

The Use of Autobiographical Stories in First Speeches to the Ontario Legislative Assembly

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Draft version: Please do not cite without the author's permission

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association,
15 June 2012, Edmonton, Alberta

Introduction

Brian Mulroney famously once said, “When I was driving a truck, John Turner was dancing with Princess Margaret.”¹ This strategic reference to two contrasting personal histories allowed Mulroney to draw a sharp contrast between himself and his opponent. The inferences here regarding their differing values and capacities to understand the struggles of average citizens are apparent without being explicit. The intersection between the public and private spheres in political settings can be tense ground, and examples such as this one show how autobiographical anecdotes can be rendered politically relevant. Private lives are used as shorthand for political values and suitability for public office.

To better understand how autobiographical stories can be invoked in the public sphere, this paper will analyze the use of personal details in parliamentary first speeches, also known as maiden speeches. By analyzing 168 first speeches delivered by newly elected members of the Ontario Legislative Assembly during four different sessions, this will provide insight into the act of “strategic self disclosure” as practiced by elected officials in the Ontario context. These Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) lack established records as legislators, so instead they must leverage examples from their personal and professional experiences to assert an identity and demonstrate their credentials. Rather than wait for their new colleagues and constituents to learn firsthand what to expect, members can set expectations by disclosing information intended to reveal their defining qualities as elected representatives.

¹ Quoted in John Allemang, “True Grit,” *The Globe and Mail*, 5 June 2009, Access: 15 April 2012. <www.theglobeandmail.com>.

Approach

The approach used in this paper is adapted from McCooey and Lowe's study of the use of autobiography in Australian first speeches to parliament.² Although there are some points of divergence based on cultural context, Canadian and Australian parliaments both rely on the Westminster model and follow similar conventions, including many of the practices governing parliamentary speech. Inaugural addresses have been established elsewhere as a valuable source of information on the members who deliver these speeches and the themes they express through these speech acts.³ This study will fill a gap in the literature on legislative proceedings in Ontario, which currently contains limited information on the evolution of the first speech tradition in this theatre. As a result this marks a novel contribution to the study of parliamentary speech in the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

This topic will be addressed through the use of Hansard transcripts, supplemented by comparative research on political uses of personal narratives. All inaugural speeches from newly elected members were analyzed for the legislative sessions immediately following the general elections in 1990, 1995, 2003, and 2011.⁴ As will be discussed below, each of these years represents a new session and a significant change in government, providing a sample that includes majority governments led by each of the three major political parties in Ontario and a minority government. In addition to offering a balance in governing conditions and partisan factors, the four sets of speeches also represent sessions where large numbers of newly elected representatives were inducted into the legislature.

² David McCooey and David Lowe, "Autobiography in Australian Parliamentary First Speeches," *Biography* 33 no. 1(2010).

³ Ibid.; Mary Power and Michelle Berardone, "Speaking in Parliament: First Speeches of Men and Women," *Journal of Applied Social Behaviour* 4 no. 2(1998); Jen Tsen Kwok, "Asian Australian Citizenship as a Frame of Enactment in the Parliamentary 'First Speech.'" *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 27 no. 1-2(2006); Pauline Horn, Margaret Lewiston, and Pauline Lewis, "The Maiden Speeches of New Zealand Women Members of Parliament," *Political Science* 35 no. 2(1983); etc.

⁴ A full list of the speeches analyzed can be found in Appendices A, B, C and D.

The period selected for consideration is after cameras were introduced into the Legislative Assembly, which suggests any impact televising proceedings has on the behaviour of members would be present in all four sessions examined and therefore would not impact these results.⁵ This choice was made to maximize the number of speeches analyzed to consider the variety of approaches used over time and under different political dynamics in the legislature at Queen's Park. Pragmatic concerns, such as the availability of Hansard transcripts for the target time periods, also helped determine the years selected for this study. Interviews with MPPs and other experts were used as background to illuminate themes and traditions relevant to this subject. This qualitative analysis is accompanied by an overview of the first speeches evaluated over the selected time period, which summarized the results of the study (See Tables 1 and 2).

For the purposes of this paper, first speeches were identified using various contextual cues in addition to the timing of the speech relative to the member's election. Other indicators, such as explicit identification in the text, were used to identify first speeches when the presentation was not the member's actual first time rising in the house to speak. If members did not deliver any speeches during their first session that fit these guidelines they were excluded from the final analysis (See Table 1). Inaugural speeches were analyzed for autobiographical themes, such as details of family life or work experience. The use of first person pronouns and stories where the member's own experience is the subject were some of the signifiers used to identify parliamentary speech that included personal themes.⁶ References to the constituency or the member's predecessor have been identified elsewhere as common material for first speeches,

⁵ Cameras were introduced based on the recommendations found in: Ontario Legislature, Standing Committee on Procedural Affairs and Agencies, Boards and Commissions. *Television Coverage of the Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly*. 1st sess., 33rd Parl., 1985.

