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The Rise of the Postmodern Presidency:
The Evolution of Rhetoric and Media Usage in Presidential Election Campaigns

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Departmental Honors Thesis
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Introduction

This study aims to characterize the evolution of rhetoric used in certain presidential campaigns as evidenced through primary and secondary research, including research on the radio electioneering in President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 1932 campaign, television advertisements and speeches in President Ronald Reagan's 1984 campaign, and the Twitter usage of President Donald Trump during his 2016 Presidential Campaign and the first year of his presidency. The research focuses on these presidents' use of each medium to disseminate campaign materials by examining specific word choice, use of visuals or audio, and how these messages translated into behavioral changes in terms of voter turnout. The main purpose of this research is to analyze how presidential rhetoric may change depending on the medium used to propagate the message, which will provide perspective on the aspects of political rhetoric that have become institutionalized over time as well as rhetoric that is unique to its medium and time period. (Stier, et al., 2018)

Prior to the presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, presidents opted for written communications to other branches of the government as opposed to oral addresses, which created a disconnect between politicians and their constituency (Tulis, 2017). Following Wilson's 1913 State of the Union Address, which was the first SOTU address directly delivered to Congress since John Adams in 1800, popular or mass rhetoric became a principal tool of presidential governance (Jones, 2018). The subsequent increased frequency of direct communication between presidents and the public allowed for presidential candidates to be more bombastic and braggadocious than ever before, which is exemplified in all three media campaigns considered in this study.

Hypothesis

This paper seeks to investigate the methods in which these presidents utilize their medium of choice to disseminate messages among a massive audience, with the expectation that rhetoric used and the frequency of exposure will play a large role in the success of each movement. A strong correlation with inflammatory rhetoric and popularity of the message is expected as well. Put differently, messages or advertisements with more subdued rhetoric are presumed to be less effective in garnering support for the campaign. This essay will also examine these presidential campaigns through the lens of the spectacle in an effort to highlight the American public's increased focus on the popular culture aspect of politics instead of policy agendas and other traditional benchmarks of political success (Miroff, 2003). The increased role of the spectacle as it relates to presidential campaigns is exacerbated by the media, which places more significance on presidential elections than other races and provides candidates ample opportunity to cultivate a specific image of themselves (Miroff, 2003).

This research will be framed by the social marketing theory (SMT), which is an amalgamation of media studies theories on diffusion, propaganda, cultivation, and audience segmentation (Baran & Davis, 2012). The social marketing theory will be applied in conjunction with new social movement theories (NSMT), which are primarily concerned with the relationship between the background of the audience and the success of the message (Buechler, 2005). This theoretical framework is bolstered by Jeffrey Tulis's book, "The Rhetorical Presidency," as well as Bruce Miroff's essay "The Presidential Spectacle" (Tulis 2017; Miroff, 2003).

Considering there has been a significant amount of research on FDR, Reagan, and Trump's weaponization of media, this research paper will go more in-depth in its examination of rhetoric decisions, including word choice the contrasting levels of impact between messages using inflammatory rhetoric and others using positive or neutral rhetoric (Gallagher, 2019). The main focus of this research will be to illuminate the developments in presidential election communication throughout the last 100 years and how those developments ultimately culminated in the postmodern presidency of Donald Trump (Cogburn & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011).

Methodology

Portions of this research will focus intensively on the vast amount of work that is already available concerning the specific media tactics used by Roosevelt and Reagan during their presidency, serving as relevant material to our understanding of historical media campaign rhetoric at the presidential level. Primary research conducted on the two 20th century presidents was based on archived speeches from both of their presidential libraries, ranging from their announcement of candidacy to election day. The purpose of including these two presidents in addition to Donald Trump is not to make individual assertions about their specific campaigns, but rather to comprehensively assess the transformation of conventional presidential campaign language, depending on medium, from the time of Roosevelt to contemporary approaches taken by Trump.

In order to effectively evaluate the rhetoric of Trump's social media communication, this research involved the use of Keyhole, a third-party Twitter analytic software. Keyhole was used to collect original data such as tweet impact and traction, common words and phrases, timing,

market analysis, potential engagements, and follower characteristics. In addition to providing these relevant metrics, Keyhole also has the function of limiting the data collected to a specific time frame, which is beneficial in isolating data from the 2016 presidential election cycle and the year following election day, during which Trump tweeted 9916 times. Although Keyhole is quite effective in gathering data using various metrics, there are limitations to the service's depth and its ability to compare different Twitter accounts. Because of this obstacle, every statistic referenced as found through Keyhole has been verified using a number of other twitter analytics softwares and sites, including Trackalytics, TweetBinder, and the Trump Twitter Archive. These supplemental softwares were also utilized to show tweet frequency and follower count. The information collected was then visualized through a variety of time-based graphs exhibiting tweet volume as well as charts listing both repeated rhetoric and how specific words or phrases affect the interactions with those tweets.

Literature Review

A pervasive question in this research is whether or not changes in rhetorical tactics of presidents should be considered as transformations or developments (Tulis, 2017). In other words, if Roosevelt implemented a new precedent in terms of presidential communication, how significant of an impact did that precedent have on future presidents' rhetorical decisions? In hopes of identifying the factors that lead to said developments, this research will highlight the political moment each actor is operating within and the agency the politicians are afforded in their respective eras (Skowronek & Glassman, 2008). The historical factors that allow for creative media campaigns are integral to understanding the rise of the postmodern presidential

spectacle, which is “more familiar in popular culture than in presidential politics, features fleeting images and fractured continuity, surfaces without depths, personae rather than personalities.” (Miroff, 2003) Additionally, the data provided on FDR and Reagan’s media campaigns will be evaluated using social marketing theory (SMT), particularly methods for inducing audience awareness, targeting specific audiences, reinforcing messages within a segmented audience, cultivating a candidate’s image, and inducing desired decision-making and the subsequent behavioral change (Baran & Davis, 2012).

Similarly, the information collected on Donald Trump using Keyhole and supplemental analytic softwares will also be assessed through the lens of social marketing theory (SMT), but Trump’s tactics are primarily concerned with generating audience awareness about specific issues and the reinforcement of his message regarding those topics (Baran & Davis, 2012). The conceptual framework of this paper will also include new social movement theories (NSMT), which is the idea that political ideology, socioeconomic background, and culture catalyze action in a political movement (Buechler, 2005). By focusing on NSMT and SMT, this paper will bridge the gap between the rationale in targeting specific audiences for a social or political movement and the behavioral effects said movements have on those audiences.

Because both NSMT and SMT are amalgamations of a number of theories, it’s difficult to provide a consensus definition for the two paradigms, given how diverse the opinions are on some of their core tenets (Turner, 2013). For the purposes of this paper, the discussion of these two theories will focus on their impact in a politico-economic sense. NSMT, for instance, is often considered to be a set of theories that transcends conventional politics due to its focus on evaluating transforming power relations; however, this theory is applicable to this paper’s

argument considering all three of these presidents' campaigns critiqued modern political practices, with the promise of entirely reshaping the institutions of U.S. politics (Buechler, 2005). Similarly, traditional NSMT dictate that "new" social movements must be anti-establishment in the sense that these movements will obstruct or circumvent the traditions of existing partisan regimes (Turner, 2013).

While NSMT is primarily focused on *why* certain movements are successful and *who* these movements tend to attract, SMT is centered around *how* the leaders of these movements are able to mobilize individuals and the tactics they use to invigorate an audience. SMT is a multifaceted approach to understanding message formulation and fluctuation based on a segmented audience, traditional and intermedia agenda setting, and the activation of a group in regards to physical activism and voter behavior. This framework is particularly helpful in terms of evaluating social media communications due to its ability to judge myriad persuasion effects using a source-dominated, linear-effects model, along with the fact that it is better suited for scenarios in which elite sources of information output (e.g. presidents) directly influence what their followers or readers believe (Cogburn & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011).

The main disparity between the candidates in terms of the application of this theoretical framework is the medium each presidential candidate uses to disseminate their campaign's message. The three forms of media discussed in this thesis (radio, television, Twitter) have considerably different applications and potential impacts, so each presidential candidate will be evaluated in the context of their specific media and political climate. For example, radio and television have comparable output methods in that all of the formal messages are scheduled in advance and have some degree of regulation or censorship. However, social media allows users

to “follow” (like, subscribe, befriend, etc.) specific sources of information such that these platforms have the potential to evolve into digital “echo chambers” that reinforce their messages on an hourly basis (Harris & Harrigan, 2015). The creation of these social media “echo chambers” underscores the point that Twitter users are constantly bombarded with messages that tend to fortify their previously held beliefs. By using these two sets of theories to drive the research, this paper aims to holistically assess the process of message creation, dissemination, and reception by the target audience, while simultaneously determining the success of the message based on its actual impact in comparison to the message creator’s desired results.

Financing Political Advertising Campaigns: A Brief History (Lit Review Cont.)

A thorough assessment of any political marketing strategy must include a detailed breakdown of the amount of campaign funds allocated to advertising, which can indicate the level of commitment each candidate had to media advertisements. This assessment will illustrate the increased monetary allocation political campaigns earmark for advertising purposes over the years, which is largely due to the exponential growth in both civilian campaign contributions and the inception of political action committees (PACs). Although there is an observable inflation of money allotted to political advertisements from FDR to Trump, this section will show the percentages of total expenditures designated for each candidates’ advertising efforts are remarkably similar.

The Federal Election Commission was established in 1975, long after FDR’s 1932 campaign, and prior to the FEC regulating campaign finance, disclosure requirements for federal candidates were enforced by political parties (FEC). Political parties also played a direct role in

appropriating funds for campaigns, which is exhibited by the Democratic National Committee's creation of Roosevelt's 1932 campaign budget (Nicolaidis, 1988). The DNC initially proposed that Roosevelt's campaign spend \$340,000 of its \$1.65 million total strictly on radio advertising (Keith, 2008). After submitting this proposal to Roosevelt, he increased the radio advertising budget to \$500,000, and his campaign ultimately spent \$540,000 solely on radio, nearly a quarter of the campaign's entire expenditures (Keith, 2008). FDR's radio expenditures are significant in that they highlight the campaign's preference of radio over other media, given that the radio allocation dwarfed the expenditures on media such as print, which received an allocation of \$382,000 (Keith, 2008).

Ronald Reagan's 1984 campaign exhibited a similar dedication to its television advertisements, with his ad agency, the Tuesday Team, working overtime to dominate the airwaves with attack ads on opponent Walter Mondale (NYT, 1984). Reagan's campaign earmarked a larger percentage of their total disbursements for TV ads than Roosevelt did for radio, with an astonishing \$25 million of their \$77.2 million funding TV advertising (FEC, REAGAN). Reagan and FDR's disproportionate allocations toward their medium of choice underscores an emerging pattern in campaign advertising, which is a dedication to a specific medium and the audience of that medium as opposed to spreading their message across a number of platforms and a more diversified audience. This noteworthy pattern demonstrates that casting a wide net has not been as historically important to successful political campaigns as cultivating a candidate's image among a segmented audience by repeatedly exposing them to that candidate's message (Baran & Davis, 2012).

