

The Marvelous President Donald J. Trump:
A Quantitative Content Analysis of the Real Trumpism on Twitter
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Introduction

“What FDR was to radio and JFK to television, Trump is to Twitter” (Gabler, 2016).

Since Donald Trump’s presidency in 2016, a plethora of academic publications and public discussions have started to focus on his public speeches, diplomatic influence, domestic polls, etc. Compared to previous presidents in the United States, President Trump has taken advantage of the benefits of social media, Twitter in particular, and has achieved unprecedented interactions with the public since the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Trump’s tweets also successfully made headlines on newspapers, magazines, and online publications, although most of them were negative news stories about his presidency. Around one-in-five adult Twitter users in the U.S. follow Trump’s personal account on the platform, @realDonaldTrump (Pew Research Center, 2019). As a prolific Twitter user, Trump, Chief-in-Twitter, has made his fame on social media over the entire world through his tweets. Therefore, his posts on Twitter have increasingly gained tremendous attention from both academia and civic groups. Trump’s nontraditional political ideology, also known as Trumpism, espoused by himself and his supporters, empowers traditionalism, populism, and American greatness. To further explore and study the pillar concepts of Trumpism, it is necessary to take Trump’s tweets into the research study, in which he dramatically expresses himself in front of a broad audience and effortlessly to promote his ideas, opinions, and words of *wisdom*. During the debate for the 2020 U.S. presidential election, Senator Kamala Harris called for Twitter to suspend Trump’s account. Trump is a non-stop, one-person political tornado, roaring through this campaign and sucking up every news cycle in his vortex (Gabler, 2016). This not only verified the value of Trump’s tweets as significant content to study Trumpism but also urged more focus to explore and explain what characterize Trumpism and how Trump proselytizes his political ideologies to the public through social media.

Literature Review

Twitter, as a public relations tool, has been proved an enormous success ranging from contingency interactivity to social network analysis (Sobel, Riffe, & Hester, 2016). In a global survey of the ways in which companies are benefiting from Web 2.0, McKinsey reported that 69% of the respondents had gained measurable benefits from social media (Vogelsinger, 2015). As a super influencer, Donald Trump, the 45th President of the United States of America, has established his magnificent profile on Twitter and showed his power on influencing social changes (Brookey & Ott, 2019). Google Trends indicates that searches for Trumpism took off in July 2015, a month after Donald Trump announced his bid for the US presidency. By August 2015, mainstream had started to set Trumpism into common use.

Fake News vs. Real Tweets

In the political arena upon the social media sphere, while “fake news” is treated as a publicized term for most politicians to attack the media and opposing parties (Brummette, DiStaso, Vafeiadis, & Messner, 2018), Trump makes the political use of social media into the perfection (Flores, Valley, Falk, & Stoves, 2019). Trump not only states politician’s discourse to affect the extremely polarized trends on Twitter (M’Bareck, 2019), but heavily criticizes and challenges the validity and reliability of the news media and turns the political sentiment on Twitter extremely negative and agitated (Campbell, 2019). Such an agenda on Twitter, mainly set by Trump’s tweets, not only provide a game-change strategy for other politicians with aggressive rhetoric (Foster, 2017), but motivate the mass audience to choose more negative topics and tweets (Frechette & Ancu, 2017; Posegga & Jungherr, 2019). Since the majority of Twitter users being politically inattentive, they become more likely to be “exposed to polarizing alternative news sources as opposed to mainstream news coverage when seeking out issue-based news items

(Nguyen, 2011, Parmelee, 2014; Ott, 2017). A significant aspect of Twitter's impact on American society includes "how Twitter engages the world's political sphere." Therefore, with such massive followings, politicians on Twitter have immense potential to affect their public perceptions (Larson, 2019). This also influences news reporting as tweets posted by users become news sources among various news organizations, including alternative web-only and legacy news outlets (Kushin, 2010; Bane, 2019), and has the potential to change the traditional media gatekeeping (Conway-Silva, Filer, Kenski, & Tsetsi, 2018).