⁶ Anita Fetzer and Peter Bull. "Well, I Answer it by Simply Inviting you to Look at the Evidence": The Strategic Use of Pronouns in Political Interviews." *Journal of Language and Politics* 7 no. 2(2008): 275-276.

and were included in this analysis to better understand what type of content was being included in maiden speeches in the Ontario context (See Table 2).⁷

The most common time to deliver an inaugural address is in response to the Speech from the Throne although they can be delivered under other circumstances. The throne speech is the first act of a new session, after electing the Speaker of the House, which makes it the first opportunity for many of the new members to rise in the House and deliver a speech. For three of the four sessions sampled in this paper the majority of first speeches are responses to the throne speech, and in 2003 the plurality of speeches were during the throne speech debate (See Table 3). Responses to the Speech from the Throne invariably give the speaking member considerable freedom because they can respond to any element from the government's entire plan for the session, which normally covers a broad selection of issue areas.

The House typically gives MPPs "considerable latitude" while delivering their maiden speech and members themselves have made explicit reference to the practice.⁸ By convention, MPPs are normally not interrupted or heckled during their inaugural speeches and the Speaker may even extend additional courtesies, such as additional time, to allow the member to complete their inaugural address. Reminders that a maiden speech is in progress are often issued to encourage these types of considerations. Members are also permitted to read their maiden speeches, which allows them to follow prepared texts more closely than would normally be permissible in parliamentary speech.⁹

⁷ Michael Dalvean, "Predicting Cabinet Ministers: A Psychological Approach," in *Ministerial Careers and Accountability in the Australian Commonwealth Government*, eds. Keith Dowsing and Chris Lewis (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2012), 46.

⁸ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 36:1 (23 November 1995) (Ms. Elinor Caplan); Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 39:2 (11 April 2011) (Mr. Ted Arnott); Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 38:1 (15 December 2003) (Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne).

⁹ Richard Marleau and Camille Montpetit, eds. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, (Montreal: McGraw-Hill, 2000): Chapter 13.

Literature

Ana Inés Langer describes the phenomenon of the “politicization of the private persona,” in which politicians are expected to present personal backgrounds that match their political ideologies.¹⁰ The public and private identities are fluid, with ideology and policy positions presented as a natural extension of a politician’s personal life and experiences. Marjut Johansson explores how a “political self” is constructed for public use and although it represents a version of a public figure’s private persona it is not necessarily a mirror reflection.¹¹ By sharing strategic personal details elected representatives can make themselves appear “more like the voters themselves,” and therefore more alluring to the voting public.¹² These autobiographical stories form a narrative that allows the public to relate to the MPP through common experiences.

Sidonie Smith explains that sharing information about one’s private life can establish informal and formal credentials.¹³ These credentials can telegraph the types of policies a member could be expected to advocate, while the implied membership in particular communities can be interpreted as a statement of the member’s values. Firsthand accounts have emotional appeal, and personal anecdotes can be potent because “the public consumption of such stories provides occasion for identification, titillation, and effective attachment, binding voters, citizens, and consumers to an individual at once exceptional and distinctive and intimately and accessibly like them.”¹⁴ The details about private lives being shared demonstrate “social and political

¹⁰ Ana Inés Langer, “The Politicization of Private Persona: Exceptional Leaders or the New Rule? The Case of the United Kingdom and the Blair Effect,” *International Journal of Press/Politics* 15 no. 1(2010): 61, 62.

¹¹ Marjut Johansson, “Presentation of the Political Self: Commitment in Electoral Media Dialogue,” *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 27 no. 4(2008): 398-399.

¹² McCooey and Lowe, 2010: 68-69.

¹³ Sidonie Smith, “Autobiographical Discourse in the Theater of Politics,” *Biography* 33 no. 1(2010): xiv.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*: ix.

affiliations,” including informal attachments to particular causes or communities within Ontario.¹⁵

Elected representatives who use personal pronouns more liberally are viewed as more charismatic than their counterparts who use personal pronouns less frequently.¹⁶ By sharing their background and motivations, MPPs may be perceived as more charismatic, one of the characteristics that has been associated with the overall appeal of political figures.¹⁷

History and Context

The speeches analyzed here were selected due to the large volume of newly elected members following each of these elections, while also being inclusive of the province’s three major parties. All four of these governments were formed after 1985, which marked the end of forty-two years of consecutive Conservative governments in Ontario and scholars have identified as a distinct era in Ontario’s political history.¹⁸

In 1990 the first, and to date only, NDP government to govern Ontario is elected. Bob Rae replaced David Peterson as premier in what was considered a surprising outcome.¹⁹ Peterson’s Liberals had previously governed in a minority situation with the support of Rae’s NDPs under an accord signed in 1985 that expired in 1987. A PC majority government came into power in 1995 under a movement called the Common Sense Revolution. The rhetoric during the election portrayed a stark contrast between the values represented by the PC party, led by Mike

¹⁵ McCooey and Lowe, 2010: 73, 75.

¹⁶ Andrew Rosenberg and Julia Hirschberg. “Charisma Perception from Text and Speech.” *Speech Communication* 51(2009): 646.