Before evaluating President Trump's use of Twitter during the 2016 Presidential Election and the year following his election victory through this theoretical framework, it is necessary to provide perspective on the shift in election marketing focus from traditional media (print, radio, television) to digital and social media. Shortly after the inception of the internet in the mid-1990s, politicians began utilizing this online marketplace of ideas to lobby for funding through online fundraising. Senator John McCain was one of the first politicians to expose how effective the internet could be for raising campaign funds in the year 2000, when he raised \$1 million solely from online fundraising campaigns (Cogburn & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011). Former Governor of Vermont Howard Dean also promoted the internet's importance in terms of fundraising during his 2004 Presidential Campaign, during which he raised \$14.3 million in just three months (Cogburn & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011).

Former President Barack Obama's 2008 Presidential Campaign further emphasized the power of an online presence when it comes to campaign finance. The Obama '08 campaign recorded an astounding \$664.8 million in contributions from 2007-2008, with \$430.2 million of that total listed as an itemized contribution and the remaining \$234.7 million categorized as non-itemized (FEC, OBAMA). According to the FEC, an itemized contribution is any contribution greater than \$200, and it is estimated that an infinitesimal portion of the U.S. population makes a contribution of this nature, with .44% of the population making this level of donation in 2008 (OpenSecrets). Aside from the financial benefits of online political campaigning, Obama's 2008 Presidential Campaign fully illuminated how the internet could be utilized to promote a campaigns' messages and translate those messages into grassroots activism. Obama was able to modernize antiquated campaign practices, such as targeting specific groups

and demographics, by collecting email addresses, zip codes, and other personal information from users of the Obama '08 website and app. The ability of Obama '08 to mobilize on-the-ground movements via daily email blasts is largely attributed to the fact that many of the emails appeared to be sent directly from Obama himself, and this "direct" line of communication proved to be effective for the campaign, given there were more than 2 million online users and over 200,000 offline campaign events (Cogburn & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011). This high level of activism showed that these social platforms are potentially more effective at message dissemination than garnering financial support.

Donald Trump formally announced his candidacy on June 16, 2015, and from that day on, the Trump Campaign had a demonstrated focus on reaching audiences through social media. From 2015-2016, the Trump '16 campaign shelled out \$303,000 on Twitter ads and \$261,000 on Facebook ads (FEC, TRUMP). Despite the seemingly high totals, these numbers are terribly deceiving. This misrepresentation of ad expenditures is due to campaigns exploring other avenues of financing advertisements, such as rerouting these advertising expenses through digital marketing consultants. In the case of Donald Trump, he paid his digital advertising firm of choice, Giles-Parscale, \$87.8 million during the election cycle (FEC, TRUMP). For reference, Hillary Clinton spent \$31.5 million on digital advertising, meaning she spent less than half of the Trump Campaign's expenditures for online advertising despite receiving \$256 million more in campaign contributions (FEC, HILLARY). Trump's concentration on digital ads continued leading up to election day, with the Trump '16 campaign spending \$8.4 million on digital advertising in the month prior to election day alone (FEC, TRUMP). The campaign expenditures

listed above paint a picture of an obvious dedication to social media political advertising by the Trump campaign.

Monopolizing a Medium: Roosevelt's Domination of Radio Airwaves

Despite popular belief, there is an extensive history of partisan ownership of American media outlets (Smith, 1997). With his sharp criticisms of the Republican-owned newspapers in the 1920s, Franklin Roosevelt was one of the first major politicians to directly address this issue (Smith, 1997). In borderline draconian fashion, FDR attacked newspapers that wrote scathing articles regarding his candidacy and went as far to say that they were misquoting him and taking his words out of context (Smith, 1997). Due to his disdain for Republican-dominated print journalism, Roosevelt sought other media that would more accurately portray himself and his message to the country, and radio was practically a perfect fit for the would-be president. In addition to having a naturally soothing voice and being lauded as an effective orator, FDR was constantly battling the paralytic symptoms of polio, which made public appearances and traditional soapbox politicking difficult (Nicolaidis, 1988). Consequently, radio became the candidate's medium of choice, and he utilized the airwaves to leapfrog the newspapers and establish a direct line of communication with the American people. In a 1933 response to the president of NBC, Roosevelt emphasized his predilection toward radio as an accurate way to convey messages, stating:

"I need not tell you that in my opinion radio is now one of the most effective mediums for the dissemination of information. It cannot misrepresent or

misquote. It is far reaching and simultaneous in releasing messages given for transmission to the Nation and for international consumption. (Cornwell, 1965)"

In a sense, Roosevelt preferred radio because he was the sole source of information, simultaneously acting as the news-gatherer, the reporter, and the editor (Winfield, 1990). On top of formal political advertisements during his '32 campaign, FDR also spoke frequently on various talk shows and programs (Nicolaidis, 1988). As stated in the 1927 Radio Act, all air time prior to the July convention was free to political candidates, leaving the decision to broadcasting networks and the DNC to limit the time allocated to each candidate (Nicolaidis, 1988).

Considering Roosevelt was in the heat of a Democratic primary, incumbent President Herbert Hoover had the option to create a stranglehold on the radio air time before the Democratic convention, but Hoover missed this brief window of opportunity. Hoover's negative attitude toward radio, coupled with the overwhelming nature of dealing with the Great Depression, contributed to his avoiding of the medium (Nicolaidis, 1988). One of Hoover's advisors even suggested he give weekly radio addresses to the nation, to which he replied, "It is very difficult to deal with anything over the radio except generalities, without embarrassing actual accomplishments which are going forward." (Nicolaidis, 1988)

While Hoover disregarded the power of radio, FDR took advantage of any air time offered to him (Tables 1 & 2). For example, in the five months before the Democratic convention, Hoover addressed the nation via radio six times for a total of 178 minutes in comparison to Roosevelt's 287 speaking minutes over eight appearances (Nicolaidis, 1988). Roosevelt's early commitment to radio is evident here considering his airtime was limited to allow other Democratic candidates the opportunity to speak to the public. This disparity becomes

more staggering when evaluating radio speeches following the convention and before the election, during which FDR made 19 appearances and spoke for 904 minutes, which is more than double the 415 minutes Hoover spoke across his 15 appearances (Nicolaides, 1988). Although the contrast in total speaking minutes speaks volumes on its own, perhaps the most notable conclusion drawn from this analysis is the considerable difference in average length of speech, which is 44.1 minutes for Roosevelt and a mere 28.2 minutes for Hoover. This discrepancy in speaking time cements the fact that FDR strategically utilized radio to disseminate and reinforce his message.

TABLE I. Network radio speeches by Herbert Hoover in the 1932 campaign

Date	Time	Network	Type	Description
2-12	10:30-10:45p*	NBC-R ¹		Lincoln Day Dinner
2-22	1:06-1:27p	CBS	sus**	200th Birthday of George Washington
	11:30-1:15p	NBC		
3-6	10:20-10:32p	CBS	sus	Anti-Hoarding campaign
	10:15-11:00p	NBC-R		
4-11	10:30-11:00p	CBS	sus	American Red Cross convention
	10:30-11:00p	NBC-R		
4-27	3:09-3:34p	NBC		
8-11	10:15-11:30p	CBS	sus	'Need for Reform in Taxation and Government Spending'
	10:00-11:00p	NBC		Accepting the nomination
<i>POST-CONVENTION</i>				
8-14	5:15-5:30p	CBS	sus	Unveiling of statue of Cardinal Gibbons
	4:30-5:30p	NBC-R		
9-26	11:00-4:15p	CBS	sus	Laying cornerstone of new Post Office Dept., Wash. D.C.
	3:30-4:15p	NBC-R		
9-29	8:30-9:00p	CBS	sus	'Child Labor', Women's Conference on Current Problems
	8:36-8:45p	NBC-R		
10-4	8:40-10:11p	CBS	spn	'Agriculture', Des Moines, IA
	8:30-10:13p	NBC-R		
10-7	3:15-3:55p	NBC-B		Address to women involved in the Republican campaign
10-12	9:30-10:00p	CBS	sus	'Responsibility of Lawyers', ABA Convention, Wash. D.C.
	9:30-10:00p	NBC-R		
10-15	8:46-10:00p	CBS	spn	'Unemployment and Wage Salary Earners', Cleveland, OH
	8:30-10:03p	NBC-R		
10-16	6:35-6:38p	CBS		Welfare & Relief Mobilization, 'Appeal for Winter Relief Funds'
	6:30-7:00p	NBC-R		
10-22	8:52-10:04p	CBS	spn	'Present Emergency Programs', Detroit, MI
	8:53-10:00p	NBC		
	(scheduled for 8:30-9:30p)			
10-28	8:46-10:02p	CBS	spn	'Republican vs. Democratic Policies', Indianapolis, IN
	8:30-10:04p	NBC-R		
	(scheduled for 8:30-9:30p)			
10-31	9:00-10:30p	NBC		'Republican vs. Democratic Policies', Madison Square Garden, NYC
11-2	11:15-11:51p	CBS	spn	Talk over West Coast network
11-4	9:04-10:00p	CBS	spn	'Democratic Campaign of Avoidance', St. Louis, MO
	8:49-10:00p	NBC-R		
11-5	12:05-12:07a	CBS	spn	'Importance of Economic Recovery', St. Paul, MN
	10:30p-12:08a	NBC-R		
11-7	10:43-10:53p	CBS		Campaign talk from Presidential Train in Elko, NV
	10:40-10:57p	NBC-R		

Sources: Compiled from CBS 1932 Analysis Book; NBC 1932 Corrected Traffic Sheets; *New York Times* "Today on the Radio" schedules for 1932; William Starr Myers, *The State Papers and Other Public Writings of Herbert Hoover*, Vol. 2 (New York, Doubleday, 1934).

