth Moss, is President Bartlet's youngest daughter who tries to live as normal a life as possible given that her father is the president. Her budding relationship with Charlie Young causes some issues. Her father, who admires and respects Charlie, struggles with his youngest daughter dating anyone. Because of their different races, Charlie and Zoey's relationship causes groups to speak out against the administration. Like her father, her resolve and determination endears her to all.

Admiral Fitzwallace, played by John Amos, and National Security Director McNally, played by Anna Deavere Smith, are loyal supporters to Bartlet. They bring more cultural diversity into the cast. Their relationship provides comic relief; however, there is no question that they will protect the president at all costs.

Will Bailey, played by Joshua Malina, joins the cast halfway through the season. Replacing Sam Seaborn upon his exit from the show, Will Bailey is not as suave or patriotic as Seaborn. As he struggles to find his niche, he must work hard to earn the respect of both the staffers and the loyal fans.

Mrs. Landingham, played by Kathryn Joosten, is a key character, even though she is killed off in Season Two. Landingham serves as a mother figure/antagonist to the president. She has no problem pointing out his faults. She speaks to him like he is the

subordinate. Her death at the end of Season Two devastates the staff, leaving Bartlet unable to move forward. By Season 4, she has still not been replaced; as a mother figure and close confidant to the president, she remains crucial to the plot even though she has passed away (Bauder, 2001).

First Lady Abigail Bartlet, played by Stockard Channing, is another strong woman who can speak openly and directly to the president. She is a power in her own right. She is a world-renowned physician who stands for her beliefs and is not above using her power and influence to get what she wants. As a couple, they exemplify a modern marriage. Their back-and-forth banter endears the couple to viewers; however, their marriage is not perfect. The stress and constant demands of the presidency begin to show during Season 4.

Season 4: Re-Election and Re-Evaluations

As Season 4 unfolds, President Bartlet is campaigning for re-election. Toby, Josh, and Donna are left behind in Indiana due to negligence on their part. As Toby and Josh squabble over which way the campaign should be headed, they realize the Midwest is not supportive of Bartlet. The trio slowly make their way back to Washington, D.C. As Toby and Josh spar over the direction of the campaign, they realize they are overlooking the heart of their mission: to serve the average American. It takes a horrific terrorist attack at a Midwest University to help them gain perspective. Sam, who struggles to find his place in the administration, must consult with the president all by himself in their absence. He learns that it is not as easy as it looks.

The president faces many obstacles in his quest to be re-elected. There are terrorist standoffs, debate debacles, and a third-party nominee that could harm Bartlet's

re-election bid. Bartlet struggles to come across as a leader who is competent and current. The chaos of the re-election campaign has moments of elation, worry and despair. Charlie and Abby are concerned about the president's health, given that Bartlet had previously revealed he has multiple sclerosis. C.J. worries about the image Bartlet is portraying as they prepare for the debates in California. It is a struggle between Bartlet being true to his intellectual self or fitting the image of the average Joe his opponent likes to portray. As his staff worries about the debate, Bartlet finally finds his voice and relies on his strengths to win the debate. Bartlet wins re-election easily, but he still must come to grips with several other issues throughout the season.

Consequences

Meanwhile, the administration is faced with a decision from the past. In Season Three, President Bartlet makes the difficult decision to assassinate Abdul ibn Shareef, Qumari Minister of Defense. Shareef, the Sultan of Qumar's brother, was connected to a foiled attempt to blow up the Golden Gate Bridge. His affiliation with known terrorist made him a threat to national security. Qumar does not accept the story that Shareef's plane accidentally went down, and the Qumari government is not believing it. Qumar tries to blackmail the president by blaming Israel for the death of their defense minister. Admiral Fitzwallace and McNally are worried what the long-term implications could be for the president. Fitzwallace, McNally, and Leo conspire to take the fall for the president. However, Bartlet will not consider it. He refuses to allow anyone to take the fall for him.

Qumar retaliates against Israel by shooting down a plane carrying an Israel dignitary. Both the U.S. and Israeli militaries strike Qumar as the situation escalates.

During the abduction of Zoey Bartlet when President Bartlet invokes the 25th Amendment, the acting administration launches both air and ground strikes to deescalate the situation. Bartlet realizes that all actions have a consequence.

Throughout the season, as Bartlet deals with domestic issues, problems in Africa, international terrorists, and the capture of three Marines overseas, the series illustrates the complicated issues the president faces daily. It also emphasizes the importance of Leo's counsel in all matters. Leo is the president's confidant, advisor, and often harshest critic. The relationship between the two is a strength of the series. Viewers see a leader who can handle criticism and listens to advisors.

Relationships

Season 4 addresses numerous relationships among the characters. As Bartlet tries to handle foreign relations, he refuses to address a staffing problem: he has yet to replace Mrs. Landingham. Charlie has the perfect replacement for Mrs. Landingham if Bartlet will give her a chance. Although eccentric, Debbie Fiderer, played by Lily Tomlin, has the gusto and spunk Bartlet needs in a secretary. Her past seems to hinder her from getting the job. However, Bartlet connects to her and offers her the job. He realizes he needs someone to be honest with him and loyal. Although Fiderer is not Mrs. Landingham, President Bartlet is ready to move forward with his new secretary.

Another relationship examined is between Josh, First Lady Abby Bartlet, and Amy Gardner. Josh, who uses charm and wit to get what he wants, finally meets his match. Josh believes he has the authority to put the first lady in her place. No one, not even President Bartlet, goes toe to toe with the First Lady. His paramour, Amy Gardner, played by Mary-Louise Parker, becomes the First Lady's Chief of Staff and uses

whatever means to get what Abby wants. After getting what they want, Josh realizes they are a formidable match to be respected. They teach him that Abby and Amy will not fight fairly.

Sam has decisions to make regarding where his career will lead him. He is given the task of ending the senate campaign of the deceased Horton Wilde. Will Bailey, Wilde's campaign manager, inspires Sam. Sam makes a deal: if Wilde can win the primary, Sam will run in his place. Will Bailey is successful in an election no one thinks he can win. Sam decides to keep his word and run for senate. It is bittersweet since this means that Sam leaves the White House. Will Bailey is then hired as Sam's replacement and has a difficult transition into the staff. The departure of Sam affects all as they say goodbye to the heart of the team.

Toby, who puts his job as his top priority, has personal problems of his own. His ex-wife is expecting twins. Toby tries in vain to form a new relationship with his ex-wife before the twins are born. As he begs her to remarry him, he struggles with what his role as a father will be in the unique situation. Toby reveals to the president that he is going to be a father and is encouraged to be an involved parent. The birth of his children is bittersweet. Toby is torn between elation at the birth of his children and the horror of the Zoey's abduction. He names his daughter Molly after a fallen secret service agent killed in Zoey's abduction. He finally understands the complexity of being a parent and urges President Bartlet to do what is best for the country and his family.

Abduction of Zoey Bartlet

An ongoing relationship throughout the series is between Charlie and Zoey. Their on-again off-again courtship fuels many of the ongoing issues throughout the series. They

struggle to define and accept their relationship as they both want different things. Charlie tries to move on from his relationship with Zoey since she has a new French boyfriend that both Charlie and Bartlet dislike. Zoey graduates from college. As she celebrates her graduation at a local club, her secret service agent is murdered, and Zoey is kidnapped. Leo is given the task of alerting Bartlet to Zoey's abduction. It is an emotional moment as Abby realizes something terrible has occurred. Josh and Charlie are on scene and Charlie's raw emotions can only be kept in check by Josh's cool head and promises to find her.

Both the nation and the first family wait to learn Zoey's fate. Bartlet struggles with how to be the president as he is distraught over his daughter. It becomes apparent to him that he cannot lead the country effectively in this situation. He invokes the 25th Amendment to temporarily step down as president. Because the office of vice president is vacant, Republican Speaker of the House Glen Allen Walken, played by John Goodman, becomes acting president. The season finale ends with Bartlet being dismissed from the oval office by Leo (Sorkin & Misiano, 2002).

The West Wing was not just another political drama. As the nation faced many trials and tribulations of its own, this series resonated with viewers. By analyzing the political structure of the time, presidential administrations influenced *The West Wing*.

Presidents During the West Wing

Due to the success of the series, it enjoyed seven seasons. During and since that time, several presidents occupied the White House. President Clinton and President George W. Bush were presidents during the seven seasons. President Obama and President Trump came after the series finished. This series remains popular decades later,

partially because portions of its storylines resonates with the political viewpoints of Obama and Trump. To understand the political context in which *The West Wing* is rooted, it is important to first analyze President Clinton's presidency.

President William "Bill" Clinton's Administration

When the *West Wing* premiered, there were two years left in President Bill Clinton's second term. The drama was more of a fantasy than a realistic portrayal of the Clinton administration. For many, *The West Wing* was a fantasy in wish fulfillment in the post-Clinton era (Lehmann, 2001). Being a fantasy, it focused more on the good than the bad of the Clinton administration. For those who celebrated the series as an extension of the Clinton administration, *The West Wing* was a version with moral gravitas and political backbone (Lehmann, 2001).

Although Clinton was popular, he often brought on the controversy that seemed to plague him. Both Clinton and Bartlet had faults. Martin Sheen as Bartlet concealed that he had multiple sclerosis; Bill Clinton denied his sexual encounters with Monica Lewinsky. Clinton's crime was more severe and not as forgivable (Sepinwall, 2021). Premiering in a pre-9/11 America, worries of terrorist attacks were not nearly as prominent. Coming on the heels of a Bill Clinton presidency, it portrayed the liberals as almost getting things right (Armstrong, 2020). Bartlet was the epitome of what an honorable liberal president could be. According to Armstrong (2020), "'What if we could have a smart, optimistic, progressive administration... without the icky sex scandals? What if most politicians, deep down, *meant well*?'"' (p. 3). Despite the controversy that followed Clinton as he exited the White House, the idealistic liberal president persevered in the portrayal of Bartlet. "Aaron Sorkin intended Bartlet to be the figure most liberals

wish Clinton had been brilliant (Bartlet is a Nobel-prize winning economist), devout (a Notre Dame graduate, he is a faithful Catholic who confesses on his knees in the Oval Office) and scrupulously honest” (Epps, 2002, p. 2). Clinton could never live up to Bartlet’s reputation. However, Bartlet was not perfect. He too had faults that could not be forgiven. For example, Clinton was infamous for his lady’s man reputation; Bartlet is considered a prig. Clinton’s impeachment was more about his personal indiscretions, whereas Bartlet’s crimes are more serious and have consequences for more people (Epps, 2002). In the end, Clinton was the weaker version of the liberal Bartlet.

President George W. Bush’s Administration

The 2000 election caused a major shift in the political atmosphere in Washington. Al Gore and George W. Bush battled to see who would be the 43rd president. As results came in, it was clear Florida would be the deciding factor to determine the winner. Al Gore had won the popular vote by around 500,000 ballots. However, the electoral college vote was neck and neck (Elving, 2018). At the center of the Florida recount was the issue of hanging chads. Determined a tie, the Supreme Court got involved and ended the manual recount in Florida that could have produced a different outcome (Mann, 2001). The source of the controversy was voter intent regarding the punch card ballots used in Florida. A “chad” is a partially punched card where one corner of the hole is still attached (Levine, 2020). The country watched as officials examined cards trying to decide who would receive that vote. The 2000 election was believed to be the closest presidential election in American history (Elving, 2018). Texas Governor George W. Bush was declared the winner and the country moved from a liberal president to a conservative one.

For most of the series, President George W. Bush was commander in chief. There was a deep partisan divide (Lyall, 2019). President George W. Bush did not appear to bridge the gap between the two parties. Because of the Republican controlled Congress, Bush had no need to make peace with the Democrats. The only time he gained their full support was during the 9/11 crisis. Even in his most unpopular times, the Republican party had enough power to support his initiatives (Holbert et al., 2003). Sorkin had no qualms in using *The West Wing* to discuss his frustration and objections to the Bush administration. “On the most obvious level *The West Wing* appeals to liberal viewers as an exercise in wish-fulfillment fantasy, pointing a way out of their post-Clinton predicament” (Lehmann, 2001, p. 3). The Bush administration gave Sorkin ample material to work with each season.