Social Media as Pre-Party for Elections

Through a content analysis of Trump's tweets, most researchers focus on election issues exploring how Trump's tweets influence voting behaviors through ideological favoritism and partisan antipathy (Bessire & Bond, 2017; Grover, Kar, Dwivedi, & Janssen, 2017), and explaining the patterns of political rhetoric on Twitter in the 2016 U.S. president election (Anderson, 2017; Davis, 2017; Evans, Brown, & Wimberly, 2018). Although visual elements such as images and videos were more effective than texts in bring voter reactions for Clinton and she posted twice as many tweets as Trump did during the three months before the result revealed, the results showed that Trumps became more successful than Clinton regarding capturing public attention towards preferred issues (Ahmadian, Azarshahi, & Paulhus, 2017; Lee & Xu, 2018). Also, the analysis of both Trump's debate language and Twitter rhetoric confirms his unconventional efficacy of rhetorical approach (Marietta, Farley, Cote, & Murphy, 2017). Some studies applied content analysis to discover stylistic and linguistic patterns in Trump's tweets to test the degree of persuasion and found informal, direct, and provoking as Trump's communication style to further construct and reinforce "the concept of a homogeneous people and a homeland threatened by the dangerous other" (Kreis, 2017; Clarke & Grieve, 2019).

Moreover, Trump employs positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation to spread his agenda via social media and preferably leads to the normalization of right-wing populist discourses (Kreis, 2017; Morris, 2018). Some findings suggest commentary and accounting styles are the most popular narrative styles on Twitter (Humphreys, Gill, Krishnamurthy, & Newbury, 2013). Instead of interacting with opponents, social media are mainly being used to reach out to supporters (Fromm, Melzer, Ross, & Stieglitz, 2017). Agenda-setting and framing theories are two dominant theoretical frameworks in mapping Trump's political superiority on Twitter (Dunning, 2018, Vlatković, 2018; Bolgov, Chernov, Ivannikov, & Katsy, 2019) Thus, some researchers found that Trump's victory in 2016 was predictable, and was predicted not by looking at polls but by Trump's tweets and voters' reaction (Blyth, 2016; McGregor & Vargo, 2017).

The Emperor of the Trumpism

Some researchers put Trumpism into the context of political philosophy and define it as “an anti-establishment blend of economic populism, reactionary nationalism, and strong militarism summed up in Trump's campaign slogan, ‘Make America Great Again’” (Rojecki, 2016; Ліндсі, 2018; Yang, 2018; Roy, 2019) new norm in the U.S. Politics It is clear that social forces and social media help propel Trump into feeling this American dream (Stokes, 2018), but little attention has been paid on using social media to portray the conceptualization of Trumpism. Such a phenomenon in Trump's tweet would be *Sad!* given twitter has become his new White House on commenting on public issues. From governmental reports and announcements, and newspaper articles, researchers concluded some major characteristics of Trumpism, such as celebrity, nativism, the outsider, and populism (Tabachnick, 2016; Komlos, 2017; O’Gorman, 2018) Some studies emphasized on “seeking opportunity in economic decline,

a zero-sum or negative-sum approach to profit-making and economic values” in Trump’s ideology (Mollan & Geesin, 2019). In the process of describing Trumpism, most of his critics have reduced all their disagreement with Trump to his personality; because of his well-known cynical authoritarian “who managed to take power plainly because he has no moral restraints” (Shlapentokh, 2019). While the non-tweet corpus of research dedicated to nationalism studies is vast, less attention has come to the surge of neo-nationalism, far-right populism in particular, which has also seen a significant rise in prominence over the last a few decades (De Matas, 2017). When it comes to political communication on Twitter, most scholars examined behavioral characteristics of the tweet sources and the public reactions. They found Trump’s tweets tended to be more focused on himself rather than the audience and features “negative, angry, and anxious” (Auxier & Golbeck, 2017). Also, a few academic focus highlight the comparative analysis between Trump and his predecessors, such as Trumpism versus Bushism (Lordkipanidze, 2019)

Hypotheses

RQ1: What characterizes Trumpism on Twitter?

H1: The content analysis of Trump’s tweets will not only confirm those characteristics summarized by empirical studies in political philosophy but find more features and his attitudes in the field of popular culture.

RQ2: How Trump proselytizes his political ideologies to the public through social media?

H2: The more users on Twitter “like” Trumps’ tweets, the more likely they will react again to his tweets in the future whatever he posts.

Methodology

Data Collection

For the data collection of tweets from Trump, two databases will be compared for double-checking and compiled into a new database for content analysis. One data source is from <http://www.trumptwitterarchive.com>, in which it covers almost all the up-to-date tweets after September 2016, but about approximately 4000 missing tweets. Additionally, the website didn't monitor Trump's twitter feed in real time until January 27, 2017. There might be some missing data before that. One of the biggest advantages of this website is that even Trump deletes a tweet, the website will save an entry for that tweet. Another database from Harvard Dataverse by Jason Baumgartner contains Trump's tweets from May 4, 2004, to July 11, 2019. Tweets deleted by Donald Trump will not be in this dataset but can be obtained from the author and compared to the first database.