Table 1 (Radio Electioneering)

TABLE II. Network radio speeches by Franklin Roosevelt in the 1932 campaign

Date	Time	Network	Type	Description
2-22	2:00-2:30p*	CBS	sus**	200th Birthday of George Washington
	11:30-1:15p	NBC		
4-7	10:00-11:00p	NBC-R		'Forgotten Man', Lucky Strike Hour
4-9	9:15-9:30p	CBS	sus	'Present and Past Expenditures and Taxes', Young Democratic Club
4-20	1:15-1:30p	CBS	sus	Int'l Society for Crippled Children
4-27	10:30-11:00p	NBC-R	sus	Tribute to George Washington
6-7	4:15-4:45p	CBS	sus	Dedication of Port of Albany
	4:00-5:00p	NBC-R		
7-2	7:15-7:50p	CBS	sus	Acceptance of nomination (entire program: 2:00-8:15p)
	7:03-7:50p	NBC		
<i>POST-CONVENTION</i>				
7-30	9:00-9:30p	NBC-R	sus	'Democratic Platform', Albany, NY
8-20	5:00-5:47p	NBC-B	spn	'Failures of the Present Administration', Columbus, OH
				'Campaign Funds', Albany, NY
8-25	9:00-9:30p	CBS	spn	'Agriculture', Topeka, KS
	9:00-9:08p	NBC-R		
9-14	2:30-3:15p	CBS	spn	'The Railroad Mesh', Salt Lake City, UT
9-17	10:15-11:00p	CBS	spn	'Public Utilities', Portland, OR
	10:15-11:05p	NBC-B		
9-21	11:00-11:45p	CBS	spn	'Agriculture and Tariffs', Sioux City, IA
9-29	9:00-9:52p	NBC-R	spn	Address to Business and Professional Men's League, Albany
10-6	1:30-2:00p	CBS	spn	'Federal Responsibility for Relief', Albany, NY
10-13	10:00-10:30p	CBS	spn	'The Federal Budget', Pittsburg, PA
10-19	9:30-10:33p	NBC-R	spn	'Eight Great Credit Groups', St. Louis, MO
	(scheduled for 9:30-10:00p)			
10-21	10:00-11:00p	NBC-R	spn	Talk over Dixie Network
	(scheduled for 10:00-10:45p)			
10-24	10:15-11:00p	CBS	spn	'Four Horsemen', Baltimore, MD
10-25	8:00-8:30p	CBS	sus	Welfare & Relief Mobilization, Roosevelt and others
10-30	10:30-11:15p	CBS	sus	'Long Range Planning', Boston, MA
	10:30-11:19p	NBC-R		
10-31	10:36-11:41p	NBC-R	spn	Democratic Rally with Roosevelt, Owen D. Young, others, from Metropolitan Opera House, NYC
11-3	10:15-11:00p	NBC-B	spn	Democratic Rally with Roosevelt Herbert Lehman, Alfred E. Smith, from Brooklyn, NY
11-4	10:00-11:41p	NBC-R	spn	Democratic Rally with Roosevelt, Lehman, Sen. Robert Wagner, from Madison Square Garden, NYC
11-5	9:06-10:30p	CBS	spn	Roosevelt, Farley and others, Hyde Park, NY
	9:00-10:29p	NBC		
11-7	10:57-11:45p	NBC		
	11:00-12:00p	CBS		

Table 2 (Radio Electioneering)

Content Analysis: Roosevelt's Radio Rhetoric

Roosevelt's devotion to spreading his message on the radio is observable in the previous section, but the question still remains: what exactly was his message during his 1,191 total minutes of airtime? In hopes of differentiating between Roosevelt's rhetoric in the primary and the general election, this analysis will be separated into three parts, including his language during the primary contest, followed by his reception of the Democratic nomination, and through to the end of his campaign, which lasted from January to November of 1932.

During the '32 Democratic primary, which FDR won handily, the main concern among voters was the Great Depression and how each candidate planned to ameliorate the sustained economic collapse (Leuchtenburg, 2017). Aware of the public outcry for government regulation of the economy, Roosevelt deliberately mentioned economic reform or some variation of aiding the economy in all six radio speeches during the primary (FDR Library). In fact, of the 11,459 words utilized in his primary radio speeches, FDR mentioned the "economy" or "economic reform" 59 times, more than any other word or phrase. His other most commonly used words also reflected the public's growing disdain for government officials, including "Washington," "nation," "state," and "government," all of which were used in a critique of current legislative and executive officials (Figure 1). Although Roosevelt's airtime in the primary was limited, he utilized the time he was allowed to speak to disaffected voters who felt the government cared little about their individual economic struggles. When he ultimately accepted the nomination at the Democratic Convention in Chicago, Roosevelt pledged to his supporters that he would broker a "new deal for the American people," keeping in line with his economic populist message many Americans heard on the radio (Leuchtenburg, 2017).

Heading into the general election, the level of discontent for Republicans was markedly high, with many Americans holding the belief that the blame for the depression rested squarely on the shoulders of Herbert Hoover (Skowronek & Glassman, 2008). Roosevelt capitalized on this opportunity, signaling ways in which his policy agenda would revive the U.S. economy while simultaneously denouncing Hoover and the Republican party for their laissez-faire approach to economics (Truslow, 2013). Despite only mentioning Hoover once in his primary speeches, FDR invoked his name 27 times during the general election, which alludes to Roosevelt's campaign strategy of dismantling Republican support throughout the country (FDR Library). Building on his primary message of economic recovery, Roosevelt became much more specific with his policy agenda during the general. He began to directly address interest groups within the agricultural and industrial sectors, mentioning "farms" and "farmers" 114 times, which were the most frequently used words of the total 22,678 words from general election radio speeches. Similarly, he mentioned "tariffs" 76 times during this time frame, most of which were critiques on Republican tariffs that negatively impacted the industrial sector. This is significant because it shows an attempt by Roosevelt's campaign to reach out to the areas of the country most affected by the economic collapse. The rest of FDR's most commonly used words were strikingly related to his language from the primary, often repeating words like "government," "people," "state," "public," and "economy." (Figure 2) Roosevelt's strategy proved to be effective, as he won the 1932 election in a landslide, securing 472 of the possible 531 electoral college votes and carrying 42 of the 48 states (Truslow, 2013).

Hoover's decision to avoid radio communication allowed Roosevelt to control the narrative regarding the ongoing financial crisis, which was disastrous for the Hoover campaign

due to the massive radio audience at the time. Roosevelt had amassed an audience of close to 40 million listeners, which is the total number of listeners for his broadcast on the night before election day (Nicolaidis, 1988). By speaking longer and more regularly than his opponent, Roosevelt had a monopoly on radio's audience of roughly one in two Americans (Nicolaidis, 1988). By the conclusion of the election cycle, Roosevelt had spoken to this enormous audience 27 times for a total of 1,191 minutes, and his speech transcripts contained 34,137 words across 62 single-spaced pages. A word cloud representing his most commonly used words over the course of his entire campaign displays Roosevelt's issue-oriented approach to politics, focusing on specific interest groups while also addressing the most pressing issues during that political moment (Figure 3).

A notoriously loquacious orator, Roosevelt flooded the airwaves with frequent and lengthy speeches, with the longest lasting an hour and 41 minutes, and based on the data presented here, it is evident that this direct line of communication to the people won him the election (Nicolaidis, 1988). Many American citizens were becoming frustrated with the lack of transparency and accountability in Washington, and Roosevelt represented an atypical version of politics, promising to consistently update the public on the financial crisis and to focus on the working class population that felt betrayed by elected officials.

The Great Communicator: Reagan's Constant Communication with the Public

The analysis of Ronald Reagan's use of television during his 1984 presidential campaign will consider Reagan's televised speaking engagements and his formal TV advertisements. This investigation of Reagan's strategies will be slightly different from the examination of Roosevelt and Trump in that Reagan was an incumbent president heading into 1984. The rationale in choosing Reagan's reelection campaign over his first bid for the presidency was based on a number of factors, most notably because Reagan and his marketing team perfected their usage of television as a medium during the '84 election. Additionally, the most memorable and widely studied Reagan ads, such as "Prouder, Stronger, Better," "Bear," and "Reaganomics," came during this election cycle. Aside from paid advertisements, Reagan also delivered many more televised speeches during this time period, with only eight speaking engagements in the 1980 election cycle compared to 15 speeches during his reelection bid (Reagan Presidential Library). In order to allow for direct comparison across candidates, the data presented will strictly focus on Reagan's campaign speeches, disregarding formal presidential speeches such as state of the union addresses and ceremonial speeches.

Considering Reagan's opponent, former Vice President Walter Mondale, had to compete in a primary contest prior to focusing his efforts on the general election, Reagan had ample control of his campaign's message in the early stages of the election. Although Mondale's media attention and televised speaking engagements were restricted so as to provide the entire primary field with a fair chance to receive the nomination, his campaign demonstrated a concentrated effort to disseminating campaign messages over television (Clendinen, 1984). This focus on

television was justified by the 35 percent of Americans who received information about the election solely from television (Benoit, 2004). By 1984, television was no longer an emerging medium in the U.S. considering more than 90 percent of households had at least one TV set (Elert). The importance of this specific medium to political campaigns grew substantially with 89 percent of the population using television to learn about political campaigns, a 31 percent increase over 12 years (Benoit, 2004).

Reagan's campaign was aware of the growing influence of television, and where Herbert Hoover missed an opportunity to use his presidential power to command media attention, Reagan did not. On top of spending roughly the same amount on TV advertisements as Mondale, Reagan used his incumbency to his advantage and addressed the public six more times than his opponent over the course of the entire election cycle (Benensen, 1984). Additionally, every TV network allowed Reagan unfettered access to air time when he desired it, which resulted in 432 minutes of total televised speaking time, over 200 more minutes than the amount of time allotted to Mondale. By repeatedly exposing the public to his message, "The Great Communicator" was able to craft a transparent image of himself while also limiting the amount of media coverage of Mondale's campaign addresses.

It's Morning Again in America: Reagan Balances Attacking and Virtue Signaling

By the time Reagan announced his candidacy for reelection on January 29, 1984, his job approval rating had reached 54 percent, and it remained above 50 percent throughout the entire year (Newport & Carroll, 2003). Reagan capitalized on his widespread support by focusing his televised message on aspects of his presidency that appealed to the public, particularly his

strength as a negotiator, his economic prowess, and his diplomatic talent. Reagan's well-curated image and extensive history in the political realm granted him the agency to stake his campaign on ideas of American symbolism in addition to his record in Washington. This section will highlight this dichotomy by comparing the rhetoric used in Reagan's televised speeches throughout the '84 campaign to the language in his official TV advertisements. Similar to the rhetorical analysis of FDR, the evaluation of Reagan's speeches will be separated into two parts, including the period before Walter Mondale received the Democratic nomination and the general election following each party's convention. Although Reagan's campaign ran 10 total TV ads during the '84 campaign, this research will only consider three ads, including "Prouder, Stronger, Better," "Bear," and "Reaganomics," which display the variety of messages found within Reagan's paid advertisements.

Reagan's first term was a particularly volatile one, dealing with a number of notable events like an attempted assassination, the release of Iranian hostages, the invasion of Grenada, and the suicide bombings on the U.S. Marine Corps barracks in Lebanon (Miller Center, 2017). The Reagan administration was also expected to handle hostile international relations with the Soviet Union, the Republic of Cuba, and the Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua (Miller Center, 2017). This plethora of momentous events was still fresh on the minds of American citizens, so in hopes of maintaining control of the narrative regarding Reagan's handling of these issues, his campaign focused their early message on many of them. Reagan spoke six times prior to his acceptance of the Republican nomination in August, and his word choice during these speeches underscores the importance he placed on the issues that riddled his first term. This is exhibited by the fact that "Soviet," "communist," "Sandinistas," "Salvador,"

“Nicaragua,” and “Cuba” are among the top 10 most used words of the total 14,183 words during this time period (Figure 4). It’s worth noting that these hot button issues were accompanied by typical political terms like “America,” “people,” “government,” “president,” and “freedom,” which were used almost twice as much as the words focused on international relations (Figure 4).