During the 2000 election, there was a cry for Jed Bartlet to be the actual president. Bumper stickers stating “Bartlet for President” were plentiful, especially in southern California (Skinner, 2008). Sorkin made no attempt to hide his dislike for the Bush administration. During Clinton’s time in the White House, cast, crew, and producers of *The West Wing* were invited to visit. President Bush never extended that invitation (Armstrong, 2020). Sorkin had no love lost for the Bush administration.

For some, Sorkin took direct aim at President Bush in his portrayal of Governor Robert Ritchie in Season 4. Fans were not surprised that the series would be so bold as to create a villainous character to portray President Bush. “It’s exactly what everyone would expect from *The West Wing*. The show has been nakedly partisan for an exceedingly long time and the people associated with the show are nakedly partisan” (Bluey, 2008, p. 1). Many believe Bartlet’s opponent, Ritchie, was a caricature of President Bush. One

similarity was the actual physical similarities. Ritchie, played by James Brolin, favored the president (Coop, 2016). Another connection was that Bush's brother, Jeb Bush, was governor of Florida. Ritchie was Florida governor (Bluey, 2008). Gov. Ritchie was portrayed as an ill-informed southerner who was not as intellectual as Bartlet (Khoday, 2009). Sorkin did not hesitate to question Bush's intelligence through the character of Ritchie (Coop, 2016). Season 4 showcases Bartlet's struggle in deciding whether to use his intellect against Ritchie. Sorkin developed the idea of how to use higher intelligence to the candidate's advantage. Gore was believed to be superior in intelligence to Bush, but he did not use it to his advantage (Coop, 2016). Eventually, Toby Ziegler encourages Bartlet to use his intelligence as an advantage. In the end, it is what gives Bartlet the edge.

The West Wing positively impacted the public's views on the U.S. president (Holbert et al., 2003). Even die-hard Republicans became fans of the show. Although they may not have agreed with Bartlet's agenda, they valued his commitment to the U.S. The series also showcased a Republican Congress that won as many as they lost to Bartlet (Lyall, 2019). Something that stands out is the diversity of fans. One did not have to be a Democrat to love the series and root for the characters.

The bulk of the mail we'd get would be from people who identified themselves as Republicans or said, 'I don't agree with the politics' but nonetheless liked the way they felt when they watched the show. (Lyall, 2019, p.1)

The West Wing's popularity was not dependent on the actual president at the time. Fans remained loyal because of the idea that there could be a president who cared more about the average citizen than his power.

Post-Series Presidencies

While many may have disagreed with President Bush's administration during the original airing of the series, most see a drastic contrast between Bartlet's and Trump's administrations. Fans of *The West Wing* often disliked Trump's style, behavior, and overall approach to the presidency. "For many in the Trump era, the show is an idealistic alternative reality, an escape from the vitriol and ill-will that they see coursing like poison through contemporary politics" (Lyall, 2019, p.1). As both old and new fans utilized streaming on Netflix and Amazon Prime, the idealistic themes of moderation, collegiality, and principles over partisanship shone brightly against the daily controversies in the Trump administration. For example, comparing Toby Ziegler to Anthony Scaramucci, who only lasted ten days, made many yearn for a government about all the people (Pincus-Roth, 2018). For many fans, admiration for the series was not partisan driven. The characters in the show cared about each other and what happened to the country. Characters helped each other overcome any imperfections in the pursuit of making America the best it could be (Pincus-Roth, 2018). "As Ziegler tells Martin Sheen's President Jed Bartlet, 'In a battle between a president's demons and his better angels, for the first time in a long while, I think we just might have ourselves a fair fight'" (Pincus-Roth, 2018, p. 3).

2020 Presidential Election

The West Wing remains relevant in today's political landscape. To support Michelle Obama's Get Out and Vote campaign, the cast created an HBO special reenacting the third season episode "Hartsfield Landing". All the original cast returned. The late John Spencer was replaced by Sterling K. Brown (Lloyd, 2020). As fans waited

eagerly for the return of the beloved cast, once again they questioned why today's American politics cannot follow the example of *The West Wing* instead of the bitter partisan hate speech seen today.

Those associated with *The West Wing* hope there can be healing after the 2020 elections. Martin Sheen, who is recognized more as Bartlet than his actual name, calls Trump for who he is: an actor. Sheen believes that Trump runs the White House like he did his reality show.

He is an actor. Not a good one, because he has no sense of truth. His instinct is to bully and to be what it is all about all the time — all the time. This administration, what the hell was their policy on anything? I hate to say this, but it is a show. It is a series. Every day is a new episode, and every day, it is all about him, all the time. (Henneberger, 2020. p. 2)

President Trump's rhetoric, especially in his tweets, has led many to question his portrayal of the president. His in-your-face bravado contrasts with the calm, in-control personage of past presidents. It is a deep contrast to the fictitious Bartlet. Both liberals and conservatives yearn for a more diplomatic president who is respected both at home and abroad. For many, the fictional character of Bartlet is more presidential than President Trump.

For Sheen, the series was a fair representation of both sides. Sorkin did not attack the other side. He pointed out their flaws but allowed them to retain their humanity (Henneberger, 2020). *The West Wing* brought out the best in both parties. 2020 politics is not about what is best for the American people; it is about who has the most power.

Because the public is weary of this, the series promises what could be instead of the mudslinging atmosphere in Washington D.C. today.

The *West Wing* is a palette cleanser for many who have become disenchanted with the presidency. Americans are drawn to fictional depictions of the presidency and the White House (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 2006). Bartlet makes it look easy; in reality, the president and his staff face everyday situations too complicated to fit into a 30-minute time slot. “A fictional depiction of the presidency offers what we have previously called a ‘presidentially’, or a discourse that democratizes the cultural and ideological meaning of the presidency for the general public” (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 2006, p. 2). *The West Wing* is one of the few presidential dramas that focuses on what can be done for the country instead of showing only the scandalous events that happen in the White House.

Since the *West Wing* ended its broadcast run, US television’s depictions of the presidency have become much darker and more cynical: *Scandal*’s cheating Fitzgerald Grant, *House of Cards*’ scheming Frank Underwood, *Veep*’s incompetent and vulgar Selina Meyer. *The West Wing* feels like a relic of a whole other America – one that seems farther from reality than ever (Armstrong, 2020, p. 5)

President Bartlet is one of the few presidential characters that stays true to his beliefs. He remains loyal to his family, his subordinates, and his country. No other television-series president is painted in a positive light aside from *Madame Secretary*. As the nation continues to deal with unscrupulous politicians, President Bartlet is a shining light.

Nationalism

Nationalism can be defined as “the complex of ideas, sentiments, and representations by which Americans understand the United States and their relationship to it” (Bonikowski & DiMaggio, 2016, p.1). This concept is how citizens identify what is representative of their nation. Nationalism shares idealistic views of government based on history, social expectations, and national pride (Kecmanovic, 1996). The role of the president and other political figures are envisioned based on history and experiences. The U.S. government is often held to a romantic point of view: citizens hope for leaders who put the welfare of their constituents ahead of their political aspirations. These series use nationalism as the lens to help define what the American government looks like due to historical, social, and cultural contexts (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 2006). Modern presidents are compared to Washington, Lincoln, FDR, and Kennedy. Presidents who have served the country are depicted as defenders of the nation even if their service was not in combat. Presidents and their staff are held to high standards based on the public’s opinion of what makes a “good” president. The media, in particular film, often defines those views. Films have depicted presidents throughout time. By the 1990s, political dramas often showcased the Oval Office.

Edutainment

When analyzing how political dramas impact cultures, edutainment helps viewers connect to the lessons being offered in each episode. *Edutainment* is defined as to engage in entertaining learning through interaction and communication (Shulman & Bowen 2001). Edutainment is a popular learning avenue with children; learning through play is an important tool used in primary grades. However, edutainment is still effective learning

for adults. Learning sometimes uses both concrete and abstract concepts through their experiences. Active living and observations help make connections (Aksakal, 2015). Edutainment can increase audience's knowledge, boost positive attitudes, shift social norms, and change overt behaviors around the world (Singhal, et al., 2004; Singhal & Rogers, 1999).

Technology has advanced learning in many avenues. Regarding edutainment, we see it through how-to videos on YouTube, cooking shows on popular networks, documentaries about important historical events and individuals, and through dramas that make connections through relationships seen on screen. One reason for this is that learning is an expected experience since millennials have a better educational background than their predecessors. For example, according to United States census data, only 25 percent of Americans ages 25 or over had high school diplomas or the equivalent. A meager 5 percent held a bachelor's degree or higher. In 2009, the same demographic had 87 percent with a high school diploma and 30 percent with a bachelor's degree or higher (Beato, 2015). *The West Wing* rated the highest with upscale, educated, politically hip urbanites (Sorkin et al., 2015). Today, millennials are connecting to the driven and determined cast that share opposite views to the Trump administration. Viewers are more knowledgeable and curious about how systems work, whether that be medical, government, or any other area.

Accessibility allows more access to edutainment. With access to Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, and many other streaming services, series from any era can be enjoyed. *The West Wing* is popular on these streaming services. Netflix carried all seven seasons so new generations can be introduced to the empathic cast who works tirelessly for their

country (Sandomir, 2006). As more and more Americans became disenchanted with the Trump administration, the series serves as a hope for future administrations. There are numerous podcasts about the series. One popular podcast is *The West Wing Weekly* (*The West Wing Weekly*, 2020). This podcast is hosted by Joshua Malina and Hrishikesh Hirway. Each week the podcast reviews one episode (*"The West Wing Weekly" podcast*, 2016). Another popular podcast is *The West Wing Thing* (*The West Wing Thing*, 2021). Hosted by Dave Anthony and Josh Olson, it too dissects each episode. However, these hosts are more critical of the series and question if the series caused more harm than good (Berkowitz, 2020). No matter which view these podcasts present, they contribute to viewership. This new technology is something both old and new fans can enjoy while keeping the series from the beginning of the century relevant.

The West Wing shows us a world where the political system works. It reminds us of a time, not too long ago, when people in political office took their jobs very seriously and wanted to govern this country rather than settle scores and appeal to their respective bases (Moylan, 2016. p.2). Original viewers can enjoy rewatching the series and reconnecting to characters. New viewers learn about a different time in politics when partisanship was a goal and seemed possible.

Technology also allows more involvement. With the use of Twitter, Facebook, SnapChat, and TikTok, people can interact easily with those who have similar views and interests. They can be more politically minded. In the 2020 election, there were numerous additional ways to explain the complexities of the issues and connect to candidates. On the other hand, a candidate who does not share the same message can be countered with tweets, responses, etc.

Whether it is intentional or not, many political dramas are considered edutainment. Television dramatic series represent the most popular edutainment format as the long-running story portrays the complexity of in-depth issues and connects viewers with social mobilization, service delivery, and policy advocacy (Singhal, et al. 2004). Like the concept of child's play being educational, political dramas such as *The West Wing*, *Madam Secretary*, and *Designated Survivor* help the average citizen get a clear picture of how government works. Edutainment uses experiences within the drama to improve learning by making it pleasurable (Beato, 2015). Many viewers have a better understanding of how the government works after watching edutainment series.

The West Wing contains edutainment content that results in edutainment outcomes. *The West Wing* is compared to a "running civics lesson"; the average American citizen learned key concepts about government. It provided civic opportunities and made viewers question and wonder (Paxton, 2005). The actors in the series help contribute to the education of fans through their own personal experiences outside the show. "The assumption of the back-and-forth between reel and real life was only bolstered by the fact that most featured members of the cast not only played committed Democrats but were committed Democrats off-screen" (Sorkin et al., 2015, p. 138). In 2020, the cast joined together to support Michelle Obama's initiative to encourage voting (Lawler, 2020). There is no denying that they hoped viewers would vote Democratic.

