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## **TRUMPS SOCIAL MEDIA – THE FIRST 100 DAYS OF HIS PRESIDENCY: A CONTENT ANALYSIS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

More than any time in history technology allows politicians to directly reach large audiences to increase interaction. Modern social media permits information to be more accessible, direct, and permanent. Politicians can address audiences more frequently and directly through mobile devices - a tactic which creates a perception of immediacy unseen in past political climates. Specifically, Twitter grants unfiltered communication with users, while bypassing established mainstream media. The use of Twitter politically was first revolutionized by Barak Obama. Donald Trump's use of Twitter has elevated this social media platform to an unheard-of level. A content analysis was conducted on President Donald Trump's Tweets from his first 100 days in office. The results indicate that the majority of these Tweets can be separated into the Burkeian categories of Identity and Division. A discussion of the substance of these Tweets, the political use of social media, and specifically President Trump's embracing of Twitter ensues.

*Keywords:* Trump, Twitter, Social Media, Content Analysis, Political, Burk

### **INTRODUCTION**

Social media was developed by American democracy in the 1700s, though not in the technological sense that we see today. This early use of social media had to be truly personal. It operated in a physical social circle employing the machinery of the time period - printing presses. Since printing presses were scarce, the physical distribution was low. For the most part social media and mass media in general relied on word of mouth.

Ben Franklin, as an established leader and politician, utilized the tech of the time in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1754, amid the French and Indian War, he designed and published America's first political cartoon; a distinguished snake-shaped illustration as a means of creating unity among the colonies. It depicted a snake in thirteen separate pieces – each section as a representation of an individual colony – with the words “JOIN, or DIE” (Herskovits, 2013). The message was clear to the colonies, just like a snake cannot function when divided neither can the colonies. They must stand united or accept assured failure. It was a simple yet tacit image that was amply distributed and forecasted the potential influence of this medium.

By the 1920s and 30s, radio became the most powerful form of political communication. It paved the way for audiences to be influenced by the speaker's voice, inflection and delivery creating a

highly personal susceptibility to persuasion. President Franklin Roosevelt appreciated and took advantage of its influence. Rather than allowing an interviewer to pose intentionally difficult and probing questions, Roosevelt spoke directly to the American people. He gained popularity with fireside chats – an intimate series of radio broadcasts in the 1930s that addressed current issues. These chats allowed the audience to feel like conversations were specifically molded for them and elevated their sense of importance. Roosevelt was described as a speaker with a great mellifluous voice who spoke with a conversational tone and invoked warmth to the more than ninety percent of Americans who owned a radio (Roosevelt, 2009).

The evolution from radio to television as the medium of choice began in 1950's. The addition of visuals added another element to the politician's arsenal of tools. Communication had changed to include image, voice, and tone as prominent elements in people's perception. Through television, wider audiences would be able to view as well as hear politicians' speeches and judge both components at once. One of the first to demonstrate the strategic power of a television broadcast was Republican candidate for Vice President Richard Nixon in September 1952 (Soniak, 2008). He took an unprecedented step flying to Los Angeles to broadcast the infamous Checkers speech. This speech was designed to combat criticism over financial improprieties concerning campaign expenditures. Nixon dispelled allegations in a well-crafted and enticing thirty-minute address to the nation while avoiding rebuttal. Nixon established himself as a family man and connected with 60 million people to gain momentum and simultaneously eliminate criticism toward his party. As a testament that Nixon understood the power of mass communication, he and Eisenhower won 55% of the popular vote in 1952 (Hammond, Roberts & Sulfaro, 2016).

In 1959, John F. Kennedy also recognized the power of television when he wrote an article for T.V. Guide - "A Force that has Changed the Political Scene." In that article, Kennedy penned that television's "revolutionary impact" would have far-reaching and lasting consequences for politics. By the 1960s, the telegenic qualities of candidates began to matter. The political machine turned its attention to polishing candidates for television in order to showcase their personal traits.