After Walter Mondale won the Democratic primary, Reagan’s issue-oriented language quickly shifted to focus on the Democratic platform and Mondale’s record in the Senate. In fact, in the nine televised speeches following the Republican convention, Reagan used the word “Mondale” a remarkable 125 times, the second most used word of the 32,733 total (Figure 5). When he did not directly invoke Mondale’s name, he referred to him as his opponent, which was used 49 times (Figure 5). In addition to attacking Mondale, Reagan fixated on Democratic policies that were widely unpopular at the time, most notably a proposed tax increase to all households earning more than \$25,000 annually (Reagan Library). Reagan’s assault on the Democratic tax plan is displayed by the usage of “tax,” “taxes,” “plan,” and “inflation,” all of which were used more than 50 times (Figure 5). Much like FDR’s plan to balance attacking Hoover’s performance in office and his own vision for the future, Reagan successfully devitalized Mondale’s campaign by casting doubt on his record while touting his successes as president. The results of the 1984 election were also extraordinarily similar to 1932, with Reagan winning 525 electoral votes to Mondale’s 13 and 49 of the 50 states (270 to win).

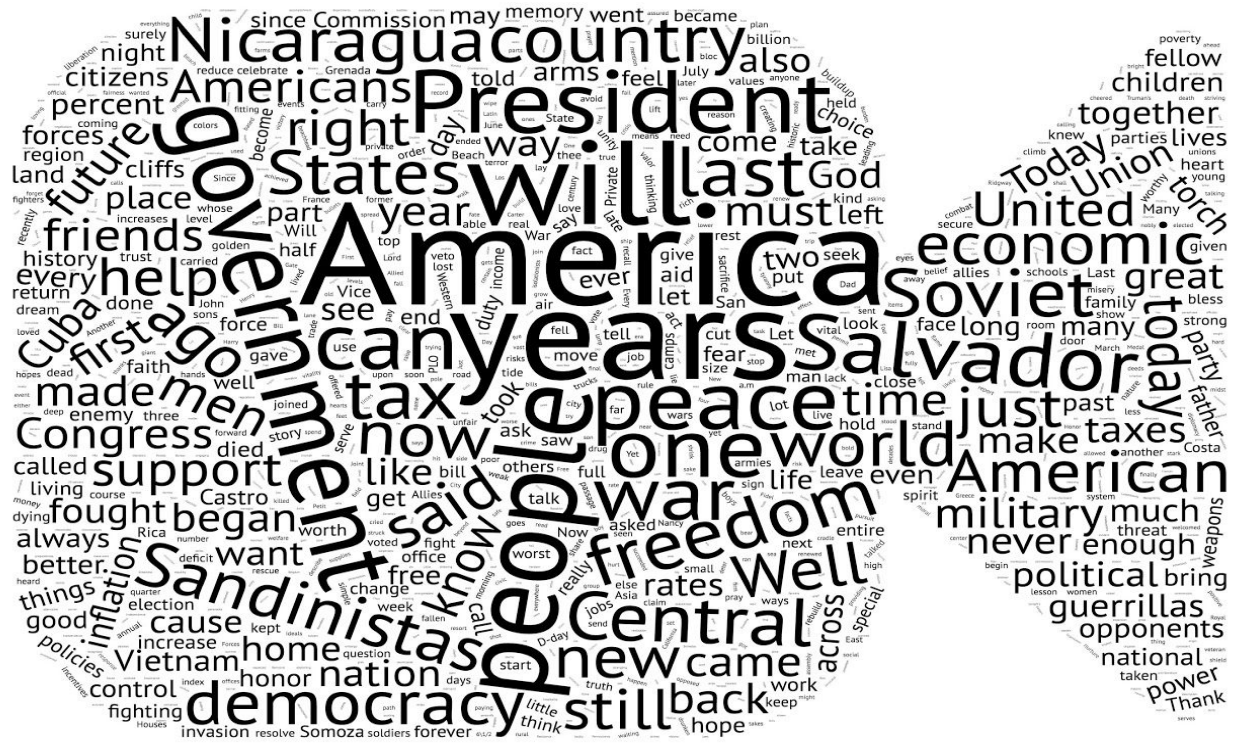


Figure 4: Pre-Convention

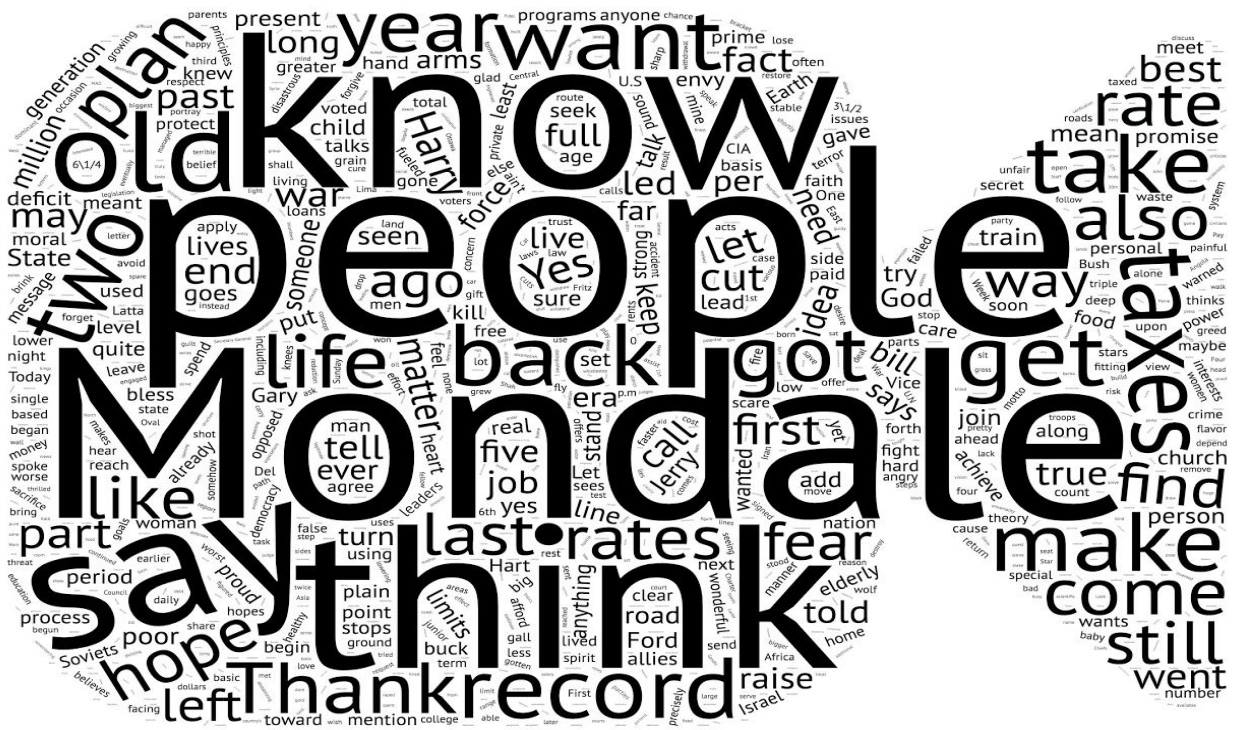


Figure 5: Pre-Convention

Reagan's landslide victory in the '84 campaign is largely due to his multifaceted utilization of televised media. Not only was he exceptionally comfortable in front of a camera due to his career as an actor, which greatly benefited his televised speaking appearances, but he also used the medium to depict a picturesque vision of America through his use of televised ads. Reagan utilized a renowned group of advertising executives called the Tuesday Team to present voters with an idyllic portrayal of Reagan's America (Devlin, 1982). Perhaps his most famous campaign advertisement is "Prouder, Stronger, Better," (PSB) more commonly known as "It's Morning Again In America." (Devlin, 1982) Straying from the norm that political ads should be a straightforward account of a candidate's platform, PSB is centered around all of the positive aspects of American life that resulted from Reagan's first term, citing the record number of employed Americans, low interest rates and inflation, and increased homeownership (Figure 6). Despite saturating TV channels during the early stages of the primary, the minute-long ad also subtly criticized Mondale for his role in the Carter administration's failures, regularly comparing the current state of the economy to 1980. The ad concludes with the statement, "And, under the leadership of President Reagan, our country is prouder and stronger and better. Why would we ever want to return to where we were less than four short years ago?" PSB revolutionized political advertising with its ability to balance abstract virtue signaling, the positive aspects of Reagan's presidency, and attacks on Mondale and the Democrats, but the ad also reimaged the role of music in advertisements. Like the majority of ads during the 1980s, most political ads either omitted music or used music that resembled a jingle, but PSB's orchestral symphony was a prominent factor in its success. The gradual crescendo throughout the ad paired well with the soothing voice of Tuesday Team member Hal Rinley, and the unprecedented combination of

music, narration, and video distinguished PSB from every other political advertisement (Christiansen, 2016).

Another prominent ad was “Bear,” which was arguably the most symbolic political ad in American history by the time it aired. The main purpose of “Bear” was to highlight the Reagan administration’s approach to foreign policy, often referred to as “peace through strength” or “prepared for peace.” (ISI Archive, 2019) The narration, also done by Hal Rinley, follows a bear walking through a wooded area, stating:

“There is a bear in the woods. For some people, the bear is easy to see. Others don't see it at all. Some people say the bear is tame. Others say it's vicious and dangerous. Since no one can really be sure who's right, isn't it smart to be as strong as the bear? If there is a bear?”

The bear is representative of any threat to America, and the lone hunter at the end represents America itself (Figure 7). Due to the escalation of the Cold War, one can assume the threat is the Soviet Union. This theory is especially compelling given that the USSR conducted another nuclear test in Kazakhstan just two weeks before the ad aired (OnThisDay). Considering “Bear” never explicitly names the threat, the ad propagates general fear of any threat to the U.S. and indicates that Reagan’s hardball approach to national defense is the only thing keeping Americans safe.

The final advertisement studied, “Reaganomics,” is the most direct attack ad on Mondale from the entire election cycle. The message is simple but effective, claiming Mondale’s approach to economics is only to raise taxes (Figure 8). At the time “Reaganomics” aired, the country was benefitting from significant economic growth, and

the Tuesday Team attempted to exploit the recent financial prosperity to attack Mondale's role in the economic downturn of the late 1970s. "Reaganomics" ends on a powerful note, stating "[Mondalenomics and Reaganomics] "both work. The difference is, Reaganomics works for you. Mondalenomics works against you." The ad essentially depicts Mondale as a politician who frivolously spends American tax dollars while portraying Reagan as an economic populist.



Figure 6: PSB



Figure 7: Bear

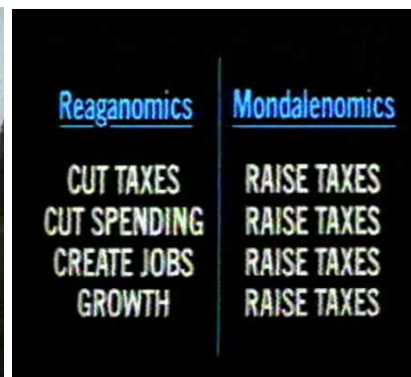


Figure 8: Reaganomics

As shown in this section, Reagan's combination of innovative paid advertisements and frequent televised speaking engagements accentuates his campaign's mastery of his medium of choice. By balancing attacks on his opponent, Walter Mondale, with the publicization of his administration's accomplishments, Reagan instilled a sense that he and the Republican party embodied all of the successes the U.S. was experiencing. The effectiveness of his television media campaign is emphasized by his lopsided electoral victory, the lasting effect his presidency had on the American polity, and the durability of many of his core messages. The impact of his televised message was amplified by the reliance of many Americans on television ads to learn about the election. In fact, in her study of the 1984 election, Montague Kern found that "by a

ratio of four to one, Americans received the majority of their information about candidate positions on the issues from ads rather than the news." (Kern, 1990) The influence of television on the public's political awareness, coupled with Reagan's frequent usage of the medium and strategic choice of both inflammatory and positive rhetoric, firmly establishes the increasing importance of postmodern campaign practices in the American political landscape.