The West Wing never intended to be edutainment; however, it does engage viewers into discussions about the ideology of government. It challenges American leaders to serve to the best of their ability (Paxton, 2005). What makes the series unique is that twenty years later, those same lessons are relevant in American politics. In a

tumultuous 2020 election campaign, Jed Bartlet is still revered and longed for as the commander in chief.

Filming Innovations

The West Wing changed how television was viewed. Sorkin along with the directors and cinematographers created a realistic portrayal of the White House. The program's aesthetics, in particular the distinctive look, feel, and sound of the show, changed how American political dramas were filmed (McCabe, 2013). One important concept was the "walk and talk". Instead of standing and delivering lines, the idea of the "walk and talk" became the new norm. Director Thomas Schlamme is credited with implementing the walk and talk in the first episode (Jackson & Kile, 2016). Actors are continuously on the move. Extras flit in and out of the scene as they scurry like ants to fulfill their task. The sequence-shots are intended to film the continuous movements of the president and his enormous staff. In these trajectories there is incessant dialogues that fuel the constant machine at work of the everyday activities of the White House (Lévy, 2015). Schlamme was the mastermind that implemented the organized chaos that signified how the staffers were always moving and talking (Jackson & Kile, 2016). The walk and talk also created an intimate setting. As staffers or President Bartlet moved quickly from one place to the next, relationships were developed, crises were solved, and plans for the next obstacle were discussed (Lévy, 2015). The constant movement also fueled how the dialogue was delivered.

Methodology

The West Wing uses metaphors throughout to connect to viewers. Viewers' understanding of metaphors helps with the complexity of politics. This metaphorical analysis examines the following research question:

RQ: What are the verbal and visual metaphors in Season 4 of *The West Wing*?

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, a description of the artifact was analyzed through re-election and re-evaluations, consequences, relationships, and the abduction of Zoey Bartlet. I also discussed presidencies during the series run of *The West Wing* and presidencies post series. The 2020 presidential election was examined as well. Edutainment was reviewed to understand how political dramas can also impart education about the complexities of government.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The West Wing utilizes metaphors to create understanding of political ideas and concepts. Metaphoric criticism is used in this study to examine Season 4 of *The West Wing*. In this chapter, metaphors are defined. The works of scholars such as Burke, Lakoff and Johnson, Osborn, Richards, and Foss are analyzed to understand metaphoric criticism.

Metaphors

Metaphors are used throughout Season 4 of *The West Wing*. Prior knowledge and experiences help make connections of dissimilar objects through metaphors. Metaphors are defined as “nonliteral comparisons in which a word or phrase from one domain of experience is applied to a different domain” (Foss, 2018, p. 285). Metaphors have been in place for centuries. Metaphors are seen in both scholarly and critical writing; they can also be found in Shakespeare, Homer, Dickens, and Charles the Second (Booth, 1978). With the revival of the study rhetoric in past decades, metaphor has gained a new lease on life (Franke, 2000). Metaphors are used as evidence for a position that may be of an opposite point of view (Schmitt, 2015). This form of figurative language has become an object of research and theoretical conjectures (Franke, 2000). Metaphorical analysis brings to light connectivity in both research and everyday life.

Metaphors argue a point, define reality and perspectives, and help visualize the world (Foss, 2018). They are often used to explain natural phenomena, processes, or mechanics for those who have no expertise (Kampourakis, 2016). By aiding in the understanding of complex, abstract, and even invisible concepts or emotions, metaphors aid in how we linguistically and visually comprehend (Fahlenbrach, 2015). “Metaphor is a particularly powerful rhetorical device when audience response requires little to no cognitive activity and the metaphor can immediately relate two dissimilar concepts” (Heidt, 2013, p. 235). With the understanding of how metaphors work, more in-depth knowledge can be derived.

Metaphors in all genres of writing successfully communicate ideas and themes. Metaphors are effective hands-on learning (Bougher, 2012). Our language, literature, and art use intellectual descriptions of society, relationships, spirituality, and culture through metaphors. Metaphoric expressions enable our consciousness to express how we understand reality (Jensen, 2006). Metaphors are bridges that connect to understanding of the surrounding world. They allow examination of phenomena in unique and creative perspectives. Metaphors provide structure to data while creating new understanding to both new and familiar processes (Carpenter, 2008). “Metaphor is a heuristic device because it represents a form of analogical reasoning, which itself involves heuristic processing” (Bougher, 2012, p. 3). Life experiences and basic knowledge makes valuable connections through the metaphor. There are many important scholars that provide important insight into the power of metaphors.

Classical Views of Metaphors

The impact metaphors have on meaning has been studied throughout time. Aristotle discussed metaphors in both *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*. Aristotle believed in limited use of metaphors (Aristotle, 2010). They should only be used to strengthen language and style. Aristotle concluded “metaphor promotes to consciousness an awareness of relations that subsist between the objects and concepts that make up our universe (Levin, 1982, p. 3). In both the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle’s main theory proposes that the phenomenon is semiotic (Aristotle, 2010; Aristotle, 2013). The audience must participate in cognitive decoding; the metaphor must be sophisticated that gives the audience pleasure while it will be aptly suited or appropriate for the situation (Kirby, 1997). Aristotle believed that less was more in regard to metaphors.

Contemporary Views of Metaphors

Philosophers did not value metaphors equally. Many had negative views of the benefits of metaphors. For example, both Hobbes and Whatley felt metaphors had negative effects on communication. According to Hobbes, metaphors impede communication. He characterized metaphors as “abuses” because they are misleading. Whatley believed they prevented concise communication (Foss, 2018).

Other philosophers suggest metaphors enable reality to be reinforced through communication. Black concluded that reality is created through the use of metaphors in that each metaphor created a unique reality (Foss, 2018). Black proposes that metaphors interact within systems that are grounded in analogies of structure that has been partly created and partly discovered (Black, 1977). He also stated that metaphors are filters that we use to make associations more so than literal uses of the word are controlled by

syntactic and semantic rules (Black, 1954). In his opinion, metaphors must be critically evaluated to be effective. “Metaphors that survive such critical examination can properly be held to convey, in indispensable fashion, insight into the systems to which they refer” (Black, 1977, p. 456). Black’s interpretation of metaphors focuses on how metaphors interact within context.

Kenneth Burke, creator of the pentad and rhetorical critic, believed metaphors were truth-tellers (Foss, 2018). Burke stated that “metaphor is a device for seeing something in terms of something else. It brings out the thisness of a that, or that thatness of a this” (Burke, 1955, p. 503). Burke sees metaphors of the continuation of life (Fergusson, 1946). The literal application of a metaphor is perspective (Burke, 1941). Metaphors allow one’s perspective to be altered due to the comparison of the two dissimilar things. Rhetoric is influenced heavily by metaphors.

Language develops by metaphorical extension, in borrowing words from the realm of the corporeal, visible, tangible and applying them by analogy to the realm of the incorporeal, invisible, intangible...” (Burke, 1941, p. 425). Relationships are better understood through the use of metaphors, in particular with abstract ideas and concepts.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980a) did an intensive study of metaphors. They concluded that metaphors were necessary in everyday life. Their research focused more on how the subconscious unknowingly uses metaphors to mold our understanding (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980b). Because metaphors are so widely used, they have a great influence on rhetoric.

Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. ... If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual

system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a, p 3)

In their research, Lakoff & Johnson (1980b) surmised learning is automatic. Concepts are metaphorical because instinct takes over. Therefore, the thought process is metaphorical. Most philosophers acknowledge that metaphors have a role in communication.

Michael Osborn's intensive work on metaphors gives a different lens to look at metaphors. He defines metaphor as "not merely a sign that denotes something not ordinarily denoted by a term but is the meaningful use of a sign for this second or substitute purpose" (Osborn & Ehninger, 1962, p. 225). The majority of his research focuses on the relationship between metaphor and rhetoric (Osborn, 2009). He also perceives themes in metaphors. Persistence is the ongoing theme in Osborn's research. Osborn observes persistence throughout human discourse. He also sees persistence as man's pursuit of following the effects of metaphor (Jones, 2019). Osborn's fascination with metaphors helped develop his understanding of metaphor. He had an "epiphany" in regard to how the mind understands metaphor (Osborn, 2018). In this early research, Osborn's research led him to archetypal metaphors (Jones, 2019).

Osborn developed the archetypal metaphor. "It reconceived metaphor not as a literary device but as an event that occurs in the minds of listeners, often with important consequences for attitude and action" (Osborn, 2009, p. 3). These metaphors are grounded in experiences, actions, objects, values, and truths that human experience (Osborn, 1967). He admits early on he was fascinated with words (Osborn, 2009).

Osborn believes there are four sources of archetypal metaphor: light and darkness, the sun, heat, and cold, and the four seasons. These four sources connect to nature to allow a shared motivational grounding (Osborn, 1967). Osborn states that light signifies the fight for survival. Because light enables sight; light allows escaping from danger, discovering rewards, and controlling somewhat of nature. It also signifies warmth that allows man's physical development (Osborn, 1967). Light has a positive connotation that the audience understands easily.

Darkness is another source. Darkness brings about fear of the unknown. It hinders sight and obscures our environment. Being in the dark is dangerous and blind to both hostile and friendly environments. Those in the dark have little control of their world. Darkness also leads to thoughts of the grave (Osborn, 1967). By contrasting darkness against the light, Osborn creates clear pictures of light and dark.

When speakers use light and dark metaphors, they “express intense value judgments and may thus be expected to elicit significant value responses from an audience (Osborn, 1967). This also can be attributed to the theme Of the journey. Classical literature like *The Odyssey*, *Divine Comedy*, and *Pilgrim's Progress* use the journey metaphor (Darsey, 2009). Audiences prefer simple black and white attitudes when light and dark images are used in rhetoric. “Light-dark metaphor combinations carry still another important implication which students of rhetoric appear to have neglected” (Osborn, 1967, p. 117).

Osborn not only uses light and dark; the sea is an archetypal metaphor. Osborn refers to the Auden essay that states the sea represents the barbarian nature of civilization. Osborn also uses light and dark of the sea to explain positive and negative connotations

on the journey of life (Osborn, 1977). Osborn's intensive research of metaphors has led to greater understanding of the role metaphors play in rhetoric today.

Metaphors follow an identification process. Metaphoric criticism establishes principal metaphors and studies the meaning created by said metaphors. Two prominent scholars have created a process to understand metaphors. Metaphors are made up of two parts: tenor and vehicle. These scholars are I.A. Richards and Sonja Foss. Both employ tenor and vehicle to identify metaphors in rhetoric.

Ivor Armstrong Richards, world renowned educator and rhetorician, was instrumental in how metaphors are analyzed. In regards to rhetoric, Richards posits that a conscious understanding of meaning is inevitable and necessary (Brown, 1992). Richard's tenor-vehicle model of metaphor was introduced in 1936; it is the most widely used model in metaphoric analysis (Douglass, 2000). "In the simplest formulation, when we use a metaphor, we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction" (Richards, 1976, p. 93). He stated the best way to understand how words work was to use metaphor as the focus of the study. Richards proposes "that human cognition is metaphoric in nature rather than primarily literal, and that the metaphors of our language actually derive from an interaction of thoughts" (Way, 1991, p. 2). This idea led to the invention of the terms *tenor* and *vehicle* (Berthoff, 1980).