Even with the rise of television, at this point the radio medium still had a lot of influence. In 1960 the Nixon vs. Kennedy presidential debate was broadcast both over the radio and television airwaves. The winner of this debate was determined by which media the audience consumed. Television viewers say it was a win for Kennedy, but for radio audiences Nixon took the triumph. Television viewers saw a very polished, tan and handsome John F. Kennedy stacked up next to Richard Nixon who did not have that same telegenic presence. Sporting a 5 o'clock shadow and a gray suit, Nixon did not contrast as well as Kennedy on the visual medium. Many speculated that Nixon had lost the debate because audiences perceived his perspiration as nerves – the truth was that it was a warm debate hall and he refused make-up. From this time forward television became the politician's medium of choice. The craft of setting up shots and the architecture of a politician's image for maximum effect was born (Hammond, Roberts & Sulfaro, 2016).

In the late 60s, former actor Ronald Reagan introduced the rise of celebrity personalities in politics. Essentially, Ronald Reagan was someone who traded in a very successful career selling out box offices for a presidency that was selling an idea and a point of view (Hammond, Roberts & Sulfaro, 2016). The cynicism which was suggested in Kennedy's 1959 TV Guide article (para 5) "It is in your power to perceive deception, to shut off gimmickry ...", began to infiltrate into political

productions. Campaigns now had the tactics in place to use candidates as persuasive vehicles for the political gain of their party. Thus, reducing the role of the presidency to that of a spokesperson in the digital age (Hammond, Roberts & Sulfaro, 2016)

With the rise of 24/7-cable news came a wider availability of channels. These additional channels gave the audience the opportunity to seek more diverse viewpoints. From a network perspective, the increased number of channels created more competition leading to audience fragmentation. This competitive environment seems to have exasperate the perception of bias in the media, as more and more organizations created niche programming to reach specific audiences. As audiences gravitate toward programming that matches up with their belief systems the political landscape becomes more disjointed (Mankiw, 2014). Political strategies that bring these distinct groups together are harder to enact.

The change in political strategies can be attributed to the technological shifting aspects of communication, and its never-ending endeavor to appeal to voters and gain support. Towner & Dulio, write:

One can look to the great technological innovations during the mid-1900s as a precursor to the changes that are taking place with the Internet today. When campaigns found that they could use the airwaves to spread campaign messages, the electoral landscape was changed forever. First with the radio and then television, all of a sudden, a candidate could talk to nearly all of the voters in his or her district in 30 or 60 seconds rather than having to spend all day traveling around town. (2012, p. 96)

It is important to note that these strategies did not create new goals for campaigns, but simply created a more efficient way to accomplish candidates' campaigning goals (Towner & Dulio, 2012). Campaigning became more alluring, time saving and cost effective.

## **The Rise Social Media**

Political communication continues to evolve with each election. The goal to reach the public and influence them has never been closer. With the general acceptance of social media an additional communication avenue has become available. Social media lends itself toward mobile technology allowing messages to be transmitted and received from just about every location during all hours, removing almost all pervious barriers to communication. Mobile phones with their built-in portability has become the popular conduit for the convergence of this technology. Using this delivery system, the politicians now have direct access to whole audiences that were unavailable in the past. The reach is not only much wider than it has been through traditional communication methods, but it enables campaign messages to be more personalized and targeted toward specific audiences. Giving importance to issues without seeming invasive.

## **Twitter**

Campaigns accomplish this by using highly specific advertisements on Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites. Twitter (revolutionized by Barack Obama) in particular rose to be an invaluable platform for political content since news outlets, authors, businesses, politicians and the

general public use it to share links, data and opinions (Johnson, 2012). Trump expanded on Twitter's usability by employing it as a real time message tester (Hess 2016). More than any other social media platform, Twitter enables conversations to transcend social and economic classes; suddenly anyone could be in contact with people such as celebrities and governors who were previously unreachable.

On Twitter friends, family, and coworkers communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent messages. This unique Internet based communication channel enables users to conduct public conversations, known as 'tweets', using up to 140 characters per message (originally 140, now 280 characters). Because tweets are short and relatively easy to construct and send, this technology lends itself to near real-time response. The immediacy of tweets is particularly useful for current events where public opinion and reactions can be constantly updated (Wang et. al., 2012). Twitter provides this easily accessible mobile platform for online users not only to share information, but also to retrieve other people's opinions.

Politicians have recognized the potential of Twitter to help them become more accessible and responsive to their constituents. "Live Tweeting" has allowed conversations during large events, including debate nights and election days to occur. "People take to Twitter to debate along with the politicians. This accomplishes two things. First, it stimulates the conversation on certain issues, and second, it gives the politicians a better idea of where their followers stand. This helps them script their message" (Presidential Debates and Twitter: The New Normal, 2016).

