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Rituals surrounding the care of the dying pre-viable baby in labour ward
a critical interpretive synthesis of the literature

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Rituals surrounding the care of the dying previabile baby in labour ward

a critical interpretive synthesis of the literature

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2011

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Application of Rhetorical Analysis to Guidelines (Leach 2000)**Guidelines**

Perinatal Care at the Threshold of Viability produced by the Committee on Fetus and Newborn for the American Academy of Pediatrics and published in 2002.

The rhetorical situation

What I mean by the rhetorical situation is that described by Leach (2000) as the means by which the rhetoric was produced. This includes who produced the rhetoric, where and how.

There are three elements to consider in analysing the rhetorical situation:

- Exigence
- Audience
- Persuasive Discourse

<i>Element</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Application</i>
Exigence	<p>Exigence has been defined by Bitzer as a 'defect or something waiting to be done'. It can be further subdivided into <i>kairos</i> and <i>phronesis</i>.</p> <p>Kairos means timeliness and phronesis is about the appropriateness of the particular piece of rhetoric.</p> <p>It is about saying the right thing at the right time.</p>	<p>When these guidelines were constructed in 2002 there had already been considerable professional and public debate about the appropriateness of intervention in very low birth weight infants.</p> <p>The timeliness is reflected in their rationale for constructing the guidelines – placing them in the context of the social and medical changes that are taking place. They are also time limited - 5 years from the date of publication, so that professionals using them can be reassured about their 'currency'.</p> <p>In relation to phronesis – the appropriateness is reflected in the apparent social and medical debates described in the policy. However, the authors choose not to reflect the very deep divisions within society in the USA where religious fundamentalism colours legal and medical decision making. Anyone reading this policy without a clear understanding of USA society could be persuaded that it represents societal consensus, as well as professional consensus.</p>
Audience	<p>The audience is the intended recipients of the rhetoric.</p>	<p>In the case of this policy, it is clear that the intended audience is health professionals and specifically those caring for pregnant women and for neonates.</p> <p>The policy is written using a scientific layout, clearly recognisable to health professionals. The language is technical and there is an assumption that the audience will already be familiar with concepts presented.</p>

Persuasive discourse	This refers to the type or genre of rhetoric. Three types have been identified – forensic (legal) – this centres around past events; deliberative (policy) – course of future action; and epideictic (contemporary) – relating to censure, praise and blame.	It is clear that these are policy guidelines and so the form of persuasive discourse that they use is deliberative. The argument centres around a course of action that it proposes should be taken when the practitioner encounters a women who will deliver a very preterm infant. However, policy and guidelines could also be used in forensic rhetoric since they could form part of the persuasion that takes place in a court of law to present an account of behaviour.
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Traditionally, rhetoric is considered to have five ‘canons’: Invention, Disposition, Style, Memory and Delivery. Some canons have further categories allowing for close examination of the rhetoric.

Invention	This relates to the form and the content of the rhetoric.	Previously held assumptions about rhetoric assumed that the form was less important than the content. However, the scientific community recognises certain forms as being more acceptable than others. In this instance, the policy has adopted the same form as a scientific paper. I would suggest that this structure has been chosen because it persuades the reader that content has certain properties. It is highly significant that journals respected within the medical community prescribe the same format for publications. It could be argued that the authors are using the ‘scientific’ format to persuade the audience that the policy has a ‘scientific’ basis.
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Ethos	This relies on establishing the credibility of the author(s). While it could be argued that the authorship of a paper is less important than the content, part of the persuasion element of guidelines relies upon the credentials of the authors.	<p>One author is cited – Hugh MacDonald, a doctor. In the print version it states ‘and the Committee on Fetus and Newborn. However, the web version omits the word ‘the’ and he becomes the Committee on Fetus and Newborn. He is not represented being affiliated to a hospital, clinic or university, he is represented as ‘the Committee on Fetus and Newborn’.</p> <p>In this case, he is the ‘committee’ and thus his credentials are more believable than if he were simply representing his views as an individual.</p> <p>By presenting the paper as the product of a committee representing a professional organisation, the audience is persuaded that the policy has a strong claim for authority.</p>
Pathos	Pathos is the appeal to emotion.	<p>In the case of this policy, several appeals to emotion are made. The audience is reminded that the family should be treated with ‘warmth and compassion’. The baby is invoked and should be provided with ‘humane and compassionate’ care.</p> <p>Pathos is also invoked within this policy as an appeal is made for continuing research. The assumption is that by funding research, answers will be found to the unanswered questions and improvements to care initiated and parents and babies will be helped.</p>