¹⁷ S. Mark Pancer, Steven D. Brown, and Cathy Widdis Barr, “Forming Impressions of Political Leaders: A Cross-National Comparison,” *Political Psychology* 20 no. 2(1999): 346-347;

¹⁸ Chuck Rachlis and David Wolfe, “An Insiders’ View of the NDP Government of Ontario: the Politics of Permanent Opposition Meets the Economics of Permanent Recession,” *The Government and Politics of Ontario*, ed. Graham White (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997): 331-332.

¹⁹ Adam D. McDonald, “Evolution of the Standing Orders since 1985,” *Canadian Parliamentary Review* (2005): 36.

Harris, and the policies implemented by the outgoing government.²⁰ The PCs formed government again in 1999, although with a reduced number of seats.²¹

A Liberal majority government was elected in 2003, while the PCs moved to opposition and the NDP lost party status and the remaining members sat as independents. Proceedings in the house following this election diverged from the other examples and were markedly tense, with members even engaging in a debate over whether or not to debate the Throne Speech, before debating it in earnest.²² The Liberals were re-elected in 2007 with another majority government. After the 2011 general election, the Liberal Party remained in power but was reduced to a minority government. The PC and NDP held a combined 54 seats, while the Liberals have 53 seats. Normally only 52 of the Liberals can vote, although the Speaker of the House, Dave Levac, can vote to break a tie.²³

Results

Of the 168 speeches analyzed for this study, only some of the key highlights could be discussed in detail here. This section covers some of the dominant themes that emerged in the speeches. (See Appendices A, B, C and D for full list of speeches). While there were some recurring motifs, particularly among speeches given during the same session, there was also enormous variation between inaugural addresses. The speeches were compelling in their diversity, and the lack of uniformity demonstrated the degree of autonomy members have in determining how they will use the allotted time. Over the past twenty years, MPPs have increasingly made use of personal histories while delivering their first speeches in the House

²⁰ McDonald, 2005: 36; Felicia Martinello, "Mr. Harris, Mr. Rae and Union Activity in Ontario," *Canadian Public Policy* 26 no. 1(2000): 17-18.

²¹ Distribution verified by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario's official website: <www.ontla.ola.ca>.

²² Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 38:1 (9 December 2003) (Ms. Liz Sandals).

²³ Distribution verified by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario's official website: <www.ontla.ola.ca>. Despite by-elections in September 2012 the balance of power remains unchanged, although the NDP now have 18 instead of the 17 they were elected with, while the PCs have 35 instead of 36.

(See Table 2). The duration of speaking time devoted to sharing autobiographical information has also increased in later maiden speeches.

In the first session of the 35th Parliament, the only maiden speech to include explicit reference to a family member was delivered by Dalton McGuinty, and this appears to have been provoked by some of the unusual circumstances surrounding his election. McGuinty's immediate predecessor was his recently deceased father, adding another layer to the widespread practice of paying tribute to the outgoing MPP for one's constituency. This was also a rare instance of a member's family member being a colleague to many of the members present in the legislature for this inaugural address, meaning the discussion had potential meaning and relevance for others in the chamber in addition to the member delivering the speech.²⁴ The discussion has as much in common with other tributes to predecessors as it does with later inaugural addresses that mention family members by name.

The political careers of family members, particularly parents, allow members to share details about their private lives that are simultaneously revealing about their motivations for seeking elected office.²⁵ These details can reveal a long history with the party, dating back to childhood in some cases, and bolster a member's partisan credentials.²⁶ Even in the rare cases where the family members being discussed aligned with a different party, these connections are still used to highlight the member's own views, such as NDP MPP John Vanthof's references to

²⁴ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 35:1 (28 November 1990) (Mr. Dalton McGuinty).

²⁵ Note: It is outside the scope of this study to determine how many elected members have family connections who held elected office, particularly because members have referenced relations through marriage and relatives who served in other legislatures.

²⁶ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 36:1 (4 December 1995) (Mr. Gary Fox); Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 38:1 (11 December 2003) (Ms. Laurie Scott); Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 40:1 (5 May 2004) (Mr. Bob Delaney).

his “Uncle Ernie,” who was a sitting member of the PC caucus at the time.²⁷ In addition to asserting an affiliation with their chosen party, sharing anecdotes that show their political values in harmony with personal ones helps convey the authenticity of the identity being presented.²⁸

To create a cohesive identity, members often find ways to convey their ideological beliefs and support for particular policies while also making reference to figures from their private lives. They can blend their personal lives with political themes during their inaugural speeches by using images of how family members might be directly impacted, positively or negatively, by the policies under discussion. Grant Crack clearly identified with the policies his party was promoting, and he incorporated this enthusiasm into a discussion of the benefits his parents will reap from the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit and his excitement that his grandson would soon experience the “Liberal government's initiative of full-day kindergarten next September.”²⁹

Similarly, PC MPP Jeff Yurek reflected in his maiden speech that in the previous generation “entrepreneurialism could flourish without the worry and threat of government interference and red tape.”³⁰ Although this comment would have been fully consistent with speaking points used by his caucus colleagues in later debates and questions on red tape reduction, Yurek intertwined these ideas with a narrative of his father’s life and their family pharmacy.³¹ Comments such as these reveal a bit of autobiographical information about the

²⁷ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 38:1 (30 November 2011) (Mr. John Vanthof).