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Rhetorical Analysis**

Aristotle was perhaps the world's first political scientist in the world's first democracy. His work was born from an interest in oratory, as it was the primary political medium of his day. At the core of Aristotle's rhetoric are what he called modes of proof; ethos, pathos and logos. Ethos is establishing credibility, pathos is emotional proof, and logos is logical proof. There are two divisions for each of the forms of proof: artistic and inartistic proof. Artistic proof are arguments that may be discovered through rhetorical invention such as comparisons, relationships, circumstances, and testimonies. While, inartistic proof is that which is factual and is not supplied by the writer's efforts, but existed beforehand such as witnesses, admissions, or written contracts. (Poulakos & Poulakos, 1999).

### **Burke – Identification and Division**

Where Aristotle believed that logic was at the core of persuasion, American theorist and philosopher Kenneth Burke believed that it was identification that was most significant. Asserting that the purpose of identification is persuasion, as a form of rhetoric. Burkean rhetoric says, "you persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his" (Burke, p. 55, 1950). Burke's rhetoric encompasses both traditional and nontraditional forms of discourse. He suggests that rhetoric includes three basic functions: contributes to the formation of attitudes, encourages the justification of action and it gives commands of some kind to determine actions to be taken (Burke, 1969).

Burke coined and defined identification as the quality of sharing attributes and as the key to persuasion. For Burke, identification has several functions, occurs through common goals and transpires through unconscious association. Burke used identification synonymously with consubstantiality. As we share ideas and attitudes we come to identify with others, and as we speak each other's language, we become consubstantial. The antithesis of identification is division, also called "alienation" or "dissociation". Division, or lack of identification is the natural state of separate human beings; the human experience is inherently individual, and thus divisive (Burke, 1969).

Branching from this, Burke stated that identification in rhetoric is crucial to persuasion and leads to cooperation, consensus, compromise, and action. Burke believed that the most serious human problem was to be alienated or separated, and rhetoric was to be that problem's only solution. Much of his work was based on bringing people together. "Identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division" (Burke, p. 22, 1950). Rhetoric's goal, regarding identification, is to bring people together who have been separated by estrangement or opposition (Burke, 1950).

Burke maintained that each one of us has an essence that separates us from other people and that in one sense we are all the same, however this leads to a contradiction or tension that on one hand we are all the same but there are things about each one of us that can separate us. Consubstantiality then is the attempt to have us identify with one another, it is the attempt by a communicator to get their audience to see how similar we are knowing full well that we are each incredibly different from each other. Burke argued that when a speaker addressed their audience, they can either decide to demonstrate how we are unified or how we are divided (Burke, 1968).

### **Persuasive Resources - Social Media**

Throughout history, the term rhetoric has been used to name either the use of persuasive resources or the study of the use of persuasive resources. Ancient or classical rhetoric focused on rhetoric as the performance itself, the use of language to persuade others to act or change their minds about something. But rhetoric also refers to the philosophy that study's how and why people use persuasion in the first place. Burke's theory of identification and division combines an interest in the strategic use of words to perform an induction of action through the alignment or division of interests or motives (Burke, 1973).

Acquiring the skill of adaptability proves necessary in a time of disruption within a nation and in a society where change is constant. It is particularly important in an electoral climate where politicians are vying for votes and relevance. Politicians strive for self-promotion, voter interaction and mobilization through Twitter and other social media, "key battlegrounds" as termed by McCabe (2015). Compared to other social media sites, Twitter is useful for politicians showing real-time reactions or having intimate conversations with individual users. On Twitter, politicians are able to distribute their original messages and retweet others' content. Politicians can also share supporters' tweets by displaying their replies publicly using the mention aspect of Twitter. Because Twitter is a relatively new tool, there are few established norms concerning the utilization of features such as retweets and mentions. Analyzing tweets can reveal different aspects about a politician's communication style and character that are not evident on other social media platforms (Lee, E. J. & Jang, Y. (2010).

