**SWPA Presentation Proposal**

**Title:** Language of War

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**Introduction:** In the last few years, numerous civil disputes around the world have spurred debate over American military intervention. Language could be one way to predict when conflict will occur. In terms of language usage, Hogenraad (2005) found that an increased use of power words with a decreased use of affiliation words tend to precede war. Others have also argued for the importance of language when it comes to politics and conflict (Babones, 2012; Bugarski, 2000). Recent research in the psychology of language has shown that language usage has important psychology correlates. Tausczik and Pennebaker (2010) discuss how sociality, emotion, and thinking styles correlate with language usage. In this study, we examined the political speeches surrounding the choices of war and determined the linguistic differences between speeches supporting and opposing war.

**Methods:** Language samples from the Congressional Record, which is a searchable database containing records of each session of Congress since 1995, were used; for this study, we searched for pertinent speeches in the Senate from 1998 to 2013. Records were accessed for any speech pertaining to U.S. relations with the following countries: Iraq, Syria, North Korea, Libya, Afghanistan, Iran, Sudan, Kosovo, and Russia. Voting records for bills involving the use of military force only existed for Iraq and Kosovo. For the other six regions, party affiliation was used as an approximation of senator’s likely votes. Each language sample was analyzed using the Language Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC; Pennebaker, Booth, & Francis, 2007). The LIWC analyzes text for 82 language categories. In this study, we focused on the three linguistic processes, 16 function word categories, 14 psychological constructs categories, and five personal concerns categories (achievement, work, money, death, and religion).

**Results:** Two sets of analyses were conducted using the language categories divided into eight groups (linguistic processes, pronouns, verbs, other function words, social/emotional words, cognitive mechanisms, relativity words, and personal concerns). The first analysis set was a multilevel mixed model that predicted support/opposition to military action in Iraq and Kosovo. Nine possible models were tested, one for each language group and a model containing the best predictors from each model. The best model was the social/emotional words model (BIC = 236.73). An analysis of the regression slopes indicated that senators who support military action tend to use more negative emotion words while those that oppose it use more social and positive emotion words. The second analysis used all nine regions in a multilevel mixed model to predict party affiliation. Once again the social/emotional model was the most significant; however, statistically, it was not different than the other models.

**Discussion:** The first analysis indicated that language could be a useful measure for predicting politicians’ support for war. Further research is necessary to determine if these same models are useful in other political arenas such as the House of Representatives. Implications of the results will be discussed.