²⁸ Kay Richardson, “Broadcast Political Talk—A Discourse of Licensed Inauthenticity,” *The Communication Review* 4(2001): 490-492.

²⁹ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 40:1 (28 November 2011) (Mr. Grant Crack).

³⁰ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 40:1 (28 November 2011) (Mr. Jeff Yurok).

³¹ See: Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 40:1 (17 May 2012) (Mrs. Jane McKenna); Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 40:1 (17 May 2012) (Mr. Rick Nicholls); Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 40:1 (15 May 2012) (Mr. Jim McDonnell); Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 40:1 (15 May 2012) (Mr. Steve Clark); Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 40:1 (14 May 2012) (Mr. Michael Harris).

member, while portraying their chosen party's views and policies as a natural extension of their personal life. These hybrid personal-political histories can be "used to infer and underwrite (or undermine) political values as well as to try to legitimize policy."³²

Recognizing the contribution one's predecessor made at Queen's Park is a common feature of maiden speeches, and this feature appears in a number of otherwise dissimilar maiden speeches. This subject emerged less frequently in the speeches delivered in 2011, and references to previous members, or lack thereof, proved slightly more provocative than in the other sessions analyzed here (Table 2). For example, while PC MPP Lisa Thompson was discussing some of the previous MPPs who represented her region, and her personal relationships with those individuals, another member interjected with the name of another member from that riding who had been omitted from the list.³³ Minister John Gerretsen elaborates on this theme while praising Monte McNaughton's maiden speech by warning, "The worst thing that we can do is badmouth individuals that have gone before us or not say anything about them at all."³⁴

Honouring outgoing members appears to be considered a show of good faith toward increasing decorum in the house, in addition to being traditional subject matter for first speeches. Members from all three parties made references to this, and the interest in continuing or even expanding on this tradition may be influenced by the minority government context in which greater bipartisan and tri-partisan collaboration would be required to pass legislation.³⁵

Additionally, although partisan comments with first speeches and in reaction to these presentations remain commonplace, the deference to the tradition tends to make the exchanges

³² Inés Langer, 2010: 61.

³³ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 40:1 (28 November 2011) (Ms. Lisa Thompson); Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 40:1 (28 November 2011) (Mr. John Gerretsen).

³⁴ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 40:1 (28 November 2011) (Mr. John Gerretsen).

³⁵ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 40:1 (28 November 2011) (Mr. Jagmeet Singh, Mr. Jeff Leal, Mr. John O'Toole).

less combative than during other sections of proceedings in the legislature, such as Question Period.³⁶

Themes identified in the speeches demonstrate that over the course of these four periods MPPs increasingly chose to emphasize personal components of their autobiographies rather than their professional backgrounds (Table 2). These acts of identity formation create a political self that relies more on personal qualities to be appealing than traditional credentials.³⁷ This is a departure from the earlier use of autobiographical information, where members would frequently share their professional accomplishments to display affiliation with Ontario's larger business or farming communities, for examples.³⁸ Instead individual characteristics are a bigger part of the picture new MPPs choose to present to the legislature, overshadowing rather than accompanying references to prior occupations. The accompanying increased use of personal pronouns suggests that members themselves are increasingly the subjects of their own maiden speeches, with their own experiences being showcased rather than used as supplementary material.³⁹

The types of affiliations members choose to reveal are indicative of what they hope to convey to their constituents and colleagues in the legislature. The new NDP government in 1990 was accompanied by a number of new MPPs, many who seemed eager to share their union ties and experiences working with organized labour.⁴⁰ By 1995, the newly elected members of Mike Harris's PC government chose to emphasize connections that would be more amendable with their own party's platform. An example of this was Doug Galt's firsthand account of an

³⁶ Kelly Blidook, "Symbol vs. Substance: Theatre, Political Career Paths, and Parliamentary Behaviour in Canada," *Canadian Study of Parliament Group* (2011). <<http://www.studyparliament.ca/English/pdf/KBlidookFinal-e.pdf>>, 1.

³⁷ Johansson, 2008: 398-399.

³⁸ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 35:1 (28 November 1990) (Mr. Paul Klopp); Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 36:1 (4 October 1995) (Mr. Pat Hoy); Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 35:1 (26 November 1990) (Mr. Gary Carr).

³⁹ Rosenberg and Hirschberg, 646.

⁴⁰ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 35:1 (27 November 1990) (Mr. Randy R. Hope); Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 35:1 (27 November 1990) (Mr. Tony Martin).

encounter with constituents who “rather than turning immediately to the government, to keep the family going they peeled and pre-cooked French fries for local restaurants.”⁴¹ Doug Ford’s account of his own business career plays on a similar set of values, and asserts his autobiography as evidence that the government’s approach will yield positive economic results.⁴² The difference in values demonstrated by what the autobiographical content of these first speeches suggests accurately reflects the policy changes to labour laws and welfare regulations that distinguished the two parties when they governed.⁴³

There were few speeches analyzed from cabinet ministers, both because rookie members are less likely to be appointed to cabinet and, based on this analysis, newly elected cabinet ministers are less likely than their backbench colleagues to be deliver a traditional maiden speech (Table 4). Instead most address the house for the first time either in a ministerial statement or providing answers during Question Period on behalf of their ministries. The opportunity to respond to the throne speech in particular is considered an honour, so MPPs who have already been promoted to cabinet may be less likely to be selected for additional recognition in this form.⁴⁴

One of the rare instances of a minister delivering a maiden speech is instructive on why this is a relatively rare occurrence. Newly appointed Minister of Energy, Jenny Carter, commented on her personal experiences with energy, including the mix used in her own home, during her maiden speech.⁴⁵ Carter was strongly rebuked by responding members for this speech out of concern that she had crossed a line and in “her remarks as a private member making her

⁴¹ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 36:1 (5 December 1995) (Mr. Doug Galt).