Richards developed *tenor* and *vehicle* to identify the parts of metaphor and begin considering how the interactions of tenor and vehicle in metaphoric discourse (Richards, 1976). Each part has a distinct role. Tenor is the subject; its attributes are ascribed. Vehicle is the object; its attributes are borrowed. The vehicle is the figurative expression

(Richards, 1976). When analyzing how tenor and vehicle function in metaphor, Richards postulates three ideas. Tenor and vehicle must interact; that interaction compares; the interaction depends on context (Jordan & Adams, 1976). Vehicle and tenor is to be considered as thoughts of things; it should not be considered as statements about things or as things themselves. Richards posits that a metaphorical phrase is about its tenor and its vehicle. the interaction is between ideas of tenor and vehicle; it is not between the tenor and vehicle themselves (Mooij, 1975). Overall, Richards help create a deeper understanding of the importance of metaphor in rhetoric by developing tenor and vehicle.

According to Foss (2018), reality is experienced by the language used to describe it. The metaphors selected affect perception of reality. By using different metaphors to describe similar things, these descriptions change understanding. Foss states that the tenor is the subject that is being reimagined. She defines vehicle as the object whose properties are being borrowed (Foss, 2018). Foss uses many examples to help in understanding. Foss (2018) gives the example: “My roommate is a pig” (Foss, 2018, p. 285). The tenor, or the topic, is a roommate. The vehicle is the source - the pig. Pigs have a negative connotation of being filthy and unclean. When using the metaphor of comparing a person to a pig, the negative connotation is easily discovered. Whether the metaphor is implied or present, or if it is written or visual, the universal idea can be more easily distinguished. Metaphors are important as they create meaning in easily distinguishable ways.

Foss (2018) identifies four steps when applying metaphoric criticism to an artifact: examine the artifact as a whole, isolate the metaphors, sort the metaphors either according to tenor or vehicle, and discover an explanation for the artifact. The first step

is to examine the artifact. The rhetor can evaluate text, context, and all-important elements. This process reviews historical importance, historical and contemporary rhetoric, and how the audience feels and reactions to the artifact (Foss, 2018). The next step involves the isolation of the metaphors. At this point, the tenor and vehicle are discovered while deciphering if the metaphor is implied or present. Also, comparisons may be visual, write, or spoken (Foss, 2018). The next requirement is sorting the metaphors by tenor or vehicle. This can be achieved by analyzing metaphors by pattern or group. Sorting creates a clear schema for analysis (Foss, 2018). The final step allows for a discovery of meaning for the artifact. These components allow for analysis of the artifact by asking what is important, what does the vehicle state about the topic, what is hidden by the metaphor, what attitudes and beliefs are supported, and what influence does the metaphor have on the rhetor's world (Foss, 2018). Universal concepts are connected by metaphors. Because of previous life experiences and knowledge of the world of the artifact, metaphoric criticism can help share the messages of the artifact.

Metaphors in Politics

Metaphors are effective tools in analyzing politics. The use of this type of figurative language is a semantic strategy used worldwide (Raphael, 2016). Political science is in itself metaphorical (Lunt, 2005). These metaphors are used to explain human societies. "Metaphors are indelibly part of the political lexicon, providing various vocabularies and concepts to facilitate investigation of diverse political realities" (Lunt, 2005, p. 6). New knowledge and new experiences can connect through metaphors (Kittay, 1987). They explain how individuals, cultures, and political structures can impact the system (Lunt, 2005). Metaphors highlight certain elements of political

discourse and hide others. They aid in voting by helping decipher different political issues (Raphael, 2016).

Metaphors are also multidimensional (Miller, 2006). They use emotional, social, and cognitive dimensions to aid in understanding. Politicians use metaphor to tell the right story. They also help understand the complexity of politics (Charteris-Black, 2011). “Most metaphors are old; some others are new and these shape the next wave of knowledge and action in the world” (Miller, 2006, p. 2). Politics uses metaphors as connectors to what is and what can be.

Metaphors have played powerful roles in the political outcomes. During the 2016 presidential election, “drain the swamp” was a metaphor used by the Trump campaign that resonated with many voters (Gallo, 2016). Many wished for a change in government and used this metaphor as the battle cry. During the same campaign, Hilary Clinton made an offhand comment about Trump supporters being put into a “basket of deplorables”. Trump supporters used it to their advantage and the metaphor ultimately hurt the Clinton campaign (Gallo, 2016). Politicians use metaphors to assist in communications by using them to address dormant symbolic themes that live in the public’s consciousness (Mio, 1997).

Metaphoric criticism allows viewers of political dramas to connect and better understand complex concepts. Metaphors give common ground to people of different backgrounds, life experiences, and even political views. Political dramas use metaphors to paint vivid pictures of political atmospheres, characters, and themes and stories.

Season 4 of *The West Wing* is the source of the current metaphorical analysis. After watching the season twice during analysis, recurring metaphors are identified by

examining the artifact, isolating and sorting the metaphors by tenor or vehicle, and discovering an explanation for the artifact. Recurring metaphors are identified as a line, situation, a place, or an image that occurs more than once throughout Season 4. It can also be an abstract concept that connects to an emotion that happens more than once during the season. Analysis of characters, setting, and events is used to identify metaphors as well.

Setting throughout the season is analyzed as well as dark vs light. Metaphors are catalogued by verbal or visual. Tenors for verbal metaphors are integrity, sports, humility, sacrifice, grief, and time. Visual tenors are rain, the Situation Room, nightly meetings outside the Oval Office, the trip across the Midwest, and the Walk and Talk camera angle. These categories are adopted through my research findings. To isolate and sort each metaphor, it is examined by tenor and vehicle and the implications it has in both the series and in relation to American politics and society. Each metaphor is explained through example from Season 4 and how viewers connected to the metaphor.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the variety of views held by scholars regarding the use of metaphor, as well as a procedure to follow when analyzing the use of metaphors. Examples provided include recent metaphors used in political campaigns. Using the lens of metaphor, Chapter 4 analyzes the metaphors found in Season 4 of NBC's *West Wing*.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Metaphors help the audience relate to the themes and ideas throughout *The West Wing*. Sorkin and his team of writers use them to connect themes of episodes and make them easier to comprehend. Metaphors enable the audience to connect to the storylines and assist in their comprehension of the overall themes. To understand what metaphors are used and how they are constructed in Season 4 of *The West Wing*, this chapter discusses setting, and the tenor and vehicles found in verbal and visual metaphors.

Setting

Setting is a critical guide in understanding metaphors. The place of action helps the audience connect to the metaphors found in each episode. Setting for *The West Wing* is not simply one location during one specific time. It can be the place of action such as the Oval Office or more intricate like the campaign trail. For the average American, not much is known about the White House. Although tours and documentaries give a glimpse into the home and workplace of the president, there is little known of this national establishment. In particular, the West Wing is central to the daily activities of the president and his staff. *The West Wing* settings connect the audience to the fast pace of the daily activities of the White House. It gives an intimate look into how staffers and Bartlet work to advance their policies.

There are numerous settings throughout Season 4. The central setting is the White House. Episodes take place throughout the White House in the Oval Office, Leo's office, and the staffers' offices. Many scenes also take place in the Situation Room, the residency, and outside of the Oval Office. The White House Press Room is another important setting throughout the season.

An important setting in this season is the campaign trail. Episodes 1 and 2 focus on Bartlet campaigning across the Midwest as he prepares for re-election. The contrasting settings of the outdoors seen throughout rural America and the non-stop bustle of the White House paint a vivid picture of the differences between the two worlds. For example, Toby and Josh become frustrated with the slow transportation system in the Midwest compared to the fast pace of Washington, D.C.

Bartlet also visits California for the debate between Ritchie and to campaign for Sam Seaborn. It is an important place as Bartlet's re-election hangs in the balance depending on the outcome of the debate. As Will Bailey works fervently to help Horton Wilde win posthumously, California is also an important setting during election night and throughout Sam's campaign for the seat. The trips to California are not always positive. When the team travels to California to campaign for Sam, one catastrophe after another occurs. An exasperated Bartlet proclaims, "Every time we come to Southern California, we are absolutely the Clampetts" (Episode 16:38:23). The Clampetts were a hillbilly family who moved to California after discovering gold on their land. They were considered backwards and unsophisticated. This comparison to the famous television country bumpkins is not a compliment. Bartlet feels as if they always make fools of

themselves in this primarily Republican part of California. Southern California is not a fan of the president and his staff.

Another setting seen frequently is Air Force One. Bartlet has no down time while traveling from one destination to the next. He is always seen working while traveling. Even when there is an issue with the landing gear on Air Force One, Bartlet continues to maintain his schedule (Episode 19). For example, there is a deadline Bartlet tries to make while the aircraft experiences landing gear problems. These settings establish that President Bartlet is always commander in chief no matter the location.

Setting is important in analyzing how metaphors impact meaning. Understanding where the action takes place gives the audience connectors to the message being shared. The filming of the setting is important because it sets the pace of both the action and the dialogue.

Isolating and Sorting the Metaphors

To understand how a metaphor conveys meaning, it is important to isolate and sort each metaphor. In Season 4, the metaphors can be categorized as verbal and visual metaphors. Verbal and visual metaphors are divided into two categories: major and minor. These categories are divided based on their relevance to Bartlet and his administration.

Table 1

Metaphors in Season 4 of The West Wing

Major Verbal Metaphors

Tenor	Vehicles
Integrity	Didn't cut and run In it to win it You don't owe me The Heartland
Sports	Calling audibles Winners want the ball I called the play That is the ballgame Just throw strikes
Humility	Smartest kid in the class

Minor Verbal Metaphors

Tenor	Vehicles
Sacrifice	Angels Heroes
Grief	The Long Goodbye
Time	The Watch

Major and Minor Verbal Metaphors

Metaphors used through verbal communication use words to connect ideas.

Verbal metaphors aid in making sense of abstract ideas such as integrity, humility, and

grief (Moss et al., 2003). In terms of verbal metaphor, someone speaks of one thing in terms of a different kind of thing (Dent & Rosenberg, 1990). The major verbal metaphors use the tenors of integrity, sports, and humility. Minor verbal tenors are sacrifice, grief, and time.

Integrity

Honesty and a high moral code are important characteristics in all cultures. They are positive attributes in leaders, especially government leaders. Integrity is something all candidates claim to have; whether they exhibit it is another story. When defining integrity in the political arena, it focuses heavily on the moral behaviors of those who govern. Integrity is about the moral quality of behavior in the process of governance, not about the content of decisions and societal outcomes. It concerns “moral quality,” the essentials of good or bad in how to operate, with reference to the “valid” moral values and norms in the eyes of the relevant publics (Huberts, 2018, p. S28). Presidents throughout history have faced scrutiny over unethical decisions or moral corruptions. Even popular presidents like John F. Kennedy and Bill Clinton had their integrity called into question. Because it is an important characteristic, audiences connect to the idea that the president and his staff should have integrity.

Bartlet’s re-election is a central storyline in Season 4. Both the president and the staffers struggle to determine the best course of action. Integrity is a theme seen in many episodes. The tenor is integrity. The vehicles are “didn’t cut and run,” “in it to win it,” “you don’t owe me,” and “the heartland”.

Sports

Sports metaphors are commonly used in literature, television, and everyday occurrences in our culture. They are deep-rooted in our lexicon and are handed down from generation to generation (Mather, 2018). These metaphors use the connections to competition and success to relate to politics (Taylor, 2017). Sports references are commonly used in *The West Wing*. Because of the popularity of sports in the United States, the audience easily recognizes and connects to them. In Season 4, sports is a prominent tenor. The vehicles are “calling for audibles,” “winners want the ball,” “I called the play,” “that is the ball game,” and “just throw strikes.”

Humility

Humility is an admirable characteristic. Humbleness is to accept one’s humility and acknowledge one’s weaknesses (Exline & Geyer, 2004). Humility is a powerful symbol throughout each episode. These connections to characters gives the audience an intimate look into their lives. The tenor is humility. One vehicle for humility is “the smartest kid in the class”. Being humble is a virtuous characteristic that allows an audience to connect with these fictional characters.