New Rules of the Game: Trump's Impact on the Twitterverse

Despite outspending every single presidential candidate on digital advertising during the 2016 election (FEC, TRUMP), Donald Trump took his approach to social media campaigning a step further. He utilized his social media of choice, Twitter, to disseminate numerous messages daily to his followers. In hopes of highlighting the major fluctuations in his usage of the app, his total engagements will first be presented. Since joining Twitter in 2009, Trump has 41,963 original tweets (not retweets, which are when a user shares another user's post), and of those tweets, 28,58 (67.96%) are strictly text tweets, 10,253 (24.43%) are tweets with text and media, and 3,319 (7.91%) are replies to other users (Figure 9). In terms of total impact, Trump has amassed 75.7 million followers to date, and he receives 10,000 mentions every ten minutes.

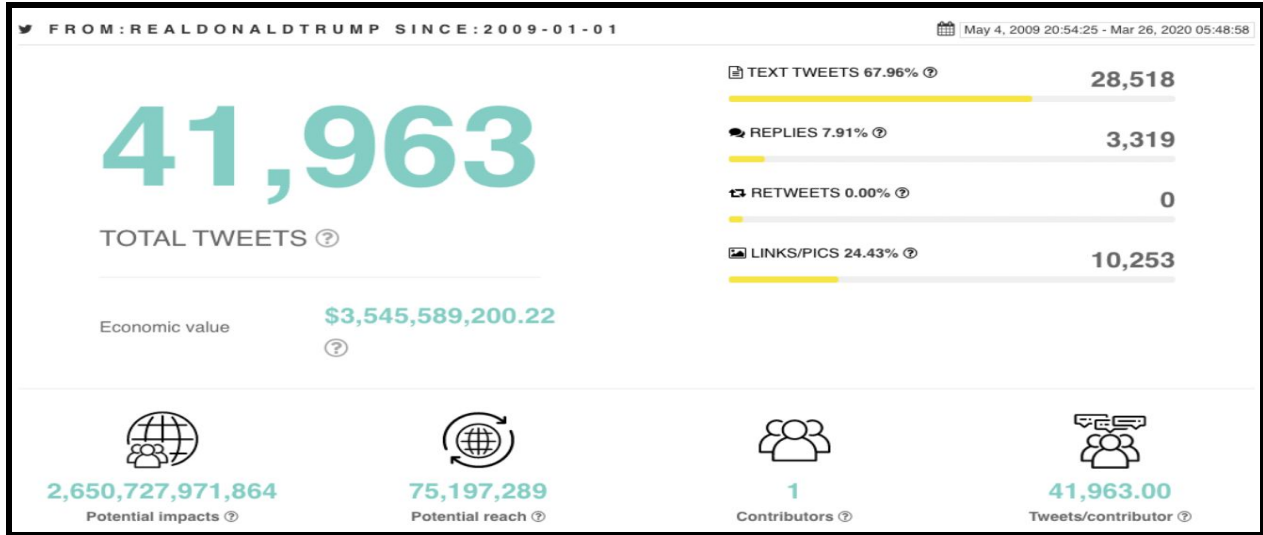


Figure 9

Additionally, his account has received 231 million retweets and 933 million likes since he first tweeted in 2009. Because of this high level of potential impact and his colossal follower count, a single endorsement Tweet from the president has a market value of \$95,813, according to Twitter, Inc. However, Keyhole provides a software that adjusts this value based on average tweet engagements, and they have reassessed the value of a Trump tweet at \$1.18 million (Figure 10).

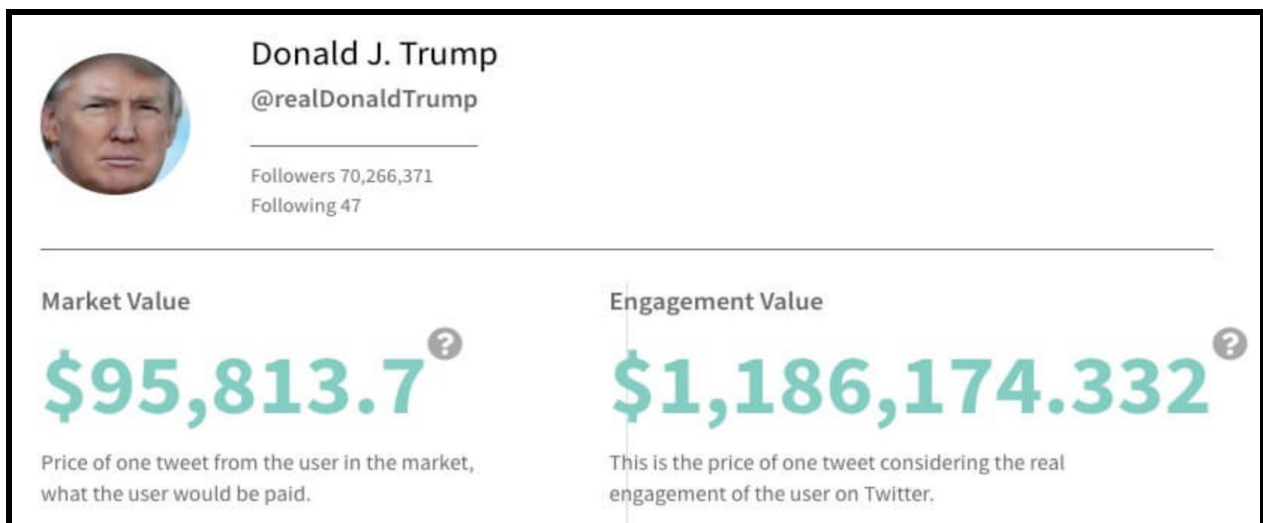


Figure 10

This level of digital influence is certainly expansive, but there has been a significant increase in Trump's online impact since the announcement of his candidacy. His follower count rose from 2.9 million on June 16, 2015 to 12.9 million on election day (November 6, 2016), which is a 10 million follower increase in just 16 months. What's more, his follower count more than tripled during his first year in office, reaching 42.1 million followers by November 6, 2017 (Figure 11). The exponential growth in followers during Trump's first year in office is the largest period of follower growth since he created his account (Figure 11).

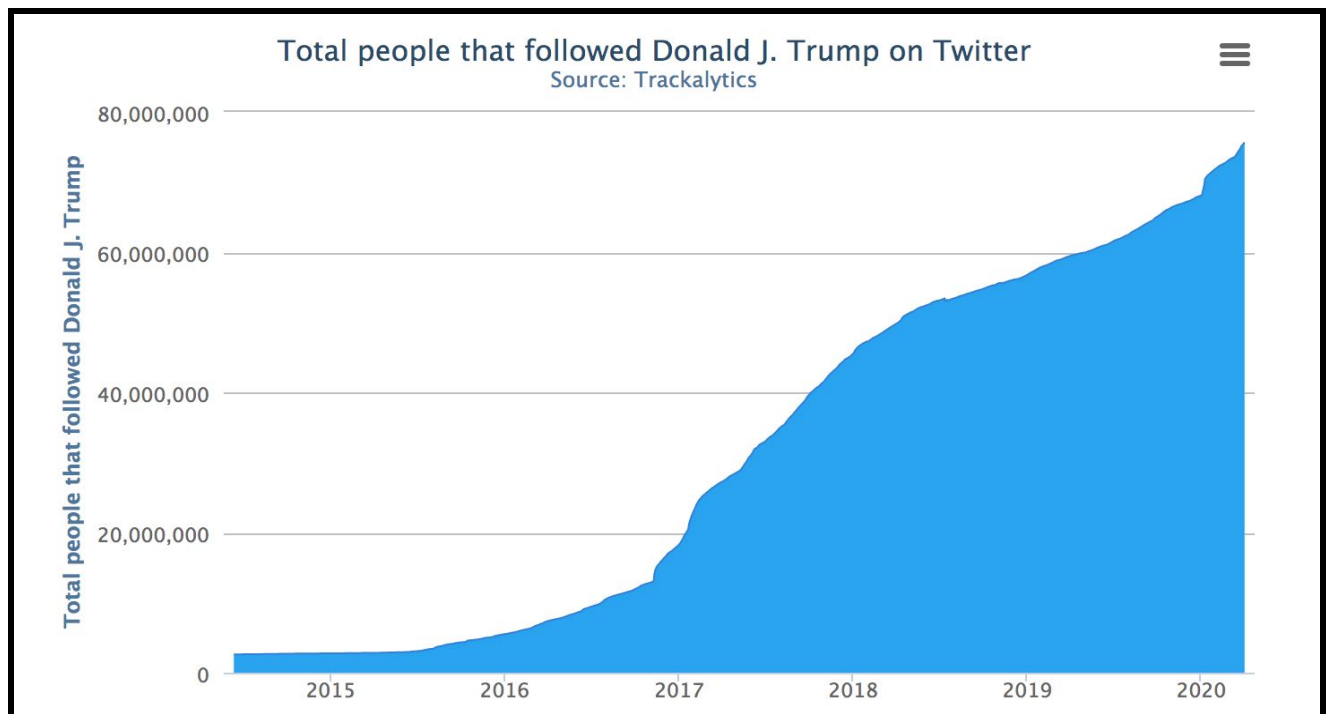


Figure 11: (Trackalytics)

Similarly, his tweet frequency grew gradually over the same time period. The day he announced his candidacy, his tweet total was at 25,715, and that total jumped to 33,924 by election day (Figure 12). Over the course of those 517 days from candidacy announcement to election day, that is an average of 15.87 tweets per day, which dwarfs his current overall total of 10.76 tweets per day. Based on Tweet frequency, this period is by far the most often Trump

posted on the app prior to his election. In fact, the only 517 day time frame in which he eclipses that daily tweet mark is currently in session. From November 1, 2018 to April 1, 2020, his tweet total grew from 39,503 to 50,319, which equates to an average of 20.92 tweets per day (Figure 4). The reason for this abnormality can largely be attributed to the political climate of the previous 517 days, which included the impeachment trial, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2020 Democratic primary.