⁴² Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 36:1 (11 December 1995) (Mr. Douglas B. Ford).

⁴³ Martinello, 2000: 17-18.

⁴⁴ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 36:1 (10 October 1995) (Ms. Janet Ecker).

⁴⁵ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 35:1 (28 November 1990) (Ms. Jenny Carter).

initial statement to the House on the throne speech, she has spoken as a minister.”⁴⁶ The reaction to this speech is instructive on why ministers may choose to decline the opportunity to deliver a maiden speech and instead choose to focus their first comments on their portfolio responsibilities. Ministers may have greater difficulty asserting their identity as private members, because under the doctrine of collective cabinet solidarity they share in ultimate responsibility for the contents.

When members share their firsthand stories in the legislature they may be “[exhibiting] an affinity to narrative structures, and to literary genres like the fairytale with its heroes and villains, rich and poor, perpetrators and victims.”⁴⁷ Through the use of humour and other storytelling techniques members can share details about themselves that may be minor but also memorable. Marilyn Churley hinted at the origins of her affiliation with the NDP by warning, “I will not bore them with a lot of details like the time I was kissed by Joey Smallwood when I was a baby and that sort of thing, which turned me against the Liberals forever.”⁴⁸ The details included in these speeches are suggestive of how a member approaches their position as an MPP and the type of identity they are cultivating in the legislature, by demonstrating the type of information they use to introduce themselves.⁴⁹

Some of the first speeches that include autobiographical information also contain an explanation of why the member thought that information would be of interest to their audience. For example, Gary Malkowski asserts that he was successful in becoming “the first deaf

⁴⁶ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 35:1 (28 November 1990) (Mrs. Barbara Sullivan).

⁴⁷ Gerda Lauerbach, “Manoeuvring Between the Political, the Personal and the Private: Talk, Image and Rhythm in TV Dialogue,” *Discourse & Communication* 4 no. 2(2010): 127.

⁴⁸ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 35:1 (4 December 1990) (Ms. Marilyn Churley).

⁴⁹ Similar approaches used in: Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 38:1 (2 December 2003) (Mr John Yakabuski); Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 36:1 (10 October 1995) (Mr. John O’Toole).

politician in the world who uses American Sign Language” in part because of the political party he chose to join.⁵⁰ In his speech, Malkowski drew a parallel between his own accomplishments and Agnes Macphail’s historic election to the House of Commons. Providing these characteristics in this setting is a way of asserting a particular affiliation, and developing an identity in a new professional setting.⁵¹

The perceived purpose of the maiden speech appears to have expanded over time, and the inclusion of more autobiographical content in these first speeches demonstrates that pattern. It has become increasingly common for MPPs to deliver shorter maiden speeches, often sharing their timeslot with caucus colleagues who wish to also have an opportunity to speak to the same motion.⁵² Although shorter speeches allow more members to join the debate and share their inaugural remarks, these time constraints may discourage members from engaging in more substantive debate and make simple personal speeches more likely.

Considering the mentorship role veteran members can have in introducing newly elected members to these procedures, particularly on a subject that has very little written material to provide guidance, their views and expectations could influence the direction taken in these speeches. Throne Speeches are heavily ceremonial to begin with, so it is fitting that the Ontario Legislative Assembly appears to have developed some accompanying rituals for new members joining this debate.⁵³ MPP Liz Sandals remarked that “the tradition of the maiden speech around here is really very important, because it allows us to get to know the new members in a way

⁵⁰ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 35:1 (21 November 1990) (Mr. Gary Malkowski).

⁵¹ Ibid.; Smith, 2010: ix; McCooley and Lowe, 2010: 73, 75.

⁵² Shorter maiden speeches are referenced directly here: Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 40:1 (28 November 2011) (Mr. John O’Toole). Members also explicitly tell the Speaker when they are sharing time, typically at the beginning of their remarks.

⁵³ James Cairns, “Ontario Throne Speeches Through the Lens of Mass Media,” Canadian Parliamentary Review (2008): 21-22.

where we learn something about the new members and why they're here.”⁵⁴ These types of comments are powerful unwritten cues that can guide how current and future members will approach this opportunity, despite the relative autonomy they have in drafting their remarks.