Logos	Logos relates to logic – the ability of the text to persuade the audience of the merit of a particular point of view.	<p>The policy is structured in such a way that arguments and answers appear to follow on in a natural manner. The paper sets out potential uncertainties and then attempts to give the practitioner guidance on how to approach or resolve the problems.</p> <p>Statistics are given to enable the practitioner to calculate the probabilities relating to courses of action and outcomes.</p> <p>Even the emotional elements of the policy, where there is little evidence as to the best course of action, are presented in a way that persuades the reader of their reasonableness. The language – compassion, dignity, humanity, appeals to a sense of reason and strikes a chord with professionals dealing with a human, rather than a medical situation.</p>
Disposition	Disposition relates to how the text is organised. The underlying assumption is that the organisation of a text can be part of the persuasive argument. In some senses it is similar to the canon of 'invention'.	I have already argued that the organisation of the text is important in rhetoric and I would argue that the authors of this guideline have deliberately organised the material in a scientific format to engage the audience and persuade them of the paper's scientific credentials.

<p>Style</p>	<p>Style refers to the relationship between form and content. It represents the way in which the authors present the information and the deliberate use of forms of language to persuade the audience of the worthiness of the paper.</p>	<p>In the case of the policy document under review, the use of the first person is missing. The paper is presented as the view of a committee representing the viewpoint of the American Academy of Pediatrics. It is a ‘-policy statement’ and thus has legitimacy both through the organisation from which it comes, and from its apparent status as a professional rule.</p> <p>A list of 9 medical doctors are cited as members.</p> <p>The document also has a list of ‘liaisons’ – these include individuals, other paediatric societies, other professional organisations e.g. nurses and obstetrics and gynaecologists and national centres for development and disease control and prevention.</p> <p>The list of authors and liaisons appears to lend ‘authority’ to the guidelines and by default to the users of the guidelines. There is no attempt to present a parental perspective. These are very much the product and property of a specific professional group.</p> <p>The style in which the document is written suggests objectivity and research papers are cited to lend credence to the views expressed.</p> <p>Although the authors express a fairly deterministic view as to how the situation should be managed, they do provide a caveat – for example, in the web version, they stress at the very end of the document in a footnote that the recommendations do not indicate an exclusive course of action and that variations may be appropriate. This caveat is placed in small print at the foot of the first column of the first page of the print version.</p> <p>However, it could be argued that the very positioning of this statement and the use of the term ‘may’, rather than ‘will’ indicates that the variations would be unusual.</p>
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Metaphor and analogy	Metaphors are used to transfer meaning from one concept to another and are used widely in literature. Metaphors work by creating analogies between two separate concepts.	Detecting metaphors in scientific papers – particularly policy papers - is difficult and at times may be impossible. In the case of this particular paper, there does not seem to be any attempt to use metaphors or analogies as part of the persuasive device.
Metonymy and synecdoche	Metonymy and synecdoche are figures of speech where we use a 'part' to represent a 'whole'. For example, the use of Scotland versus England in football matches.	As with metaphor and analogy, these appear to be absent from the report. This suggests that it is constructed to appear factual and objective.
Memory	This relates to length and recall. For example a great orator would talk for a long time and then be able to repeat the speech.	In the case of guidelines, it is generally accepted that they need to be succinct, so we seem to have a situation that is the reverse of classical rhetoric. However, the purpose of guidelines is that they are reproducible in different situations and by different people. So it could be argued that this element of rhetorical analysis is appropriate.
Delivery	Delivery relates to the dissemination of the content.	In relation to the policy, the delivery is via the American Academy of Pediatrics and through their journal 'Pediatrics'. However, it is also disseminated through their website and they emphasise the wide dissemination by referencing articles where it has been cited. All the references are to established 'scientific' journals, thus enhancing the credibility of the policy document.

Summary of the analysis

To summarise my findings using rhetorical analysis, these are deliberative guidelines that appear to have been constructed for a specific audience at a specific time. This is evident from their content and the ethos of the guidelines. The guidelines appeal to logic and do not use metaphor, analogy, metonymy or synecdoche. They are designed to be reproduced by different people in a variety of settings and have been disseminated in a manner that reaches the appropriate audience, while enhancing the credibility of the guidelines.

Leach J 2000 Rhetorical Analysis. In: Bauer M and Gaskell G (eds) *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sound*. London, Sage.