Sacrifice

Another valuable characteristic many identify with is sacrifice. Sacrifice is found throughout contemporary rhetoric of politics, religion, and popular culture (Watts, 2011). There are many examples of sacrifice in Season 4. Sacrifice is another quality that Americans celebrate. For the tenor of sacrifice, “angels” and “heroes” are vehicles that showcase the American spirit during a difficult time in the country.

Grief

Grief is an unfortunate occurrence in everyone's life. Grief is when someone experiences a loss that can be or cannot be openly acknowledged, mourned, or socially supported (Moss et al., 2003). Most adults go through the process of watching parents face deterioration and death. As C.J.'s father faces Alzheimer's Disease, she must deal with the grief. Grief is the tenor for the vehicle "a long goodbye."

Time

Society measures by time. It is used to measure seconds, minutes, hours, days, and a lifetime. Referring to "our time" means the amount of time left to accomplish something or be involved in something. Time becomes important to C.J. as her father faces the terrible outcomes of Talmidge's Alzheimer's disease. The tenor is time. The vehicle is the watch.

Table 2

Metaphors in Season 4 of The West Wing

Major Visual Metaphors	
Tenor	Vehicle
Foreshadowing of Danger	Situation Room Nightly Meetings Outside Oval Office
Walk and Talk	Bartlet and Staff Walking Debate Camp
Minor Visual Metaphors	
Tenor	Vehicle
Connections to voters	Trip across Midwest
Fresh Start	Rain

Major and Minor Visual Metaphors

Visual metaphors allow for understanding by creating a visual picture for the audience. Visual metaphors have an impact on how the audience's connection to the message is relayed. Important major visual tenors in Season 4 are foreshadowing of danger and the Walk and Talk camera angles. Minor visual tenors are connections to voters and fresh starts.

Foreshadowing of Danger

Danger is an understood job requirement for the president. Presidents must maintain peace both domestically and internationally. As commander in chief, Bartlet faces many ominous situations as he tries to maintain peace and stability. Often danger is foreshadowed to the audience in order to prepare them for what is ahead. The tenor for the visual metaphor is foreshadowing of danger. The vehicles are the Situation Room and nightly meetings outside the Oval Office. The use of lighting is an essential component to foreshadowing the dangers ahead.

Walk and Talk Camera Angles

Sorkin and his team utilized the concept of moving while actors said dialogue. The Walk and Talk establishes the fast pace of the West Wing. The tenor is Walk and Talk camera angles. The vehicles are Bartlet and staff walking and the debate camp. This technique lets the audience see what daily activity looks like within the administration.

Connections to Voters

Politicians need to have a relationship with voters in order to be successful. As seen with past presidencies, presidents who won over voters for their first term are not always successful in their bids for re-election. In Season 4, Bartlet and his staff must find

the connection to voters needed to win. As Toby, Josh, and Donna trek across the Midwest, they discover there are problems with Bartlet's image. The tenor is connections to voters. The vehicle is the trip across the Midwest. The trip helps the audience visualize how different the demographics are from each other.

Fresh Starts

Candidates with little hope of being elected often look for fresh starts to boost the campaign. Will Bailey tries to breathe life into a literally dead campaign – Horton Wilde dies before the election. Against the odds, Will tries to start over. The tenor is fresh starts. The vehicle is rain. The visualization of rain shows the audience that fresh starts are possible.

Analyzing the Metaphors

To understand how the tenor relates to the metaphor, each vehicle is analyzed. The vehicles for both the major and minor verbal and visual tenors are examined to illustrate how each tenor and vehicle is either a verbal or visual metaphor.

Major and Minor Verbal Tenors

Integrity

Integrity and politics are not usually paired together today. The idealistic staffers and president in *The West Wing* often face choices between doing what is right and doing anything to win. The tenor is integrity. The first vehicle that supports integrity is “in it to win it.” In the California 47th, Democratic candidate Horton Wilde passes away before the election. Will Bailey, Wilde's campaign manager, refuses to end the campaign of Horton. He repeatedly says, “We're in this to win it” (Episode 4:11:39). Will shows integrity by finishing what he starts when everyone else suggests that he quits. “In it to

win it” supports the tenor by illustrating that integrity often means completing something that may not end well. Will’s determination to continue Horton Wilde’s campaign symbolizes his dedication to the campaign and to Wilde. Despite the odds, Wilde wins and Will is able to hold his head high knowing that he ran a clean and upbeat campaign. Wilde’s victory leads to the next vehicle. The vehicle “didn’t cut and run” emphasizes Sam’s integrity. Sam promises to run in Wilde’s place if Wilde wins posthumously. Sam keeps his promise even when the impossible happens. This vehicle supports the tenor of integrity because Sam gave his word. Keeping his promise is more important to Sam than facing the repercussions from losing.

In the face of adversity, one must decide to save oneself or stand up to the foe. A vehicle for integrity is “didn’t cut and run.” Sam enters a no-win situation in the running for the 47th in California. In a conservative district, there is no hope for a democratic victory. Sam decides to keep his word and risk his reputation and future career. At the end, Sam realizes his support is waning. He feels frustrated that he is going to lose. Toby offers wise advice. “The story is going to be that you had the guts to stand up for what you believe in; you didn’t cut and run” (Episode 17: 39:42). By not quitting the race, Sam shows integrity by following through to the end. Sam cares more about the issues than he does about his personal gain. His integrity means more to him than winning.

Integrity is not a value always portrayed by politicians. Washington, D.C. is known for expecting favors to be returned. There are numerous examples of how politicians use favors unethically. One example is former Illinois Gov. Rob Blagojevich. He faced controversy after it was discovered he tried to trade Obama’s senate seat for a position for himself in the Obama administration (Davey & Smith, 2020). California Rep.

Duke Cunningham resigned after pleading guilty to accepting \$2.4 million in bribes from military contractors (Perry, 2005). The “Keating Five” involved five powerful senators who asked a federal agency not to investigate Lincoln Savings and Loan Association for risky investments. This favor was done for Charles Keating, owner of Lincoln Savings who contributed heavily to each senator’s campaign (*When power corrupts*, 2016).

Washington D.C. understands that favors is a currency in politics; deals calling in favors happen almost every day (Easter, 2009). These examples give cause to question integrity among politicians.

However, there are some politicians who do what is right and do not expect reciprocation. A vehicle for integrity is “you don’t owe me.” Such is the case for former Sen. Karin Kroft. Toby feels obligated to help Karin Kroft, played by Lucinda Jenney, who lost her seat after introducing an unpopular gas tax on behalf of the White House. Toby feels guilt that she is unseated. However, Kroft believes the administration owes her nothing. “I’ve made a lot of enemies on the Hill. You don’t owe me” (Episode 9:35:33). Kroft’s integrity matters more to her than keeping her seat. Kroft’s belief that the greater good was served shows her integrity and dedication to a cause she genuinely believes in no matter the outcome.

Integrity is important to most Americans. The heartland is often referred to as the heartbeat of America. However, when *The West Wing* was filmed, the heartland was synonymous with honesty and integrity. The tenor “the heartland” connects to these ideas. Toby, Josh, and Donna miss the motorcade and the plane back to Washington D.C. They encounter many obstacles as they scramble to get back to the White House. Toby and Josh are so focused on the campaign, and they ignore the heartland’s concerns. First,

they face hostility and negativity. Often negativity towards a political party is based on identification with a particular political party. These viewpoints are founded on existing beliefs that are often influenced by the media's perceptions or prejudices (Bascom, 2016). Voters speak out against those who have different political and moral views. Partisanship can lead to individuals attacking those who do not share the same moral code. It can also be a predictor in how an individual reacts to the other political parties (Arpan & Raney, 2003). "Didn't vote for him the first time, don't plan on voting with him the second time" is a vehicle that showcases the unpopular perception of Bartlet. Josh is met with hostility when he admits they work for the president. The gentleman in the store does not spare words when describing his feelings toward the president. "Didn't vote for him the first time, don't plan on voting with him the second time" (Episode 1: 21:03). These voters do not mind stating their political affiliations at all. They believe their integrity requires them to be honest in who they support politically.

The Midwest is often more conservative. Many Midwesterners have distinct views on controversial topics like abortion. Bartlet faces prejudice from many voters because of his stance on abortion. Toby, Josh, and Donny encounter this type of prejudice after meeting teenage girls in the Midwest. When they introduce themselves as White House staffers, one girl asks, "How many unborn babies did you kill today?" (Episode 1: 26:04). In this case, the integrity of the staffers is questioned. These young girls have strong opinions on controversial issues. They do not flinch when declaring where they stand. Josh's response is "Whoa, hey, danger Will Robinson" (Episode 1:26:09). This reference to the television series *Lost in Space* is Josh's way to gently inform the young lady that her remark is offensive. Donna and Toby just ignore the remark. Josh, Toby,

and Donna realize they face strong opposition while dealing with the assumption that all democrats support abortion. Their response to the girl's remark shows how they try to navigate the situation by not attacking her biased claim in order to avoid calling the girl out or embarrassing her. Integrity is an important vehicle throughout Season 4. This tenor helps to create verbal metaphors that enhance understanding of characters, their values, and their personal codes of conduct.

Sports

Sport references are found throughout Season 4. The tenor is sports. One vehicle is "calling audibles". Football is a popular Midwest sport. As Josh, Toby, and Donna try to catch Air Force One back to Washington, D.C., Josh, and Toby go back and forth on which strategy would be best for the campaign. The tenor is comparing the campaign plan to a football play. Josh: "You and Bruno and the President are calling audibles." Toby: "That's because we are coming to the line and seeing a hairdo from Florida and pass coverage, so we want to put the ball... what's your concern?" (Episode 1: 24:30). Each football play is planned prior to the snap unless the quarterback calls an audible. An audible refers to changing the play at the line of scrimmage. Josh is not confident that the current plan is not focused. Audience can relate to this vehicle because many are familiar with the game of football. Audibles are risky, and most coaches discourage quarterbacks from using them. The metaphor is enhanced by this vehicle because many fans of the series are football fans. They understand the risk the campaign is taking through the idea of "calling an audible."

Winning is a recurring theme throughout this season. Also, the characters in the series enjoy sports and use them frequently. One vehicle is "winners want the ball". In

one instance, President Bartlet is faced with interfering with a decision by the Pentagon. Although Leo and others advise him to stay out of the fight, Bartlet compares the situation to wanting to win a game. The vehicle is that the winners want the ball. “Winners always want the ball. To be a winner, you must think like a winner. He was right. Winners always want the ball. I don’t ever want to hear that it’s too sticky for the Oval Office” (Episode 10: 33:14). By using the tenor of sports, the vehicle of “the winner wants the ball” implies that those who are leaders face all obstacles head on. In this scenario, President Bartlet compares his job to that of a winner. He must be willing to do what is hard to be effective.

In most sports, the coach calls the play. In the case of politics, the president is seen as the play caller. However, it is often staffers who orchestrate the maneuvers on behalf of the president like an assistant coach. Toby is an assistant to President Bartlet. The tenor of sports is furthered explored in the vehicle “I called the play”. After losing her seat due to a bill she filed on behalf of the president, Toby tries to find a new position for former Sen. Karin Kroft. Kroft believes that President Bartlet asked the favor of her that cost her the seat. Kroft argues with Toby that she was doing her duty “when the president calls a play.” Toby responds, “I called the play. I called it” (Episode 9:35:33). Toby acknowledges his decision to have her introduce legislation he knew would cost her seat. There is guilt and a need to compensate Karin Kroft. The audience can connect with the idea that not all plays are effective. In sports, some plays are costly. This is prior knowledge that would help the audience understand Toby’s guilt and need to make things right with Kroft.