Issues surrounding the actual authorship of these speeches fall outside the scope of this study. While members may receive input or even assistance from staff and other contributors in drafting statements, the range of content found in these first speeches suggests that members have relative freedom in choosing what approach they take with this presentation. Whether or not they are sole authors of these words is irrelevant to understanding what type of content is included in these speeches and why. While comments made during other sections of the legislative proceedings that are tightly controlled, such as Question Period, display relative uniformity, the diversity of first speeches suggests greater autonomy on the part of individual members.⁵⁵

Members tend to pull examples from their personal histories that distinguish them from other MPPs, making particular use of details that might signal a departure from the typical member profile and, consequently, politics as usual. Jennifer Mossop describes the ups and downs of her initial experiences bringing her child to the legislature with her, and how her family responsibilities impacted her approach to campaigning and even the decision to seek public office.⁵⁶ This disclosure conveys a bit about her approach to this role, and how she views her own identity, while also creating a clear contrast between her approach and the status quo in the legislature. Many of the members who do employ autobiographical material in their inaugural addresses choose anecdotes or trivia that suggest they have much in common with the

⁵⁴ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 40:1 (23 November 2011) (Ms. Liz Sandals).

⁵⁵ McCooey and Lowe, 2010: 71; Blidook, 2011: 1.

⁵⁶ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates (Hansard), 38:1 (11 December 2003) (Ms. Jennifer Mossop).

constituents who elected them, often in direct contrast to the returning members they are joining in the legislative chamber. These revelations that highlight commonalities between new members and average constituents serve to deemphasize the qualities and experiences they share with other MPPs. This may be a strategic act of self-disclosure offered to stress that the new member intends to break from the prevalent practices.⁵⁷

Conclusion

Personal anecdotes and autobiographical stories help members establish identities as legislators. While these revelations may be personally meaningful for the MPPs delivering their first speeches, these details also provide signals about the member's affiliation and approach to representation. Although occasionally informal, these comments are not without significance and can reveal politically relevant information while also providing insight into the private lives of these public figures.

⁵⁷ Gemma Rosenblatt, "From One of Us to One of Them: The Socialisation of New MPs," *Parliamentary Affairs* 60 no. 3(2007): 510-511.

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Supplementary Interviews:

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- Anonymous Queen's Park Staff Member (2). Personal Interview. Queen's Park, Toronto: 2012.
- Caruso, Deborah. Personal Interview. Queen's Park, Toronto: 2012.
- Coyle, Jim. Personal Interview. Toronto: 2012.
- Howarth, Andrea. Personal Interview. Queen's Park, Toronto: 2012.
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- Murray, Glen. Personal Interview. Queen's Park, Toronto: 2012.
- Yakabuski, John. Personal Interview. Queen's Park, Toronto: 2012.

Table 1: Summary of Speeches Analyzed

	1990	1995	2003	2011
<i>Newly elected MPPs</i>	68	71	41	30
<i>First Speeches Identified</i>	49	58	32	29
<i>Speeches with Autobiographical Themes</i>	20	33	24	26
<i>Share of Personal Speeches with Autobiographical Details</i>	40.8%	56.9%	75.0%	89.7%

Table 2: Core Themes in Speeches Analyzed

	1990	1995	2003	2011
<i>Predecessor</i>	21 (42.9%)	20 (34.5%)	11 (34.3%)	8 (27.6%)
<i>Constituency</i>	18 (36.7%)	22 (37.9%)	12 (37.5%)	11 (37.3%)
<i>Work Experience</i>	12 (24.5%)	6 (10.3%)	9 (28.1%)	8 (27.6%)
<i>Family Life</i>	2 (4.1%)	14 (24.1%)	12 (37.5%)	18 (62.1%)
<i>Total Speeches Analyzed</i>	49 (100.0%)	58 (100.0%)	32 (100.0%)	29 (100.0%)

Table 3: Number of Inaugural Speeches Delivered in Response to Speech from the Throne

	1990	1995	2003	2011
<i>Inaugural Speeches Delivered in Response to</i>	29	31	15	17

<i>Speech from the Throne</i>	(59.2%)	(53.4%)	(46.9%)	(58.6%)
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Table 4: Number of Cabinet Ministers Who Deliver a Maiden Speech

	1990	1995	2003	2011
<i>Total Number of New MPPs Appointed to Cabinet</i>	12	7	5	0
<i>Number of Cabinet Ministers who Deliver a Maiden Speech</i>	2 (16.7%)	1 (14.3%)	2 (40.0%)	0
<i>Newly Elected Members Who Deliver a Maiden Speech</i>	49 (72.1%)	58 (81.7%)	32 (78.0%)	29 (96.7%)

Appendix A: Speeches Analyzed for the 1st Session of the 35th Parliament

Name	Autobiographical Themes	Party	Date
Ted Arnott	No	PC	3 Dec 1990
Gilles Bisson	No	NDP	27 Nov 1990
Gary Carr	No	PC	26 Nov 1990
Jenny Carter	Yes	NDP (cabinet)	28 Nov 1990
David Christopherson	No	NDP	26 Nov 1990
Marilyn Churley	Yes	NDP	3 Dec 1990
Mike Cooper	No	NDP	28 Nov 1990
George Dadamo	No	NDP	22 Nov 1990
Dennis Paul Drainville	Yes	NDP	3 Dec 1990
William A. Ferguson	No	NDP	3 Dec 1990
Derek Fletcher	No	NDP	3 Dec 1990
Robert T.S. Frankford	Yes	NDP	27 Nov 1990
Ron Hansen	No	NDP	27 Nov 1990
Charles Harnick	No	PC	27 Nov 1990;
Margaret Helen Harrington	No	NDP	28 Nov 1990
Karen Haslam	No	NDP	22 Nov 1990
Randy R. Hope	Yes	NDP	27 Nov 1990
Norman Jamison	Yes	NDP	29 Nov 1990
Paul R. Johnson	No	NDP	11 Dec 1990
W. Leo Jordan	Yes	PC	3 Dec 1990
Paul Klopp	Yes	NDP	27 Nov 1990
Wayne Lessard	No	NDP	27 Nov 1990