For nearly a decade, political leaders have relied on social media to mobilize support through electronic networking in an effort to win an election. Although Twitter is a relatively new method of communication in the political sphere, it is widely used today by politicians. Former U.S. President Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign legitimized Twitter in the political arena by showing how it could be used to generate enthusiasm (Tumasjan, Sprenger, Sandner & Welpe, 2010). By the 2016 Presidential election Donald Trump starting using Aristotle's modes of persuasion: *logos* (the appeal to logic), *ethos* (the appeal to credibility), and *pathos* (the appeal to emotion) in his tweets - to encourage enthusiasm, by the attacking and dividing his opponents (Hess 2016).

Skoler (2009) noted that today's culture emphasizes connections and relationships, which fuels social networking sites and promotes information sharing, new experiences, new knowledge and new friendships. Through this, Twitter creates an exchange of self-generated content while discovering information sources that best fit their interests (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009). Twitter also gives a politician more control, mainly because words can be carefully crafted to promote a politician while news and information through mainstream media are more open to interpretation. Twitter can be used as a forum for entertaining political discourse, debate and offers politicians and constituents an opportunity to address a wide range of topics. Furthermore, Twitter allows politicians to bypass the press to speak directly with the public (Kalsness, 2016).

## RESEARCH GOAL

The previous literature review notes that language historically has been categorized by rhetoricians. In addition, the review also points to the rise of social media and how Twitter has become an effective tool for rhetoric. Twitter has given politicians the opportunity to bypass traditional media and control more of their campaign, as well as public image. The use of Twitter by Donald Trump in the 2016 U.S. Presidential election to disseminate information was unprecedented.

This paper focuses on one politician, Donald Trump, who engages his audience through Twitter. Trump's use of Twitter creates an opportunity to explore rhetoric on a digital platform. The communication style used by Trump is particularly suited for Twitter, as it is for the most part an unregulated platform. Keeping the previous in mind, the goal of this study is to analyze Donald Trump's Tweets for the first 100 hundred days of his presidency and to place these Tweets into an interpretive context.

## METHODOLOGY

Content analysis was utilized to study data collected from Twitter over the first one hundred days of Donald Trump's Presidency. As a method, content analysis was initially used for examining newspapers, or other written documents, in order to understand their content and to make inferences from the data about the context (Krippendorff, 1980).

Categories were built from the data extracted using identification and division to illustrate how these techniques permeated the president's tweets from January 20, 2017 through April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

*Identification*: The process of linking oneself with others, (e.g., us, we, our). *Division*: The emphasis on differences between people, (e.g., they, them).

The unit analysis was a single tweet. Tweets may fall under multiple categories. Overall, 503 tweets were coded and analyzed. The platform *Twitonomy* that provides analytics and insights into tweets to capture the data was used in this study. The original data set downloaded contained nine identifying variables that included the date of the tweet, the twitter handle of the tweeter, the name of the tweeter, the body of the tweet, the URL, the platform (e.g. Twitter for iPhone), the type of tweet (e.g. new, reply, retweet), the retweet count and the favorite count. The data was cleaned leaving two of the nine identifying variables, the date of the tweet and the body of the tweet for analysis. The Twitter data was imported into NVivo and coding using a schema encompassing the two characterized elements: identification and division. NVivo enables the user to “import and code textual data, edit the text; retrieve, review and recode coded data; search for combinations of words in the text or patterns in the coding; and import from or export data to other quantitative analysis software” (Bandera, 2006). To ensure reliability the 503 tweets were coded independently, and each Tweet was analyzed in isolation from previous Tweets. One method to test reliability is internal consistency which can be achieved by applying *identification* as the presence and frequency of first-person pronouns such as “we” and “us” along with possessive pronouns such as “our” and *division* as the presence and frequency of third person pronouns such as “they” and “them” within a single tweet.

## RESULTS

503 Tweets were sent by the President Donald Trump in his first 100 days of office. These Tweets were coded and analyzed using the above described method. Of these 503 Tweets, 312 Tweets fell into the category of Identification and 262 Tweets fell into the Category of Division.

Many of Trump’s messages in the identification category are about things the public already had views on, such as fair trade and immigration. Several Tweets that fell into the category of division were framed about a rigged system that is held in place by a corrupt institution. This repetition of messages in both categories is well suited for Twitter because it allows for a message to be retransmitted over and over through retweets.

In addition, beside the standard use of pronouns – us, we, our, them, they, the analysis of these tweets reveals certain terms that in general signify one of the two categories. The term “Democrat” in the context of these Tweets usually indicates division, while the term “American” suggests identification. Following is a sample of Tweets from the data set coded in this study.