The comparison of the ballgame is seen several times in Season 4. The campaign itself is compared to a ballgame. The vehicle “that’s the ballgame” is comparing the ending of the debate to winning a ballgame. It is a common phrase to say, “That’s the ballgame,” when the game is concluded. As the staff anxiously prepare for the debates, C.J. admits to Toby she is worried Bartlet will lose the debates. Toby believes Bartlet’s superior intellect will ensure victory. “These two men will be side by side on the stage answering questions and that’s the ballgame” (Episode 4:7:33). C.J. worries that a mistake on Bartlet’s part will lose him the election. “And the whole thing is that he can’t tie his shoelaces and it turns out he can and that is the ballgame” (Episode 4: 7:39). This vehicle supports the sports tenor in that the audience often hears “that’s a ballgame” at the end of sporting events. It paints a picture that the campaign is like playing a game. The debate will decide the outcomes of the election.

Amy Gardner uses the same vehicle of “that’s the ballgame”. Josh and Amy have a complicated relationship. She lost a job with the administration even though she is linked romantically with Josh. When Josh accuses her of trying to get even by working for Stackhouse, she defends herself. “That is the ballgame. I fought you, I lost, I had a drink, and I took a shower. Because that’s how it is in the NBA” (Episode 4:20:12). The tenor is once again supported with the vehicle of “that’s a ballgame”. She emphasizes how she handled the losing of her position professionally by comparing it to a professional sport. The audience understands the reference to a ball game. There is a winner and loser in every game. In this case, she was the loser.

Baseball is another sport that is referred to throughout the season. Many characters reference baseball. When Amy is worried about Josh figuring out Stackhouse’s

plan, she states, “It will take Josh half that time...maybe a little longer. The Mets lost last night, and he will need to focus” (Episode 4: 2:05). Another vehicle that is connected to the tenor of sports is “just throw strikes”. In the next scene, Josh is lamenting the loss to Donna: “Just throw strikes! I don’t understand why that can’t happen! You have a three-run lead! Just throw strikes!” (Episode 4: 2:09). This vehicle describes the frustration many have during the campaign. Bartlet’s opponent is not a formidable foe; the election should not be that close. However, it seems Bartlet causes more problems than necessary. The issues the campaign faces are like a pitcher who is not throwing strikes. Often, they are making the game harder than it must be. Bartlet is compared to a pitcher who has forgotten the fundamentals. Sports references help understand metaphors that are powerful in that audiences both acknowledge and enjoy them.

Humility

Humility is a desired characteristic, especially in public figures. Understanding humility gives insight into the individuals in *The West Wing*. White House staffers often exhibit cockiness and brandishing due to the nature of the job. They need confidence to accomplish the goals of the administration. However, to truly be effective, staffers need to be willing to listen to others. The tenor is humility. One vehicle for humility is “the smartest kid in the class.”

A repetitive vehicle throughout this season is President Bartlet’s perception of being “the smartest kid in the class.” In the first episode, Bartlet states in the teaser, “You think the strike against me is nobody likes the smartest kid in the class” (Episode 1:14). Intelligence is an admiral characteristic; therefore, no one likes to be proven intellectually inferior. The American culture implies those who exhibit intelligence are considered

nerdy or overbearing. Bartlet used his Nobel Prize as an accolade to help him win during the first election (Shuham, 2012). In his bid for re-election, the president and his staff come to understand that not everyone admires his intellectual superiority. Bartlet thus become sensitive to how he is perceived by voters. This vehicle speaks to the audience of the often-negative perception of being intelligent.

The vehicle is addressed again later in Episode 1. Josh Lyman struggles with the campaign's portrayal of Bartlet in his bid for re-election. Toby Zeigler's strategy is to use Bartlet's superior intelligence to his benefit; Josh argues that this is off putting to the average American and clouds their perception of Bartlet. "When did we decide to make this about being the smartest kid in the class? What meeting did I miss?" (Episode 1: 24:50). "Most people were not the smartest kid in the class. Most people didn't like the smartest kid in the class" (Episode 1: 38:56). Josh wants Bartlet to appeal to everyone. He fears that bragging about how smart Bartlet is will alienate the average American. This is an effective connection to the metaphor. The vehicle of "the smartest kid in the class" is used to explain that Americans want a relatable president.

Bartlet himself struggles with his identity throughout the campaign. As he tries to navigate between what the public wants and who he is, he finally finds the drive he needs to finish the strenuous campaign on the night of the debate. As he walks onto the stage, Leo gives him final words of advice. "There's no such thing as too smart. There's nothing you can do that's not going to make me proud of you. Eat 'em up. Game on" (Episode 6:34:10). It is here that Bartlet understands it is acceptable to be the smartest kid in the class so long as one wants to help everyone in the class. The vehicle supports the message that intelligence and humility go hand in hand.

Sacrifice

Angels are powerful symbols. They are considered noble. It is humbling to remember those who have died in vain. Angels are the vehicle for sacrifice. Someone becomes an angel when they die. In this case, their deaths were uncalled for and some of them died tried to save others. The remorse felt causes one to appreciate the sacrifice. One example is in the Kennison University bombing. In Episode I and 2, a terrible terrorist attack occurs at Kennison University. Bartlet delivers a moving speech in honor of those who lost their lives.

The streets of heaven are too crowded with angels tonight. They're our students and our teachers and our parents and our friends. The streets of heaven are too crowded with angels, but every time we think we have measured our capacity to meet a challenge, we look up and we're reminded that that capacity may well be limitless. (Episode 2: 26:06)

Angels are a powerful vehicle for many reasons. Due to recent events at the time of these episodes airing, this resonated with Americans. Still reeling from the 9/11 attacks, the audience instantly connected the sacrifice of innocents to their recent experience. Bartlet's moving words honor those who sacrificed their lives and inspire the country to keep the faith and remain diligent.

Heroism is another powerful characteristic. The vehicle of heroes is also connected to sacrifice when analyzing the Kennison University bombing. In the same speech, President Bartlet uses the vehicle of heroes to exemplify sacrifice by calling on the citizens to be heroes. Following the 9/11 attacks, these episodes hit home for many

viewers. In his speech, Bartlet honors the fallen and calls to action all Americans to be heroes.

... but every time we think we have measured our capacity to meet a challenge, we look up and we're reminded that that capacity may well be limitless. This is a time for American heroes. We will do what is hard. We will achieve what is great. This is a time for American heroes, and we reach for the stars. God bless their memory; God bless you and God bless the United States of America. (Episode 2: 26:38)

America has suffered a great trauma in the aftermath of 9/11; this trauma reflects the country's desire to defend the homeland and recover from the tragedy. The tenor of sacrifice helps connect the audience to what has happened during the 9/11 attacks and inspire them to step up and be heroes when the country needs them.

Grief

Many of the characters experience personal hardships throughout the season. As the plot follows Toby's impending fatherhood, the love lives of various characters, and Sam's decision to leave the Whitehouse, C.J.'s problems with her father take centerstage. C.J.'s father is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. The tenor is grief associated with the disease. The title of the episode *The Long Goodbye* is the vehicle. In this episode, C.J. must come to grips with her father's failing health. Her stepmother explains, "You know what the nickname for the disease is? The long goodbye" (Episode 13:17:40). This vehicle connects with the audience because it describes the disease perfectly. As more awareness is brought to light concerning Alzheimer's, the vehicle is likely to hit home for any fan who has personal experience with the disease

Time

Time is important to everyone. There never seems to be enough of it. Time is essential in Talmidge Cregg's life. The tenor is time. The vehicle is his watch. When he asks for his watch to be evaluated by Marco Arlens, played by Matthew Modine, Talmidge is told his watch is not functioning correctly. "You are losing time, Mr. Cregg" (Episode 13: 31:31). Talmidge responds with, "That son, I am" (Episode 13: 31: 33). This vehicle is a straightforward statement about the fact that Talmidge's memory and even life are not going to last. Marco assesses that the watch is out of sync, much like Talmidge is with his disease. In the end, Talmidge agrees to allow the watch to go with Marco to Paris to fix it. "C.J., before I forget, tell Marco to send it back to me soon please, and working. Time matters" (Episode 13:40:25). It is the grief of his situation and acknowledgement that his time is limited that is poignant and moving.

Major and Minor Visual Tenors

Visual metaphors may not be as obvious, but they are powerful in that they paint mental pictures. A visual metaphor does just as it states: it creates a connection with the audience using prior knowledge or understanding through an image. Visual metaphors are subtle, but they are easy for the audience to recognize. In Season 4, the major visual tenors are foreshadowing of danger and the Walk and Talk camera angle. The minor tenors are connections to voters and fresh starts.

Foreshadowing of Danger

Foreshadowing of danger is often associated with the responsibilities of the president and his or her administration. They are faced with many serious situations that require life and death decisions in matter of minutes. Two vehicles for foreshadowing of

danger are the Situation Room and the nightly meetings outside the Oval Office. The Situation Room is an important symbol within the White House. This room is where national and international issues are handled. It is the location for important military activities. Meetings in the Situation Room are tense. To alleviate tension, Bartlet often tries to joke, but his jokes are not accepted by the group. This signals to the audience that dangerous and serious events are likely to take place. To utilize on the feeling of danger, lighting is used to portray that. The White House is often dimly lit when serious events take place there. For example, the Situation Room is always dimly lit due to the nature of the room's business. This can be seen in how Leo, Admiral Fitzwallace, and National Director McNally deal with all international issues. Those scenes are private and darkly lit. Life and death decisions are often made in the Situation Room.

The mood is expressed through the dark lighting. When Leo discusses the president's predicament with the assassination of Shareef, he takes Jordan Kendall into the Situation Room. He explains the intricate details in the dark room that is only illuminated by military maps and screens (Episode 3:9:45). The lighting of this scene emphasizes the seriousness of the issue and foreshadows the issues Bartlet will face when he is held accountable for Shareef's death. The Situation Room enhances this visual metaphor by connecting to the audience's understanding that in darkly lit areas, often dangerous and serious events take place.

The Oval Office is a major setting of the series. It is where Bartlet makes most of his decisions. However, an important area is outside the Oval Office. Many times, in particular at night, important revelations are made outside the Oval Office. Because of the time of day and the location, disruption, danger, or upheaval are foreshadowed. There

are many times Bartlet holds serious discussions outside the Oval Office. For example, when Bartlet meets with Vice President Hoynes about Hoynes' affair, it takes place at night outside the Oval Office (Episode 21:36:10). The audience understands the seriousness of the issue because the meeting is not held in the Oval Office. It foreshadows that something scandalous is about to happen.

Dark and light are used here as well. This is another example of using dark to communicate serious situations that occur outside the Oval Office. As Hoynes, McGarry, and Bartlet try to come to a solution for the upcoming scandal, the men pace back and forth in the light. Hoynes' secret is about to be exposed even though he has kept his wife, family, and the president in the dark this whole time. Because the affair is secret, so is the meeting. The meeting takes place outside the Oval Office, so the audience understands it signals upheaval and unrest.

Another example of a meeting outside the oval office at night is when President Bartlet must invoke the 25th Amendment because his daughter has been abducted. The setting foreshadows that Bartlet is no longer commander in chief. There are several things at play in this scene. Zoey is missing. Bartlet understands he must step away to allow what is best for the nation and his family. The scene is shot as Leo is outside the Oval Office preparing for the transfer of power. The scene begins with Leo sitting on a bench with a copy of the Constitution (Episode 23:33:30). This is a foreshadow that Bartlet will invoke the 25th Amendment. He instructs the staff to prepare for Bartlet to relinquish power during this crisis. It is symbolic of the transfer of power. Bartlet and his staff are now the outsiders. Audience can connect to the fact that the president and his staff are no longer in control because of the location of the meeting.

The scene utilizes the lack of light here as the staff is now in an undesirable predicament. It foreshadows that the staff is in the dark on what is about to happen to them. One of the president's enemies is now their boss. As Speaker of the House Glen Walken approaches, he walks down the dark corridor and sidewalk outside the Oval Office (Episode 23:35:52). This foreshadows the dire situation Bartlet is in both personally and professionally.