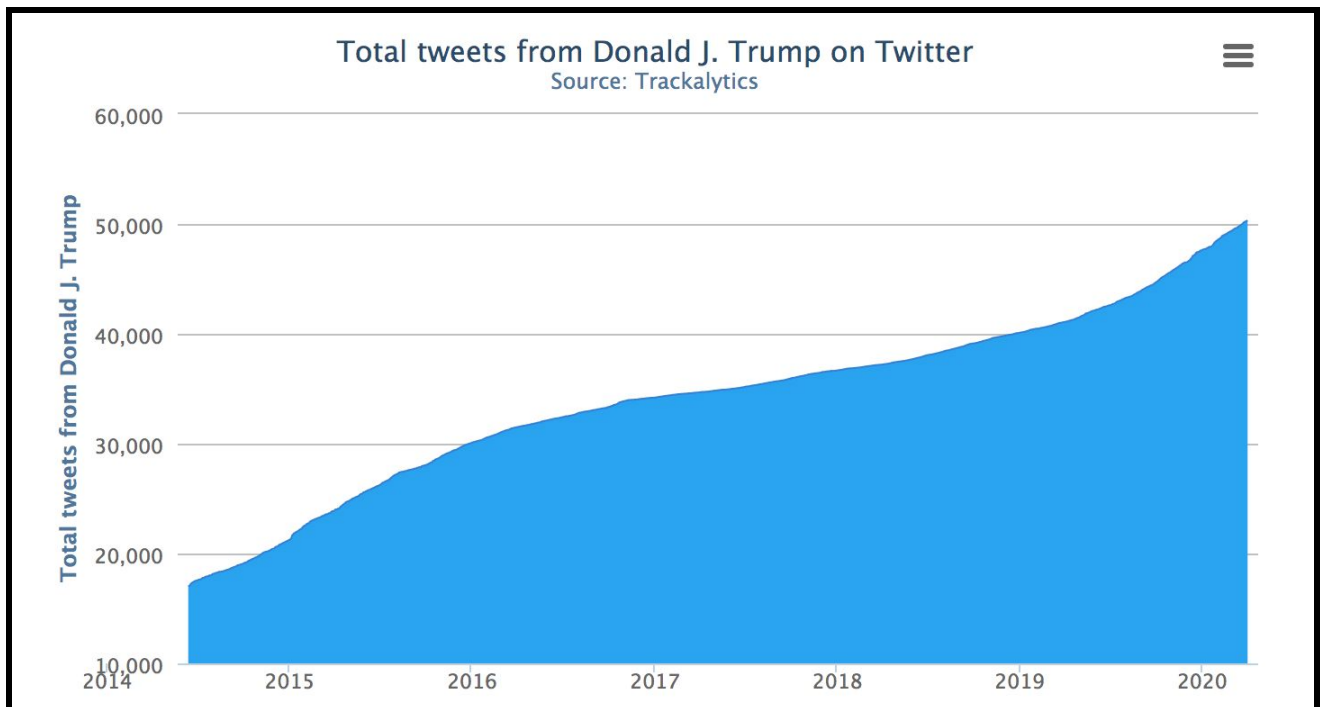


Figure 12: (Trackalytics)

It is also worth noting that although Trump was using Twitter more frequently than the rest of the 2016 presidential candidates from the start of his campaign to election day, there is a short window of time in which he wasn't even in the top three of tweets per day compared to other presidential frontrunners (Ryoo & Bendle, 2017). The table below presents data on Twitter usage of Trump and his five presidential opponents, both Democratic and Republican, from January 25 to May 4, 2016 (Ryoo & Bendle, 2017). January 25 was chosen because it is exactly

a week prior to the early states voting day and the Iowa Caucuses, and the final date, May 4, is when Trump’s final Republican opponent, John Kasich, conceded Trump’s victory. Over the course of these crucial 101 days, Trump actually tweeted at the fourth highest daily rate, with Ted Cruz, Bernie Sanders, and Hillary Clinton tweeting the most frequently, respectively (Ryoo & Bendle, 2017). During his final push for the nomination, Cruz tweeted at an astonishing rate of 34.8 tweets per day, which equates to 1.45 tweets per hour (Ryoo & Bendle, 2017). Another significant statistic in this data set is the percentage of original tweets. Trump led all candidates in this category by 15% with a staggering 96% of his tweets classified as original (Ryoo & Bendle, 2017) (Table 3) .

	Hillary Clinton	Bernie Sanders	Ben Carson	Ted Cruz	Marco Rubio	Donald Trump
Number of followers-	6,112,796	2,092,378	1,311,590	1,089,765	1,350,812	7,908,579
Total tweets-	5,456	8,285	3,031	16,571	5,426	31,830
Date joined Twitter	April 2013	November 2010	February 2013	March 2009	August 2008	March 2009
Suspended campaign	NA	NA	March 4th	May 3rd	March 15th	NA
Tweets in our data	1,865	2396	539	3512	884	1406
Tweets per day* (101 days in data)	18	24	5	34.8	9	14
Words in our data*	16,327	21,510	4,486	22,408	6,558	11,885
Words per tweet	8.75	8.98	8.32	6.38	7.42	8.45
Standard deviation	3.17	3.14	3.41	3.17	2.68	4.25
% of tweets original content	81%	67%	71%	35%	69%	96%

Table 3:(Ryoo & Bendle, 2017)

Characteristics of Trump’s Twitter Followers

The information in the previous section confirms the high potential impact of Donald Trump’s Twitter account based on frequent usage and follower base, but the focus of this section will shift to intricately breaking down said follower base through the lens of NSMT. Although it is difficult to evaluate demographics like race or ethnicity on Twitter due to the amount of

automated and private accounts along with the lack of general information about users, Keyhole allows users to see demographics like gender because Twitter prompts users to outline such parameters during profile creation. Similarly, the analytics software provides users with information on a specific user's followers' geographic location, tweet frequency, and even their political ideologies, which is based on their interactions on their respective Twitter feeds.

It is estimated that 19% of adult Twitter users follow Donald Trump, which is a small sample size for the U.S., considering only 22% of Americans are reported to use the platform (Wojcik, et al., 2019). Of that 19%, Keyhole estimates 75.6% of them are conservative-leaning and the remaining 24.4% are liberal-leaning (Figure 13). By contrast, the Pew Research Center estimates those figures to be significantly smaller, with 31% of Republican users and 13% of Democratic users following Trump (Wojcik, et al., 2019). This stark contrast is most likely due to the fact that the Pew Center researchers used a nationally representative sample of 2,833 Americans to collect their data, allowing their statistics to present concrete political views and deter automated accounts (also known as "bots") from tampering with the results (Wojcik, et al., 2019). Keyhole, on the other hand, is mainly focused on which direction the users evaluated *lean* on the partisan spectrum based on each account's content, and it will not be able to filter out automated accounts. However, the fact that automated accounts skewed these results so heavily speaks to the sheer volume of "bots" that follow the president.

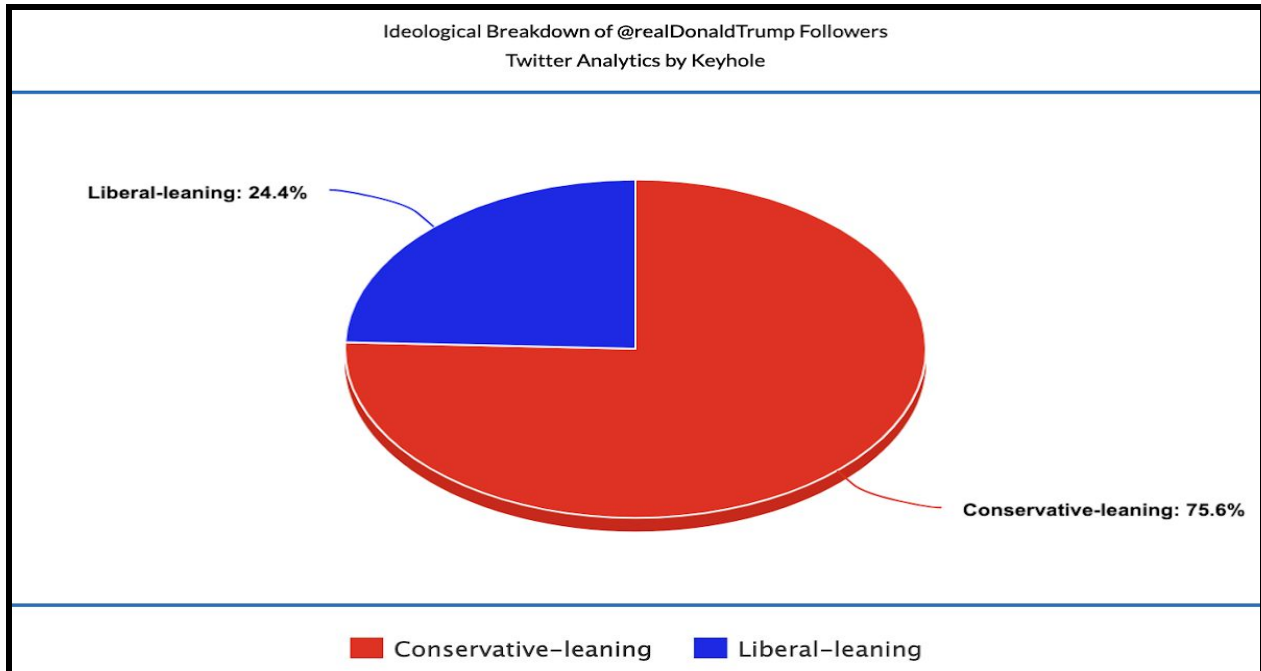


Figure 13

Ideological beliefs aside, one interesting finding related to Trump's Twitter followers is the considerable disparity between male and female users. Based on the gender they chose when creating their profiles, it appears that 50.2% of Trump's followers are male, and 32.3% of them are female (Figure 14). The remaining 17% of users are classified as undetermined (Figure 14), which is due to the fact that Twitter allows users to not select a gender when they create their profiles. Another noteworthy metric gathered by Keyhole is the recency of tweets by his follower base, which signifies their level of engagement on the app. Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of Trump's followers tweet at least once a day, with 25.5% tweeting in the last hour and 31.9% tweeting in the last 24 hours (Figure 15). Of the 57.4% of users that tweet daily, 82.9% of them interact with Trump's twitter on a daily basis.