Ellen MacKinnon	No	NDP	27 Nov 1990
Gary Malkowski	Yes	NDP	21 Nov 1990
George Mammoliti	No	NDP	28 Nov 1990
Tony Martin	Yes	NDP	27 Nov 1990
Irene Mathysen	Yes	NDP	21 Nov 1990
Dalton McGuinty	Yes	Liberal	28 Nov 1990
Gordon L. Mills	Yes	NDP	6 Dec 1990
Mark Morrow	No	NDP	29 Nov 1990
Bill Murdoch	No	PC	27 Nov 1990
Sharon Margaret Murdock	No	NDP	4 Dec 1990
Lawrence O'Connor	No	NDP	29 Nov 1990
Stephen David Owens	Yes	NDP	Nov 21, 1990
Anthony Perruzza	No	NDP	5 Dec 1990
Tony Silipo	No	NDP	3 Dec 1990
Chris Stockwell	Yes	PC	29 Nov 1990;
Kimble Sutherland	Yes	NDP	26 Nov 1990
David Turnbull	Yes	PC	3 Dec 1990
Bradley Richard Ward	No	NDP	26 Nov 1990
Shelley Wark-Martyn	Yes	NDP, cabinet	3 Dec 1990
Drummond White	Yes	NDP	27 Nov 1990
Fred Wilson	No	NDP	10 Dec 1990
Gary Wilson	No	NDP	20 Dec 1990
Jim Wilson	No	PC	27 November 1990
David Winninger	Yes	NDP	6 Dec 1990
James Perry Wiseman	No	NDP	4 Dec 1990
Elizabeth Witmer	No	PC	28 Nov 1990
Leonard Wood	No	NDP	27 Nov 1990

Appendix B: Speeches Analyzed for the 1st Session of the 36th Parliament

Name	Autobiographical Themes	Party	Date
Dominic Agostino	No	Liberal	10 Oct 1995
John R. Baird	Yes	PC	5 Oct 1995
Toby Barrett	Yes	PC	4 Oct 1995
Rick Bartolucci	Yes	Liberal	5 Oct 1995
Isabel Bassett	No	PC	4 Dec 1995
Marcel Beaubien	No	PC	18 Oct 1995
Dave Boushy	Yes	PC	22 April 1996
Jim Brown	Yes	PC	11 Dec 1995
Jack Carroll	Yes	PC	4 Oct 1995
Annamarie Castrilli	No	Liberal	4 Oct 1995
Ted Chudleigh	Yes	PC	21 Nov 1995
Tony Clement	Yes	PC	10 Oct 1995
Mike Colle	Yes	Liberal	3 Oct 1995
Harry Danford	No	PC	4 Oct 1995
Carl DeFaria	No	PC	16 Nov 1995
Ed Doyle	Yes	PC	5 Oct 1995

Dwight Duncan	No	Liberal	3 Oct 1995
Janet Ecker	No	PC	10 Oct 1995
Barbara Fisher	No	PC	28 Sept 1995
Douglas B. Ford	Yes	PC	11 Dec 1995
Gary Fox	Yes	PC	4 Dec 1995
Doug Galt	Yes	PC	5 Oct 1995
John Gerretsen	Yes	Liberal	4 Oct 1995
Steve Gilchrist	No	PC	28 Sept 1995
Michael Gravelle	Yes	Liberal	10 Oct 1995
William Lawrence Grimmett	No	PC	11 Oct 1995
Garry J. Guzzo	Yes	PC	18 April 1996
Ernie Hardeman	No	PC	11 Dec 1995
John Hastings	No	PC	10 Oct 1995
Pat Hoy	Yes	Liberal	4 Oct 1995
Tim Hudak	No	PC	2 Oct 1995
Helen Johns	Yes	PC	11 Oct 1995
Ron Johnson	No	PC	17 Oct 1995
Frank Klees	Yes	PC	11 Dec 1995
Jean-Marc Lalonde	Yes	Liberal	10 Oct 1995
Gary L. Leadston	No	PC	5 Oct 1995
Gerry Martiniuk	Yes	PC	11 Dec 1995
Bart Maves	Yes	PC	28 Sept 1995
Julia Munro	No	PC	5 Oct 1995
Marilyn Mushinski	No	PC (cabinet)	5 Oct 1995
Dan Newman	Yes	PC	4 Oct 1995
John O'Toole	Yes	PC	10 Oct 1995
John L. Parker	Yes	PC	4 Dec 1995
Trevor Pettit	No	PC	29 April 1996
Peter L. Preston	Yes	PC	9 May 1996
Sandra Pupatello	Yes	Liberal	4 Oct 1995
E. J. Douglas Rollins	No	PC	14 Dec 1995
Lillian Ross	No	PC	3 Oct 1995
Rob Sampson	No	PC	16 Nov 1995
Mario Sergio	Yes	Liberal	4 Oct 1995
Derwyn Shea	No	PC	10 Oct 1995
Toni Skarica	Yes	PC	2 Nov 1995
Bruce Smith	No	PC	4 Oct 1995
Gary Stewart	Yes	PC	3 Oct 1995
Joseph N. Tascona	Yes	PC	10 Oct 1995
Wayne Wettlaufer	Yes	PC	3 Oct 1995
Bob Wood	No	PC	5 Oct 1995
Terence H. Young	Yes	PC	11 Nov 1998