Walk and Talk

The West Wing is a place that never slows down due to the fact that the government is a machine in motion. The tenor of the Walk and Talk correlates the daily hustle and bustle. The Walk and Talk camera creates a visual connection for the audience. It plays into the fast pace of the series and allows audience to understand that there is always something happening at the West Wing. It symbolizes the constant movement due to the importance of everyone's work. Two vehicles used are Bartlet and staff walking and debate camp.

The West Wing is well-known for the walk and talk camera angle. This way of filming enhances the actual pace of the series. For example, every episode has staffers walking from one location to the next sharing vital information. For example, when preparing for the debate, Leo, Josh, Toby, and Sam discuss strategy as they prepare the president (Episode 6:1:38). Donna and Josh consistently walk and talk as he gives her assignments, or she reports on the latest developments. C.J. is always walking and talking with Toby, Sam, or Josh. She also is on the move when communicating with Danny Concannon. For example, while briefing her aide, C.J. alerts Toby that his ex-wife is being investigated for election fraud (Episode 9: 8:15). The communication is concise

and to the point. There is so much to do that the staffers have no time to leisurely discuss important topics. This gives a visual image to the audience those daily activities at the White House are fast paced and high energy.

Any time President Bartlet is walking on the job, walk and talk is used. Because of all the important issues the president must face each day, he must be able to accomplish things while walking. When President Bartlet is on the campaign trail, he is always walking and talking. For example, he has an entourage following him as he walks to the stage to deliver a speech (Episode 4:13:08). He answers concerns about the speech while conducting other business. This visual picture reinforces the perception the audience has of the president: he is constantly at work and his time is important. When handling domestic and international affairs, Bartlet must be on the move. Many times, Bartlet receives international military information while on the move. For example, while preparing for the debate at “debate camp” at a North Carolina retreat, he is briefed while walking on the farm (Episode 5:4:24). At no time can the president stop as he moves from one meeting to the next. The Walk and Talk is an effective tool in communicating the fast pace of the White House. It is used to share the themes of the series with the audience.

Connection to Voters

Every political candidate works hard to connect to voters. It is essential part of campaigning. Re-election requires a candidate to keep that connection. The tenor of connection to voters is seen through the vehicle of the trip across the Midwest. In cross country trips, people from different demographics with contrasting viewpoints are encountered. The audience can see what the staffers encounter as they travel across the

Midwest. This trip symbolizes the differences between the staff and the voters. This trip is a wakeup call for the staff. For many in the audience, they can relate to this change in setting. It reminds the Midwest audience of their home. For those who live outside the Midwest, it gives them a glimpse into the different parts of the country. The metaphor is supported by the fact that the trip introduces the staffer to people of different backgrounds and ideas.

Light also symbolizes acknowledgement and understanding. One example is this journey the three staffers make after being left by the motorcade (Episode 1). These scenes are in natural or bright lighting. These scenes symbolize an exposure to the issues both the staffers and the campaign itself must face. These are issues the audience can recognize. It gives meaning and understanding to the message.

Fresh Starts

Fresh starts are often necessary, especially when faced with adversity and uncertainty. Fresh starts are necessary in the Wilde campaign after Wilde passes away. The vehicle for the tenor of fresh starts is rain. Rainstorms often symbolize cleansing and new beginnings. Rainstorms is a recurring metaphor. In the Season 2 finale, rain plays a significant role as Bartlet decides to run for re-election. The use of rain as a chance for new beginnings is not new to viewers. Rain is seen in Season 4 on election day. Rain would impact Wilde's campaign positively. Rain will prohibit Wilde's opponents from voting. As there are chances for rain, Will Bailey hopes that Mother Nature will aid the campaign to victory. Will stands in the street calling to the heavens for rain. When he screams "Now!" it begins to pour (Episode 7:36:09). Will's commanding of the rain is a powerful image. It is a signal to the audience that there is hope of winning the seat.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, setting, verbal, and visual metaphors are explored. The tenor and vehicle of these metaphors create comprehension of complicated political ideas and themes. Metaphors aid in the understanding of integrity, sacrifice, and humility. The metaphors in Season 4 give insight into the complexity of re-election and the difficulties in everyday activities of the West Wing. The audience can connect to the characters and the situations these characters experience because of the audience's personal experiences and prior knowledge.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Metaphors create connections between abstract objects or ideas using one's prior knowledge and experience. *The West Wing* portrayed a realistic viewpoint of the working machinery of the West Wing. By identifying, sorting, isolating, and analyzing metaphors, a deeper understanding of how metaphors enhance the storyline of the series was found. This study used metaphorical analysis to evaluate what the verbal and visual metaphors in Season 4 of *The West Wing* are. Evaluating these metaphors facilitated understanding of why viewers from different backgrounds resonate with *The West Wing*. It illustrates how the show built schemas related to political discourse. These verbal and visual metaphors showcased how they created deeper meaning and allowed the audience to connect to the story being told. Verbal metaphors were integrity, sports, humility, sacrifice, and grief. Visual metaphors were rain, Situation Room, nightly meetings outside the Oval Office, the trip across the Midwest, and the Walk and Talk technique.

Analyzing *The West Wing* offers new possibilities for understanding how metaphors connect prior knowledge and understanding with the audience. This study analyzes the verbal and visual metaphors in Season 4 of *The West Wing*. In this chapter, results are discussed and connected to other literature. Implications of the study, limitations, and future research opportunities are evaluated.

Implications of Study

Metaphors advances an audience's understanding of political discourse. Politics is a complicated issue in Season 4. The use of metaphors allows better understanding of said issues. By analyzing both verbal and visual metaphors in Season 4, this metaphorical analysis has important implications.

Metaphors are key components to understanding the complex messages in Season 4 of *The West Wing*. Metaphors use discourse to activate unconscious association (Vestermarck, 2007). These associations to political jargon, discourse, and complex ideas are made easier to understand through metaphors. "Metaphors are inherently political because of the way they structure perception and therefore responses to phenomena" (Fitzgerald, 2015, p. 115). Season 4 used metaphors to connect to many who were not well versed in political discourse. By focusing on verbal metaphors, vehicles like integrity, sports, and grief are connectors to the possibly unknown world of politics. Metaphorical criticism leads those unfamiliar with the complexities of politics to not only a better understanding of how the West Wing operates, but it also creates an investment into the problems and victories each character experienced.

When one thinks of edutainment, the children's show *Sesame Street* may come to mind. However, adult political dramas can use edutainment to strengthen connections with viewers. Edutainment is a positive way to impart education while being entertained. Although *The West Wing* was not created purely as edutainment, it does educate the audience about the political structure and happenings of American government. Edutainment has positive effects on audiences' knowledge and attitudes (Singhal, et al., 2004; Singhal & Rogers, 1999). Season 4 develops the audience's understanding of the

intricacies of reelection. It gave an intimate view of the daily obstacles the president and his staff faced. Because of its popularity, *The West Wing* impacted political knowledge. For many followers, their political understanding is limited. Each week was a civics lesson in how the president and his staff handle intricate government affairs like federal budgets, international issues, and bipartisan relationships. Although biased, Season 4 educates and entertains on the trials and tribulations the president and his or her staff must face.

The West Wing tackles this issue in Season 4 by bringing to light issues in integrity. “Didn’t Cut and Run” and “In it to Win it” are vehicles that the audience understand. The vehicles paint a picture of someone who puts all they have into winning (Gozzi, 1990). They are characteristics many look for in the commander in chief. Many Americans want leaders who go after what they want with gusto and bravado in ethical ways.

For many past presidents, however, integrity had been in question. President Bill Clinton, an extremely popular liberal president, faced much scrutiny at the end of his presidency (Armstrong, 2020). Whether it be the Whitewater scandal, the death of Vince Foster, or the Paula Jones and Monica Lewinsky scandal, Clinton’s integrity was called into question (Johnson, 2013). Since many compare Bartlet to Clinton, this issue of integrity is worth noting (Sorkin et al., 2015). The American people reelected Clinton even after some of these issues came to light (Johnson, 2013). As audiences follow the idealistic Bartlet and his staff, integrity is a key component in what the administration stands by.

President George W. Bush's election was controversial as his victory was by such a small margin (Lyall, 2019). Many Americans believed he had not won the election fairly. His integrity was questioned during the Iraq war, Guantanamo Bay prisoner torture, and Hurricane Katrina (Blake, 2013). President Bush was in office during the majority of *The West Wing*. Although he was a popular president after 9/11, Sorkin in particular questioned his ethics (Sorkin et al., 2015). Audiences compare the ethics of the Bartlet administration to the Bush administration.

For some, President Donald Trump's administration showed a lack of integrity (Pincus-Roth, 2018). President Trump was scrutinized for the majority of his term as commander in chief. Trump often punished those who questioned his authority or his policies (Dimock & Gramlich, 2021). He faced scrutiny over his border wall initiative, attacks on the media, and volatile relationships with staff and cabinet members (Panetta, 2018). Due to the continued following of *The West Wing*, Trump's presidency speaks to current audiences on how the lack of integrity can impact a president's agenda and ultimately his or her legacy.

Integrity is also supported by the vehicle of "You Don't Owe Me." In order to accomplish goals in politics, there is much give and take. Politicians often help each other so the favor can be reciprocated later. Election integrity is reinforced with Senator Kroyt's willingness to fall on the sword for the Bartlet administration. When looking at the past administrations of Clinton, Bush, and Trump, there were many others sacrificed for their president. Monica Lewinsky became the sacrificial lamb in the Clinton scandal. After ten years of silence, Lewinsky still claims Clinton did not take advantage of her. She wants

the world to know it was a mistake between two consenting adults (*Monica Lewinsky writes about her affair*, 2014). She does not believe Clinton owed her anything.

In the Bush administration, General David H. Petraeus took the fall for the invasion of Iraq following 9/11. The commander in chief made the call, but Petraeus was the one who was held accountable. Petraeus remained Bush's close confidant, but the Obama administration did not trust him or his viewpoints on the war in Iraq (Bumiller, 2009). Never did Petraeus ask for any special favors. He accepted his demotion and moved on.

There were many who were willing to sacrifice their careers and take the fall for President Donald Trump. Michael Cohen faced jail time to protect the president. It was not until he was on the way to prison did Cohen speak ill of President Trump (Palazzolo & Rothfeld, 2020). All these examples, including the one of Sen. Krotz, exemplify how all debts are not expected to be repaid. In the case of *The West Wing*, audiences understand that there are often those who will protect the president at no cost. It helps us understand integrity because often these martyrs are admired for their sacrifice. The past experiences of American presidents impact how audiences view President Bartlet. Sorkin creates an idealistic president who has faults, but not to the degree of Clinton, Bush, and Trump. Audiences experience what it is like to have a president whose integrity is not questioned.

Integrity is valued more in some geographical locations than in others. There are people with integrity everywhere; however, the heartland can be characterized as places where integrity are valued highly. The heartland is another vehicle for integrity. The heartland does not have the fast-paced lifestyle of Washington D.C. These people are

honest and to the point. It is refreshing to see the impact their viewpoints have on Toby, Josh, and Donna by the end of the journey. In most elections, the heartland is key to a presidential victory.

The Heartland is going to be a major focus when it comes to determining the contours of power in the next few years. In that sense, it will be a big deal if the improved economic conditions in the region at all influence outcomes of the vote by tilting votes toward either the Republicans or the Democrats (Maxim & Muro, 2018). It is an important component in the election. These voters are outspoken and hold elected officials to a higher standard. Their demand for officials with integrity connects with the vehicle of the heartland.

For many Americans, sports is a favorite pastime. Americans in particular view sports as more than just entertainment. Sports are used to encode cultural and communal significances (Macri, 2012). Fans are not just consumers of sports; they create their own sense of identity through their experiences with sports (Cohan, 2019). These identities are further enhanced through experiences through sports. These sports give both athlete and spectator a platform for expressing principles of humanity because our society places value on both competition and the act of sports (Macri, 2012). Sports are a metaphor that many audiences can relate to from their experiences and prior knowledge.