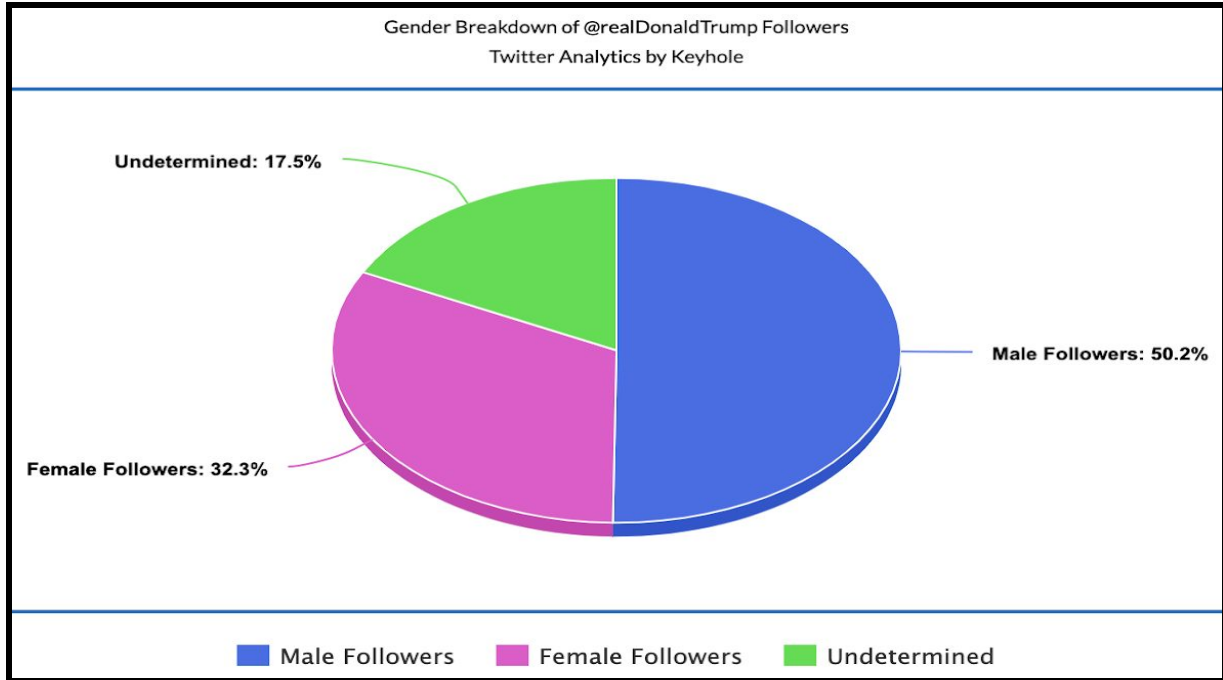


Figure 14

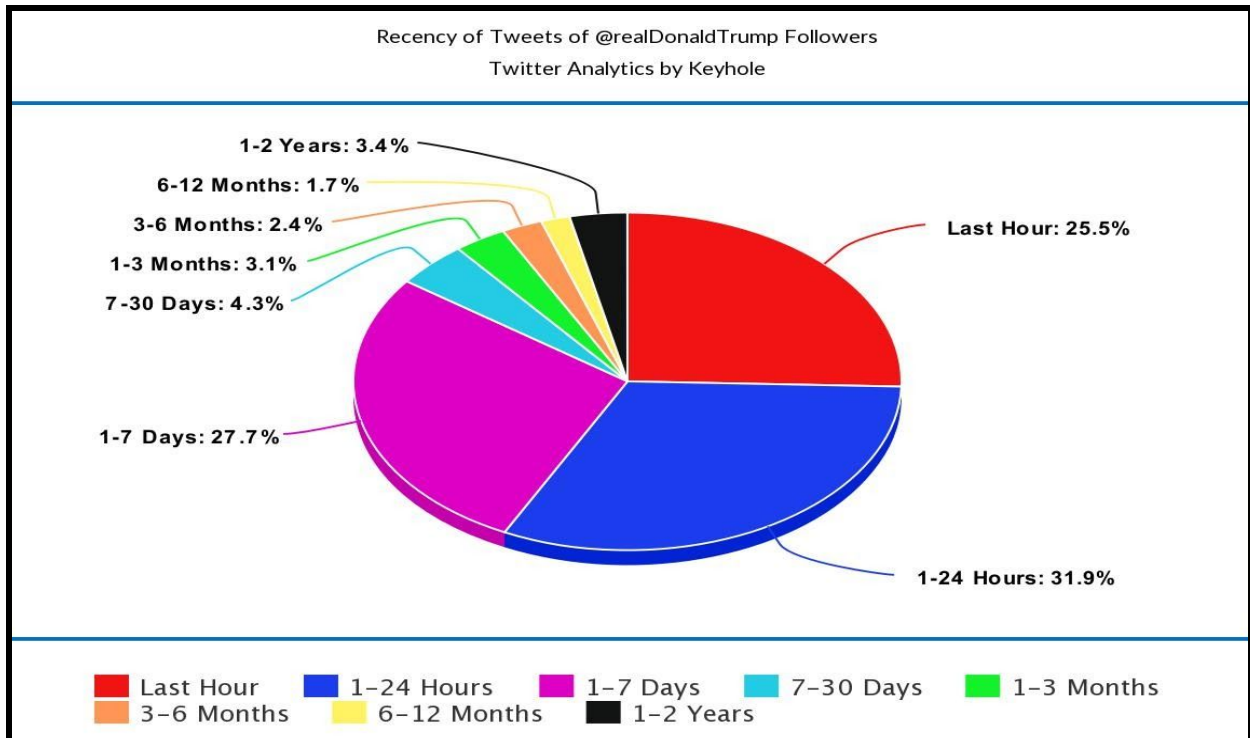


Figure 15

In sum, this data efficaciously establishes that the average Trump Twitter follower is a conservative-leaning male who tweets at least once a day. This conforms to the concept in NSMT that although most new social movements are founded on anti-establishment principles (e.g. draining the swamp), these movements are predominantly fueled by the hegemonic powers in place and attract a largely homogenized group of individuals (Buechler, 2005). With a comprehensive understanding of the follower base Donald Trump has attracted on the platform, this research can now assess why this base is energized by Trump's messages.

Content Analysis: Donald Trump's Weaponization of Twitter

The focus of this section will shift to determining the tactics Trump has used to gain this level of digital notoriety. This argument will center around comparing the rhetoric used in Trump's Tweets, evaluating why specific tweets are more popular, and the intrinsic connection between offline and online political campaigns as a predictable indicator of grassroots mobilization.

Using both Keyhole and the Trump Twitter Archive site, there was enough data to evaluate every single tweet in the time frame this paper is focused on (June 6, 2015-Nov. 6, 2017). During that period, Donald Trump tweeted 9916 times, and those tweets contained 187301 words (18.89 words per tweet). Placing the text from all of these tweets into a document results in a 419-page manifesto (1.15 spacing), and the most frequently used words are depicted in the word cloud below (Figure 16). Comparatively, during the 517 day period from Trump's candidacy announcement to election day, he tweeted 7899 times containing 144097 words (18.24 words per tweet). Those tweets only resulted in a 331 page document, and the most commonly

used words are also represented below (Figure 17). The election cycle word cloud noticeably includes the word Jeb, which is referring to Jeb Bush, the initial frontrunner in the republican primary, whom Trump directly referenced 243 times (Figure 17). This exhibits how Trump targeted his main opponents via Twitter.



Figure 16: 6/6/2015-11/6/2017

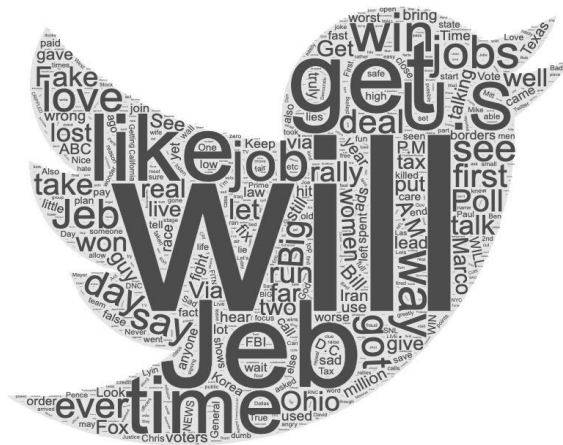


Figure 17: 6/6/2015-11/6/2016

The news outlet, Medium, conducted a similar study on rhetoric, but they focused on Trump’s Twitter from the creation of his account in 2009 to present day. Although there are striking similarities to the analysis presented above, there are also unusual differences. Medium reports that Trump’s most commonly used words are “great,” “Trump,” and “thank,” which corroborates this research on word usage, but a notable word missing from this paper’s research is “Obama.” After exploring this avenue further, this is because they included tweets prior to 2015, when Trump was particularly critical of President Obama. In fact, he has mentioned Obama over 1750 times in his tweets, which is three times more than any other individual

(Tauberg, 2018) (Figure 18).

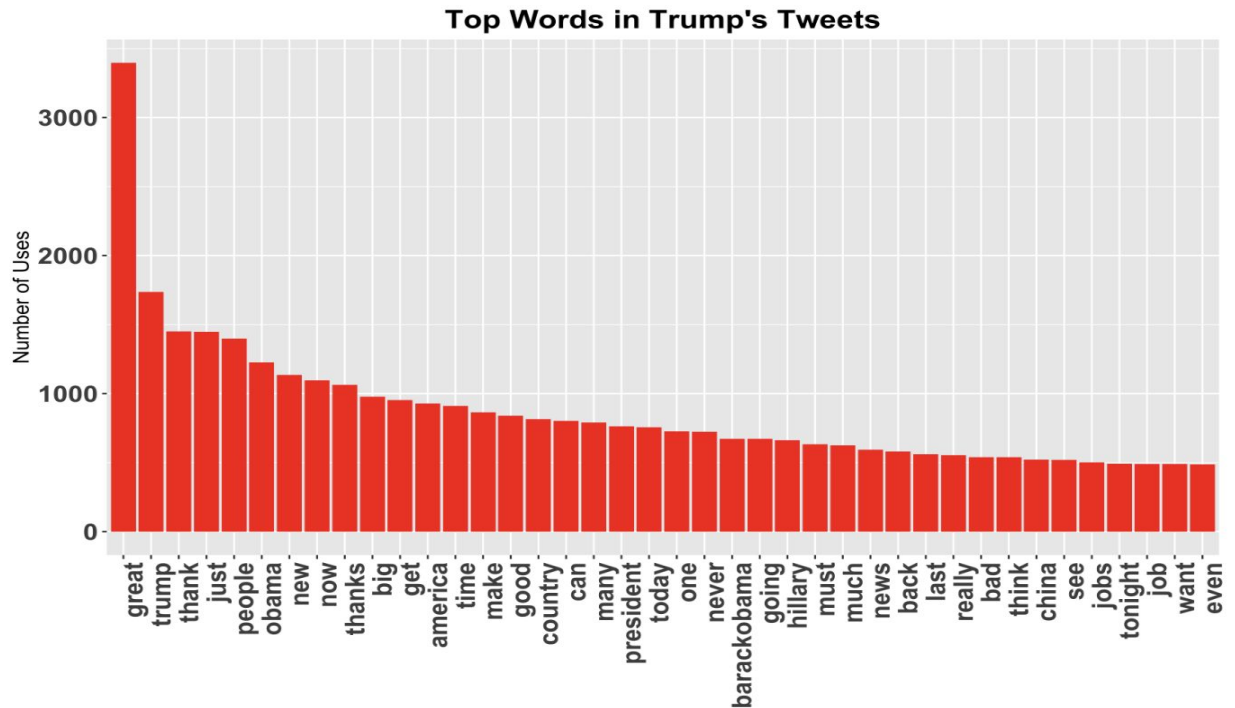


Figure 18: (Tauberg, 2018)

These graphics are beneficial in getting a comprehensive understanding of rhetoric used in the studied time period, but do not effectively show the rhetoric used in his most impactful tweets. During the 26 month period this paper focuses on, Trump's most popular tweet is a video of himself in the 1990s "fighting" in a professional wrestling match, but this particular video has been edited to show CNN on the faces of the people he beats up. It is captioned with "#FraudNewsCNN #FNN" and received 324,000 retweets and 529,000 likes. This tweet is indicative of how inflammatory the rest of his most popular tweets are, which was a surprise to find in this research considering Trump received a sentiment score of 72.02 from Keyhole, which is a metric used to determine the amount of "positive" words and phrases (e.g. great, happy, love, like, thank you, amazing) present in both the tweets and replies to them. The scale goes from

zero to 100, zero being the least sentimental (most negative) and 100 being the most sentimental (most positive). The Medium study on Trump’s tweet rhetoric yielded similar results, but they took their analysis on positive versus negative words further than Keyhole will allow. This study broke down the amount of times each adjective was used and categorized each adjective as either, positive, negative, or neutral (Figure 19). The data presented in this chart illustrates why Trump scores so highly on most sentiment metrics, which is to say, he Tweets the word “great” so frequently that it skews the data. Typically, Trump’s use of “great” comes when he tweets his campaign slogan, or slightly less frequently, when he boasts about an accomplishment.