Figure 1. Sample Tweets

Identification	Division
Thank you for joining us at the Lincoln Memorial tonight-a very special evening! Together, we are going to MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!	Congratulations to @FoxNews for being number one in inauguration ratings. They were many times higher than FAKE NEWS @CNN - public is smart!
We will bring back our jobs. We will bring back our borders. We will bring back our wealth-and we will bring back our dreams!	Where was all the outrage from Democrats and the opposition party (the media) when our jobs were fleeing our country?
I promise that our administration will ALWAYS have your back. We will ALWAYS be with you!	The fake news media is going crazy with their conspiracy theories and blind hatred. @MSNBC & @CNN are unwatchable.
The American dream is back. We're going to create an environment for small business like we haven't had in many, many decades!	The spotlight has finally been put on the low-life leakers! They will be caught!
We are making tremendous progress with the V.A. There has never been so much done so quickly, and we have just started. We love our VETS!	The Democrats had to come up with a story as to why they lost the election, and so badly, so they made up a story-RUSSIA. Fake News!

## DISCUSSION

The first one hundred days of Donald Trump's Presidency provided an opportunity to observe the Twitter phenomenon in action and isolate it for further analysis. Upon examination of Twitter rhetoric, a greater understanding emerged of how the social media platform may help or hinder in understanding presidential positions and individual beliefs. Audiences can easily drown in this flood of rhetoric. Often, the message we receive is an interpretation of events. As a platform rising in prominence and influence, this will most likely not be the last time a high-profile political candidate uses this social medium to try and persuade constituents.

According to Kreiss and McGregor (2017), digital media, data and analytics are at the forefront of contemporary electoral dynamics. They argue that the last twenty years have seen a shift towards technology intensive campaigning, one where campaigns are premised on large troves of data bases, made accessible through vast technological infrastructures. Campaigns begin by using the voter data and analytics to define targets in terms of who campaigns want to reach and what they want to say. The scores of people they want to reach are then targeted with persuasive messages.

Kreiss and McGregor go on to write - people who come from outside the political demagogues can subvert that process and make direct appeals to the voters, giving rise to populism. Populism is taking place outside of standard party structures and enables candidates to work completely separate from the traditional political parties, in effect undermining them.

One of the reasons for Donald Trump's success is through his command of mass media and his ability to use Twitter without piecing together a conventional campaign organization. The question going forward - is Donald Trump an outlier or does he represent something new in terms of a blend of celebrity and populist politics, that empowers people to go entirely outside of regular institutional party structures.

Twitter in Donald Trump's campaign was not only used for targeting communication but also designed rhetorically to use broad communication to trigger action across the various audiences. Trump's communication has been described as simple and straightforward (Stewart, 2016); however, there are dimensions of complexity in this description. For example, Donald Trump's campaign enlisted the services of an analytics company (Cambridge Analytica). These types of companies use data and psychographic techniques. The result of incorporating this type of information into social media messages indicates that these Tweets are actually data driven and not as simple as originally classified.

Trump has been criticized for sowing discord in our country, when in reality, Trump's Tweets merely echo what many Americans already believe (Lurie, 2018), which is that the system is rigged against them. In the first 100 days of his presidency Trump spoke to this segment of the American public feeding an issue that has been simmering for decades.

Interpreting this movement meant taking a deep dive into the fields of political communication, campaigning, journalism and electoral research. Insights gained from this research are 1) traditional political and media institutions can be circumvented successfully; 2) a populist candidate from outside the traditional establishment can become a powerful political force; 3) politics based on hot button issues are difficult to gauge, and 4) the ability to sell something the American people seem to think they want, cannot be understated.

This study was originally conceived to interpret Donald Trump's Tweets for his first 100 hundred days in office. This could not be done in a vacuum without considering the platform of social media and by extension Twitter as a political communication tool. While earlier forms of media have not disappeared, the expansion of technology has currently made social media the most modern and interactive form of political communication. What appears to be occurring is an enormous fragmentation of how people get their news. Presidential candidates continue to advertise on television but social media platforms such as Twitter engage the population on a much higher level. Additionally, social media users seem to actively boost political campaigns while simultaneously demanding accountability from their representatives. This is a big change from a population that only three decades ago received for the most part only an image of a political candidate. As citizens become more ideological about where they get and how they handle political information, politicians are more at risk of being put in a negative or constricting spotlight by constituents who can source their data from different informants.