Sports metaphors are popular metaphors in politics. They keep politics interesting while allowing easier understanding for those who may not understand or care about the political process (Vieth, 2014). These are seen in the vehicles associated with sports in Season 4. Calling for audibles is a recognizable football vehicle. It is one that a quarterback uses if he is confident in what he is doing. A politician using an audible is

one who is willing to chance it to win it, even if it is a risky call. Another vehicle that connects sports and politics is the idea that “winners want the ball” The president must be the leader in the campaign. Taking ownership of choices is illustrated through the vehicle “I called the play.” It connects back to the vehicle of calling audibles. “That is the ball game” and “just throw strikes” are effective vehicles in connecting sports to politics. In order to connect with a vast number of the audience, sports metaphors can accomplish this goal.

Americans have distinct opinions on the qualities the president should possess. According to a 2016 poll, integrity, humility, and compassion for others were important to voters (Fingerhut, 2016). Both Republicans and Democrats agree that presidents should be ethical (Gramlich, 2019). In *The West Wing*, these ethical characteristics are highlighted often. The final verbal tenors analyzed several characteristics. Like integrity, these metaphors connect to audience members. These types of concrete images are relatable to an audience who recognize characteristics from their own experiences (Banaruee et al., 2019). The vehicle of humility is a positive characteristic globally. Most cultures admire those who are humble. As Bartlet struggles with his perception of being smarter than everyone else, he learns valuable lessons on how to connect with others. The next vehicles of angels and heroes are important connections after 9/11. Episodes 1 and 2 aired after 9/11 while the nation was still vulnerable. Bartlet’s reference to the victims of the Kennison University bombing as angels and those racing in to save as many as possible as heroes was a touching tribute to the 9/11 victims. Audiences were still grappling with the 9/11 attacks and recognized the correlation.

Sacrifice is a noble characteristic that is showcased throughout Season 4. Several characters make personal sacrifices for the good of the president, his administration, or the nation. For many, their identity is tied to preserving what they believe in or support. In the end, the whole is more important than the self (Stern, 1995). This is a connection many audience members would relate to as well. Sen. Kroft is a prime example of this type of sacrifice. She knew the consequences for her action and did not have any regret. Her resolve to move forward and never look back is a positive characteristic that is admired by the audience. Therefore, the vehicle connects to the metaphor.

Many of the audience have experienced a loved one who faces a terminal illness. Grief, time, and despair are often felt. This experience is one that connects many viewers. They have either personally experienced it or seen it in other television shows, movies, or read about it in books. Grief is one of those experiences. The vehicle of grief is felt when a family member battles Alzheimer's disease. The title of the episode "The Long Goodbye" is the vehicle used to describe C.J.'s journey with her father. According to the Center for Disease Control, 5.8 million Americans suffer from Alzheimer's Disease (*What is Alzheimer's Disease*, 2021). Audience members understand the emotional toil the disease has on both the victims and their families. It brings to light the impact of this devastating disease.

Time or the lack thereof is another connection fans make when watching this episode. Alzheimer's Disease has become more recognized and discussed. Fans can instantly relate when C.J. announces the diagnosis. As Talmidge struggles with many of the symptoms of the disease, the discussion of time is important. The use of the watch is significant because it is the visual reminder that he is losing time with his loved ones.

Once again, this vehicle connects personally with anyone who has lost a parent, especially to this disease.

Visual metaphors support verbal messages through mental pictures. The use of dark and light not only emphasizes the degree of seriousness, but dark and light can determine if the action is good or bad. Rain is a vehicle for the visual metaphor. Rain is a symbol of cleansing and renewed hope. The Situation Room and nightly meetings outside the Oval Office are visual metaphors of bad things to come. Finally, the trip across the Midwest is a visual metaphor. Campaigns usually have numerous cross-country trips to reach all potential voters. The vehicle uses light to showcase the difference between the staffers and the Midwesterners.

As discussed in the literature review, the Walk and Talk camera technique is an effective way to set the pace and enhance the setting of the series. According to director and executive producer Thomas Schalmme, movement that suddenly stops has more emphasis. For example, when someone is moving and stops to get a cup of coffee, that dialogue is important and needs time to be digested. The Walk and Talk pinpoints important dialogue through movement. This fast-paced camera angle became the norm for other shows. *CSI*, *Grey's Anatomy*, and *House* all used this filming technique after observing the success of *The West Wing* (Wilson, 2018). Audiences came to expect the quick repertoire as they moved from place to place. The Walk and Talk technique discourages long speeches and involves numerous characters in the dialogue. It gives the impression that the government is in constant action and working for the benefit of its citizens.

The Walk and Talk also plays on the use of light and dark throughout the episodes. Many times, characters move from an area of light to an area of dark to symbolize a change. It was common to move from the Oval Office, which was lit in natural light, to the Situation Room, which was dark with bright lights coming from maps and screens to the communication bullpen, which was lit with many fluorescents (Thomas, 2001). All these changes are likely to trigger an audience's existing schema about politics. For example, the Situation Room is a serious location because of the business that takes place there. One's prior knowledge also connects to pictures we have seen of the Oval Office. It is always lit in natural light. It supports the metaphors used throughout the episodes.

Television's impact on politics cannot be overlooked. Technology allows political dramas to remain relevant years later. *The West Wing* is an example of a series that still resonates with viewers 20 years later. "This modernization of politics must be understood as a trend toward commercialization, globalization, and a visual culture in which mass media—television in particular—and new media play an important role" (Landtsheer et al., 2008, p. 219). The frequent use of metaphors help connect the viewers to the ideas in each storyline. Metaphors also help reinforce existing ideologies about government.

Metaphors are tools used to better understand government, particularly elections. Metaphors aid in mental representations of political issues that allows for understanding (Charteris-Black, 2011). Most viewers have limited understanding of the American political system. Television shows like *The West Wing* teach valuable lessons through metaphors. Because the language of politics is complex, metaphors can influence the receiver toward desired attitudes or thoughts (Vestermarck, 2007). Although the public

school system teaches basic government in high school, many Americans struggle to understand how it works. Metaphors that reference basic characteristics, like integrity and humility, sports, and visual images, aid in understanding.

Season 4 of *The West Wing* uses metaphors to create a deeper understanding and connection with viewers. This iconic season chronicled the re-election of President Jed Bartlet as he and his staff faced both positive and negative issues. Metaphors helped with understanding characters while allowing the audience to relate to real problems. Verbal metaphors connected through the tenors of integrity, sports, humility, sacrifice, and grief. Visual metaphors paint vivid pictures for the audience through rain, the Situation Room, outside the Oval Office, the trip across the Midwest, and through the use of the Walk and Talk camera angle. Metaphors are connectors that all audience members associate with through prior knowledge and experiences.

There are important theoretical implications to this study. It demonstrates how metaphoric criticism enhances social and political concepts for understanding through metaphors. In episodic television, time is an important commodity. The message must be presented in ways the audience can connect to in the limited time available (Hilmes et al., 2014). Metaphors aid in this by connecting to previous knowledge and understanding. Recurring metaphors only enhance understanding because the audience can make that connection quickly due to prior experience. For example, the tenor of sport does not need much explanation because football is considered America's pastime.

Because of the nature of the series, politics takes center stage. The election is a key story line in Season 4. Metaphors are used throughout to signal to viewers the many components of an election. For example, the use of the vehicles "calling audibles,"

“that’s the ballgame,” and “smartest kid in the class” gives viewers a clear map to understanding the trials and tribulations Bartlet faces in re-election. This study furthers metaphorical criticism by illustrating those metaphors connect political discourse to everyday concepts and ideology.

Another way this study advances the use of metaphorical criticism is through social concepts. Metaphors in Season 4 use social issues like Alzheimer’s disease, the loss of American lives, and integrity in recognizable ways for viewers. Metaphoric criticism allows the connection to prior knowledge and experiences. Viewers have either personally experienced or have knowledge of these concepts that allows the connection to these powerful vehicles. This study therefore adds to this method by using metaphors to make connections through prior knowledge or experiences.

Limitations

Socio-economics and historical context shape rhetorical analyses. President Clinton’s mistakes and blunders shaped how Bartlet was perceived. Trump’s Big Lie regarding the 2020 election influences how political dramas are perceived today. The power of metaphor is tied to the time of the viewer. A metaphor’s meaning is altered by current events and experiences. A viewer’s prior knowledge and experiences largely determine how the viewer interprets the meaning conveyed by a metaphor. Some metaphors are time sensitive, younger viewers or those living in other countries on 9/11 may not have prior knowledge or understanding of the 9/11 experience

There are several other limitations in this study. One limitation is that the study focuses on only one of the seven seasons of *The West Wing*. This study does not illustrate an all-rounded picture of metaphors of all 7 seasons. This analysis is limited to focusing

on continuous plot lines instead of exploring minor plot lines. Finally, this study does not address the role of gender played in the series. Gender roles were not a focus of this research.

Future Research

There are many opportunities for further research. A criticism of the *The West Wing* is that it has a liberal bias. An area for future research could be to study how this bias impacted future political dramas. *Madame Secretary* made a point to avoid party affiliation in the first five seasons to avoid polarization (“Political drama ‘Madam Secretary’ avoiding polarization,” 2015). A study of how future political dramas avoided or used bias could shed light on how polarization impacts viewers.

A study could also help understand how American political television series use metaphors. This study could compare political dramas like *Madam Secretary*, *House of Cards*, and *Scandal*. Emphasis could be placed on how the metaphors paint the American political system, in particular commander in chiefs and their staff. When analyzing political dramas, a study could also analyze the edutainment value of political dramas. Looking at other political dramas, the use of metaphors in edutainment could illustrate how television shares knowledge about politics.

Recurring metaphors are powerful because the audience has experienced them. Another study could examine recurring metaphors found throughout the seven seasons. Many of the verbal and visual metaphors found in Season 4 can be found in other seasons. These connections could be evaluated to understand their impact.

To further understand the impact of metaphors on elections, a study of election metaphors could be analyzed. Metaphors such as “the election is a race,” “the election

was stolen,” “the election was won by a landslide,” and many others could further illustrate the impact metaphors have on political elections.

One area to study is to see how different audiences in different eras react to the metaphors found in Season 4. Because of the popularity of the series twenty years later, the audience demographics have changed. A study seeing the difference in how those demographics react would be interesting in determining how different generations of viewers understand metaphors. Sorkin was the creator of the first four seasons. Future research could compare how metaphors were used in Seasons 1-4 against Seasons 5-7. Those seasons could be compared to the last three seasons to analyze how metaphors were used.

Conclusion

The West Wing connected with viewers because it gives a glimpse into the daily activities of President Bartlet and his staff. This study examined how Season 4 of *The West Wing* used verbal and visual metaphors to connect to the American audience.

Chapter 1 identified the subject, the artifact, the aim, and the method. Chapter 2 described the artifact, analyzed past presidencies, and edutainment. In chapter 3, metaphorical analysis was analyzed while discussing the viewpoints of important scholars such as Burke, Osborn, Lakoff & Johnson, and Foss. Chapter 4 included the identification, sorting, and analysis of metaphors. In chapter 4, the tenors and vehicles were clearly identified and analyzed. Chapter 5 discusses the implications of the study, limitations, and further research.

The analysis determined that metaphors are used throughout Season 4 to deepen understanding and make connections. Because of the complexity of politics, verbal and

visual metaphors serve as a bridge to knowledge. The analysis also shows that tenors and vehicles are how discourse is deciphered by those who may or may not have much political understanding. In summary, metaphors impact many aspects of our lives including politics. They enlighten and guide understanding. Lakoff & Johnson (1980a) explain how we live by metaphors daily.

We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. (p.

3)

Metaphors' ability to make language exciting and connectable is why they are so powerful. It is through metaphors that Jed Bartlet and his staff are so easy to like and admire. *The West Wing* gives us hope that the government can be great when its leaders care more about their citizens and nation than themselves.

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