Appendix C: Speeches Analyzed for the 1st Session of the 38th Parliament

Name	Autobiographical Themes	Party	Date
Wayne Arthurs	No	Liberal	22 April 2004

Lorenzo Berardinetti	Yes	Liberal	7 June 2004,
Laurel C. Broten	Yes	Liberal	11 Dec 2003
Jim Brownell	No	Liberal	11 Dec 2003
Donna H. Cansfield	Yes	Liberal	27 Nov 2003
Kim Craiton	Yes	Liberal	1 Dec 2003
Bob Delaney	Yes	Liberal	5 May 2004
Brad Duguid	Yes	Liberal	26 Nov 2003
Kevin Daniel Flynn	Yes	Liberal	27 Nov 2003
Linda Jeffrey	Yes	Liberal	7 March 2004
Kuldip Kular	No	Liberal	1 Dec 2003
Jeff Leal	Yes	Liberal	16 Dec 2003
Bill Mauro	No	Liberal	1 Dec 2003
Deborah Matthews	Yes	Liberal	22 April 2004
Madeleine Meilleur	Yes	Liberal (cabinet)	10 Dec 2003
John Malloy	Yes	Liberal	7 April 2004
Carol Mitchell	Yes	Liberal	22 March 2004
Jennifer F. Mossop	Yes	Liberal	11 Dec 2003
David Orzietti	Yes	Liberal	26 Nov 2003
Tim Peterson	No	Liberal	26 Nov 2003
Shafiq Qadri	Yes	Liberal	11 Dec 2003
Mario G. Racco	Yes	Liberal	4 April 2004
Khalil Ramal	Yes	Liberal	16 Dec 2003
Lou Rinaldi	Yes	Liberal	25 Nov 2003
Liz Sandals	No	Liberal	25 Nov 2003
Laurie Scott	Yes	PC	11 Dec 2003
Monique M. Smith	Yes	Liberal	22 April 2004
Maria Van Bommel	No	Liberal	7 April 2004
Jim Watson	No	Liberal, cabinet	11 Dec 2003
John Wilkinson	Yes	Liberal	22 March 2004
Kathleen O. Wynne	Yes	Liberal	11 Dec 2003
John Yakabuski	Yes	PC	2 Dec 2003

Appendix D: Speeches Analyzed for the 1st Session of the 40th Parliament

Name	Autobiographical Themes	Party	Date
Teresa J. Armstrong	Yes	NDP	5 Dec 2011
Sarah Campbell	Yes	NDP	22 Feb 2011
Michael Coteau	Yes	Liberal	23 Nov 2011
Grant Crack	Yes	Liberal	28 Nov 2011
Dipika Damerla	Yes	Liberal	28 Nov 2011
Victor Fedeli	Yes	PC	28 Nov 2011
Cindy Forster	Yes	NDP	28 Nov 2011
Michael Harris	No	PC	21 Feb 2012
Rod Jackson	Yes	PC	30 Nov 2011
Rob Leone	Yes	PC	8 Dec 2011
Jack MacLaren	No	PC	23 Feb 2012
Michael Mantha	Yes	NDP	24 Nov 2011
Jim McDonell	No	PC	5 Dec 2011

Jane McKenna	Yes	PC	7 March 2012
Monte McNaughton	Yes	PC	28 Nov 2011
Rob E. Milligan	Yes	PC	7 Dec 2011
Taras Natyshak	Yes	NDP	29 Nov 2011
Rick Nicholls	Yes	PC	7 Dec 2011
Randy Pettapiece	Yes	PC	2 April 2012
Teresa Piruzza	Yes	Liberal	29 Nov 2011
Jonah Schein	Yes	NDP	29 Nov 2011
Jagmeet Singh	Yes	NDP	30 Nov 2011
Todd Smith	Yes	PC	30 Nov 2011
Monique Taylor	Yes	NDP	29 Nov 2011
Lisa M. Thompson	Yes	PC	28 Nov 2011
John Vanthof	Yes	NDP	30 Nov 2011
Bill Walker	Yes	PC	28 Nov 2011
Soo Wong	Yes	Liberal	28 Nov 2011
Jeff Yurek	Yes	PC	28 Nov 2011