Based on the rhetorical tenets outlined by Burke, the use of Twitter in combination with the broadening ideological divide allows for politicians to solidify their base by feeding them messages that aid their supporter's world view and strengthens their resolve. The sense of inclusion and feeling that they belong to the larger group can be leveraged to the advantage of the candidate, depending on the circumstance. It can be used as the motivation for change or why a situation must

be “fixed”. As demonstrated through the tweets of Donald Trump, he can simultaneously unite and divide through the manipulation of the concepts of identification and division, often times combining both concepts into his string of messages sent through the platform.

The alienation from political life that Donald Trump displays on Twitter speaks to his followers who have a past distrust for career politicians. They have learned to exude the behavior of the political establishment. Trump has managed to generate followers that for the most part only concentrate on the elevated interaction aspect, that Twitter affords. There may be only two categories of candidates for such voters – politicians and common people. Because many constituents have failed to see personal or direct changes to their situations (jobs, income, lifestyles) there might be a tendency to accept and believe in the idea that a non-traditional candidate with a different career background will bring about the transformation they want to see. This theme fits into another strategy that is prevalent within the analyzed Tweets – blame. In the case of these Tweets, blame is a way to focus upon the things that get in the way of obtaining the desired outcomes. Without these things / obstacles the ideal situation would occur. Thus, leading to a main nostalgic theme of the better days of the past.

Beyond his differing professional record, Donald Trump’s raw and unmannered approach to social media and politics makes him the epitome of an anti-establishment candidate. While others mock Trump’s incoherent grammar, his supporters see a “real” person who has not adopted the cadence and polish that comes from being a lifelong politician and embrace the humanizing quality of his errors (Graves, 2017).

Donald Trump made his supporters viable by representing them in areas where they felt they had been overlooked and supporting the idea that something was being taken away from them. Leading to the verbiage “Take the Country Back”. What was taken away can only be speculated as that and the “Make American Great Again” slogan have never been defined. This terminology has been used to create an invisible and shifting enemy by overgeneralizing problems so that more people could identify with the campaign. The vagueness of the message allows followers to believe that many support the same ideas and therefore gives the illusion of complete unity within a community of supporters – pointing back to the identification strategy.

Trump’s ability to convey authenticity, his willingness to be unconventional and his spontaneity are central to why he has resonated so strongly with significant portions of the American public. Pew Research found that 46% of people support him either because he is a political outsider or because he “tells it like it is” (Steger, 2017). Despite being a member of the elite, Trump has been positioning himself as part of the working class his whole career. His tweets show how he managed to appear integrated into the very class which makes up his followers.

Authenticity and the ability to simulate it has become an incredible asset in the social media age. Alienated American voters and the political class in the past have often been divided. Making career politicians seemly inaccessible to the rest of the population. Social media interaction between representatives and their constituents creates an illusion that helps overcome the rift by giving voters a sense that most politicians are real people with lives not so different from their own. To his supporters, Donald Trump displays a genuineness not seen in this political climate. However, his critics would assert that he lacks the discipline that should go with this realness.

## CONCLUSION

Reflections of Trump's first 100 days in the office of the President of the United States vary. Speculators from all walks of life - communication experts, to the dining room discussions across America, to the morning news show debates, all scrutinize his messages. There is, however, an important distinction to be made between conjecture and explanations. In particular, it is possible to explain the ultra-use of social media (Twitter) and understand it, even if we are unable to discern its real value.

This research project is a case study on the growing use of social media in political communication, specifically Donald Trump's utilization of Twitter. One of the themes that emerged from this study suggests that a candidate with an agenda that is fixated on the past draws a strong voter following. Trump's slogans about making America great again drives the point home. This strategy appears to mirror history as well as fiction.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is how you win elections. You gather a group of middle age, middle class, middle income voters who remember with longing an easier time, and you talk to them about family, and American values and character (The American President, 1995).

The term "again" seems to be used as a nostalgic trigger word. Trump's catchphrases "great again", "safe again" and "wealthy again" give rise to reminiscence among his supporters. It appears as if as if Trump's tweets are less about moving forward and more about recovering something lost. The success of Trump's campaign will most likely serve as a basis for a blue print to bypass traditional media channels, removing the check and balance function.