For exploring the characteristic of Trumpism, all the hashtags that include trumpism and trumpisms after will be collected by twitter API keys with the tool called Twitter Scraper on https://github.com/bpb27/twitter_scraping.

Coding Scheme

The ideal time coding scheme will be after the data exploration stage of Trump's tweets. The quantitative content analysis method is developed into three stages: basic analytical, speech act analysis, and interaction act analysis.

The basic analysis includes word- or phrase- frequency analyses and keyword-in-context lists (KWIC) to draw a word cloud of Trump's Twitter. In this process, however, misspelled words and chat language, such as "rotfl," "lol," are not usually identified and classified in

standard dictionaries. Applying a user-defined dictionary might help solve this problem (Einspänner-Pflock, Dang-Anh, & Thimm, 2014).

The second stage analysis is speech act analysis, in which categorizing text and multimedia content is the main job. In this process, hyperlinks will not be included for this study but will be strongly suggested for furthering studies. Also, emoticons are excluded from the analysis. The coding design will be based on the Basic Classification of Illocutionary Acts by Searle (Searle, 1976) and the measurement of political communication, which involves seven categories. They are subjects of online discourse, polarization and preference identification, communicative style, stakeholder likelihood of social media participation. Network influence, electoral outcomes, and meta-studies (Goodman & Light, 2016; Pal & Gonawela, 2017)

| SPEECH ACT | PARADIGMS OF VERBS (EXAMPLES) |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| ASSERTIVE / REPRESENTATIVE | Describe, call, conclude, deduce |
| DIRECTIVE | Ask, order, command, request, beg, invite, permit |
| COMMISSIVE | Promise, swear |
| EXPRESSIVE | Thank, congratulate, apologize, condole, welcome |
| DECLARATION | Declare, nominate |

Table 1 Basic Classification of Illocutionary Acts (Purposeful Speech Acts) by Searle (1976)

The third stage analysis will examine the sentiment of comment and reaction actions include follow, unfollow, like, unlike, comment, retweet, etc. For the collection data of hashtag and comments, random sampling is more efficient than a constructed week sampling in terms of obtaining a more efficient and representative sample of Twitter data (Kim Hwalbin, Jang, Kim Sei-Hill, & Wan, 2018). The job of random sampling will be achieved by Content Analysis Script R provided by <https://osf.io/4v36r/?pid=y2kuw> under the Creative Common 4.0 License.

Anticipated Results

This study will be the first research exploring Trumpism on Twitter, and the characteristics of Trump's tweets will be generated. Still, the results could only serve as an explorer for theorizing the frameworks and concepts in Trumpism. Also, this study has the potential to map put the interactive model between Trump and his followers and people who response to Trump's tweets. Although most voices about Trump seemed native, his tweets would increase people's interest to find out what is happening with him, the President of the U.S. Additionally, such sentiment curve from the audience who interact with Trump's tweets would secure his popularity and accordingly increase his leverage for the 2020 presidential election.

Pilot Study

Generating different types of word cloud from different time periods is a helpful strategy for coding scheme. Below is a word map generated by <https://foller.me/realdonaldtrump>, and it maps out the word map in which, it shows the overall words usage on Twitter in form of a tag cloud. The more a certain word is used, the larger it is in the cloud.

[nancy](#) [whistleblower](#) [historic](#) [work](#) [schiff](#) [people](#) [administration](#) [adam](#) [2019](#) [charged](#) [pel](#)
[osi](#) [democrat](#) [entireaward](#) [city](#) [longer](#) [scam](#) [want](#) [dems](#) [waste](#) [united](#) [trump](#) [african](#) [doj](#) [announced](#) [ameri](#)
[can](#) [hunt](#) [witch](#) [perfect](#) [justice](#) [doing](#) [president](#) [russian](#) [governor](#) [account](#) [step](#) [collusion](#) [buil](#)
[ding](#) [impeachment](#) [vote](#) [presidential](#) [appreciate](#) [2016](#) [ukrainian](#) [wonderful](#) [testify](#) [house](#) [repu](#)
[blican](#) [communities](#) [criminal](#) [address](#) [whistleblowers](#) [states](#) [investigation](#) [based](#) [leadership](#) [act](#) [tim](#) [suppor](#)
[t](#) [community](#) [democrats](#)

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