Donald Trump's presidency has taken a page from history and conducted a campaign that tends to focus on doom and despair (Johnson, 2016). Politicians of all stripes have long invoked what they see as the glorious aspects of their countries' histories to bolster visions of the future. The difference is that most previous politicians typically use the past as inspiration- not prescription. What is clear from this presidency is a profound shift in the political landscape, a transformation of electorates losing faith in the idea of the future as we know it. This is something that for the U.S. is distinct from the past and the present alike. Traditional establishment politicians have been all but paralyzed by this development, while insurgent populists are eagerly fueling it.

The use of Twitter in this case also allows for the user to define the context for themselves. By providing messages that are vague, it lets the individual "fill in the blanks" providing self-defined context and meaning into the slogans and musings. Context may also form through the perceived affiliation developed by those who respond to the messages, hardening points of view through confirmation bias. The concepts employed through social media essentially remain unchanged since the early 1700's: news is defined by one's social circle. The advantage of social media is that it can create the illusion of the physical social circle without requiring the restrictions of physical proximity. It provides reinforcement of concepts and ideas, validates concerns, and motivates both for and against ideas. This by extension supports the candidates position of "with us or against us". This context is something that can only be derived through print media (of which social media is part of). While the use of television and radio easily convey context to the receiver, the use of

social media demands that individuals gain context elsewhere, in this case from multiple sources that generally are supportive of the viewpoint of the individual. It is only after the context has been defined through the medium that the messaging is carried out in the public forum.

Trump's Twitter pulpit includes insults of political rivals, competitors, private citizens, the intelligence community, the media and a rigged electoral system, all within the divisive category. His rhetoric also includes messages of unity, the forgotten, and support – bolstering the identity grouping. Trump's mastery of the Twitter platform and its 140-character limit has allowed sensationalized messages with little substance to divert the attention of both supporters and non-supporters. It also allows the self-defined context to solidify and manifest itself as truth. In modern political times this use of rhetoric combined with mobile technology is unprecedented. Thus, fortifying the power of social media and persuasion in this relatively new non-traditional communication tool.

### **LIMITATIONS**

No matter what we do when it comes to social media (or any media), how the electorate is analytically receptive to the information they receive is important in evaluating the impact of the message. Knowing how the constituency evaluate the biases of media sources is critical to understanding citizen empowerment and eliminating further alienation.

Great care must be taken to accurately interpret the tweets while eliminating bias. It can be easy to be drawn in and fall prey to the very division that is being created by the candidate. What is clear is that content analysis cannot be done in a vacuum, so steps must be taken to mitigate the bias to successfully reduce the opportunity for skewed analysis that may impact the overall integrity of a study.

When it comes to data collection from social media, it is difficult to distinguish between the trustworthy and the untrustworthy sources. Future research should focus on bots that generate automated messages. Bots are chunks of code that are written to automate the interaction between a user account and a human. The more human curation an automated account has, the tougher it is to distinguish from a human tweeting passionately about politics. Bot accounts tweet, interacts and generate followers and likes. What is unclear is how big of a role bots play as a political strategy and what specific groups are funding them. Do they have an impact on political discourse, do they generate support that a human account would not have and what impact do bots have on information distribution?

### **AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

An opportunity for future study would be to examine the tweets within a cultural context. It is easy to assume that the messages sent through social media are purposeful and motivated to suggest a change. To view the messages through a rhetorical lens in combination with cultural context would be valuable. As discussed, there is greater complexity to the messages other than examining simple content. The messages examined in the context of what is occurring may shed greater light on the intent or purpose of the writer.

It may also be valuable to examine a larger pool of Donald Trump's offerings in social media. Although the purpose of this paper was to examine the tweets of the first 100 days, the specific goals of the candidate could be seen as a furtherance of what he believed was successful in getting him elected. It would be interesting to see if tactics changed during the course of his presidency or if there was simply a continuation of the same.

Another useful approach may be to examine the messaging of this president in a historical context. Certainly, much could be said of the division of Jefferson and Adams, who often would use pseudonyms to further their political positions when writing editorials for newspapers and pamphlets while simultaneously eviscerating their opponents. There appears to be resemblance in the messaging, in creating distance through divisiveness. Eloquence aside, on the surface there are similarities in approach and purpose of the writing. There can be much to be gleaned by looking at the messaging in the context of history.

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