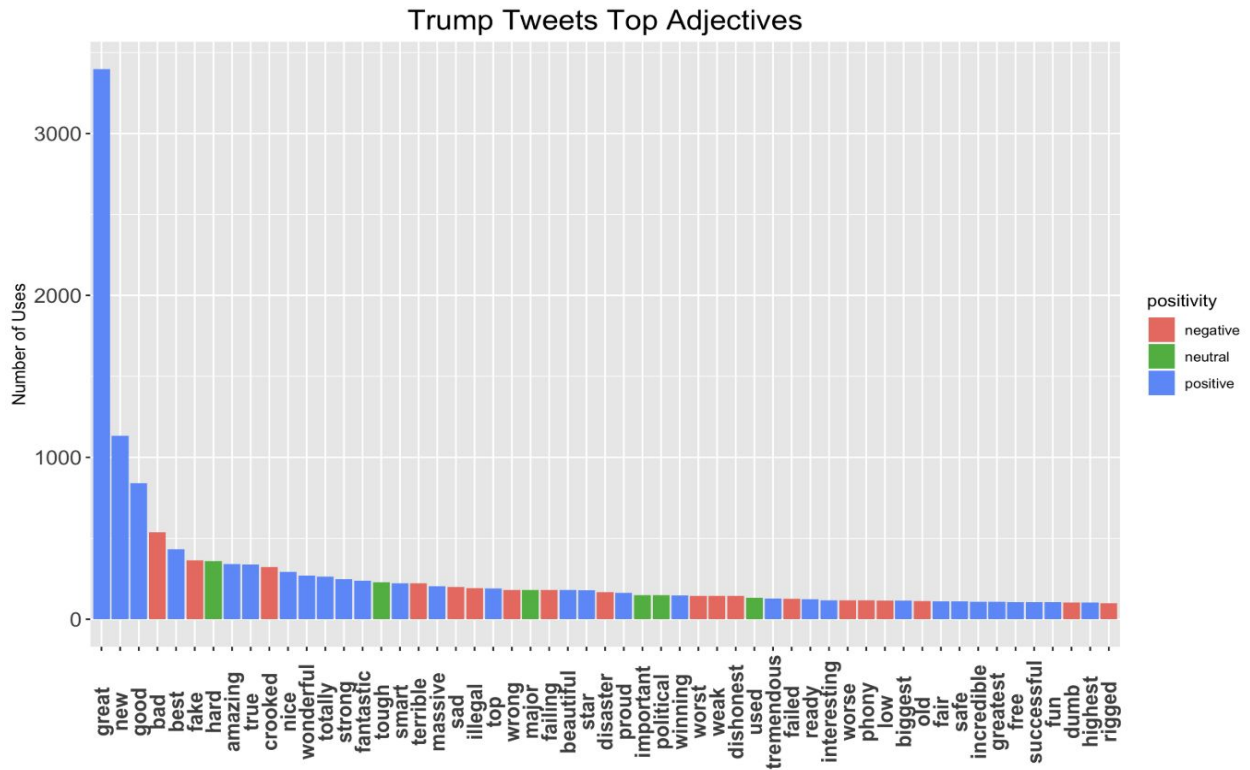


Figure 19: (Tauberg, 2018)

Despite Trump’s relatively high sentiment score and the fact that his feed is generally positive, his most popular tweets do not reflect that. In fact, Trump’s most popular tweets based

on retweets and likes are ones that are blatantly negative, including tweets like “How long did it take your staff of 823 people to think that up--and where are your 33,000 emails that you deleted?” (a quote of a Hillary Clinton tweet where she tells Trump to “Delete your account”), “Happy #CincoDeMayo! The best taco bowls are made in Trump Tower Grill. I love Hispanics!,” “#StandForOurAnthem,” and “Everybody is arguing whether or not it is a BAN. Call it what you want, it is about keeping bad people (with bad intentions) out of country!” (in reference to his travel restrictions for Islamic individuals). These provocative tweets translated to impact even outside of the Twitter realm. Google Trends data emphasizes the fact that Trump tweeting about a topic or issue renders general awareness on that topic. For example, Executive Order 13769 was signed by Donald Trump on January 27, 2017, and effectively limited the number of Islamic people traveling into the U.S. Trump spread the news via a tweet (listed above), and according to Google Trends, there was a 100% increase in Google searches for “travel ban” the week of Jan. 29-Feb. 4 (Figure 20). On the topic of Hillary’s deleted emails, there was a 100% spike in Google searches for “Hillary’s emails” the week prior to election day (Oct. 30-Nov. 5) (Figure 21). During this week, Trump tweeted about the issue numerous times, referencing Clinton 15 times and the emails specifically five times, including tweets like “Crooked Hillary should not be allowed to run for president. She deleted 33,000 emails AFTER getting a subpoena from U.S. Congress. RIGGED!” which received 23,747 retweets. To emphasize the direct effects of Trump’s tweets on Google searches, a more specific example is necessary. On May 30, 2017, Donald Trump tweeted “Despite the constant negative press covfefe,” which will stand in history as one of the most famous typos. The next day, there was a 100% increase in Google searches for “covfefe.” (Figure 22) This particular example differs from the others in that there was at

least a 53% increase in every single state for “covfefe” searches, whereas the other examples only saw every state increase by 23% in their respective searches.

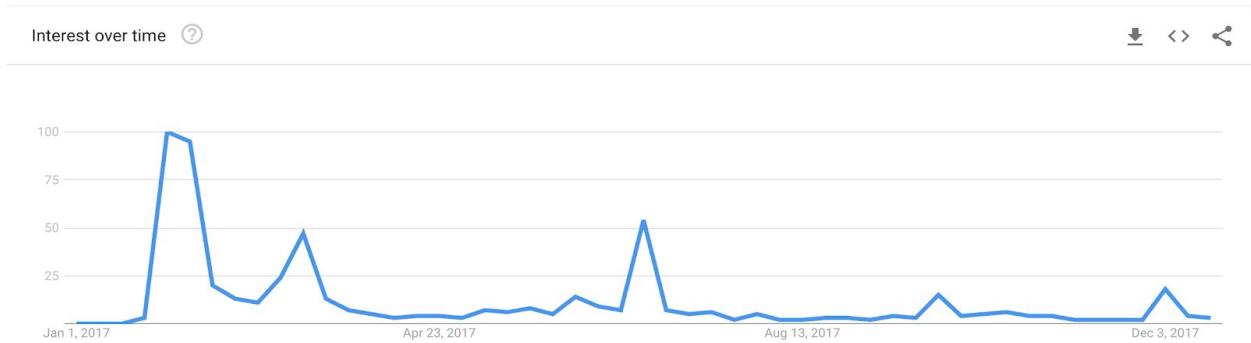


Figure 20: Google Trends data on “travel ban” searches

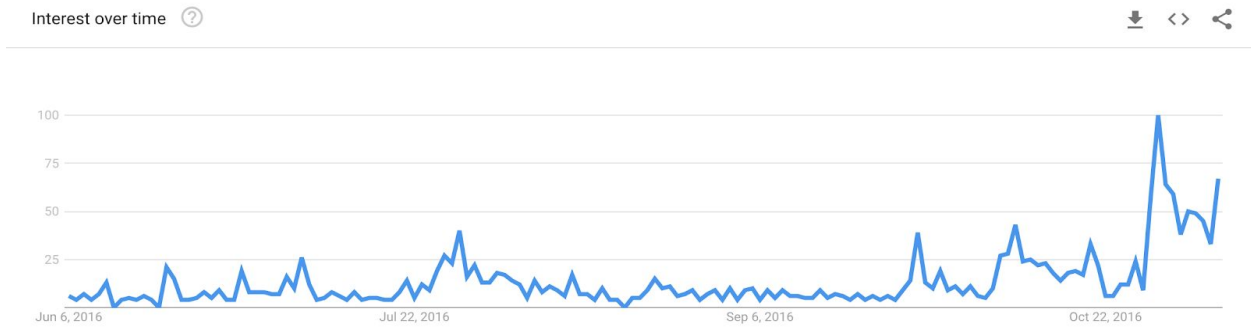


Figure 21: Google Trends data on “Hillary’s e-mails” searches

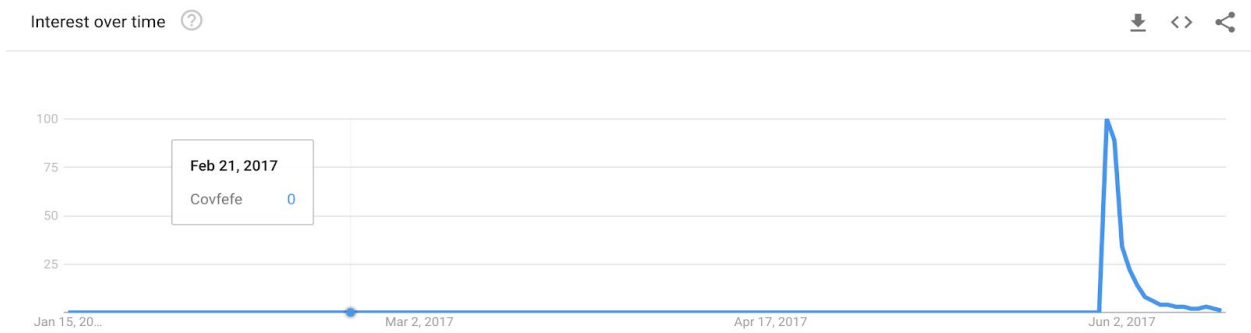


Figure 22: Google Trends data on “covfefe” searches

Analysis

This paper has presented both primary and secondary research centered around three presidential campaigns' usage of different media to disseminate campaign messages and the language present in their communication. The goal of this paper was to discover the level of impact each president's media campaigns had on their election results and how they utilized media to stimulate engagement. Based on the data presented, it appears a main factor in generating political support and maintaining active participation with a campaign is the frequency of communication and the widespread use of each medium among the U.S. population in their respective time periods. A common theme among these successful presidential campaigns is their ability to monopolize a medium and control the narrative regarding their candidacy. An unexpected finding in this research is the strategic and often dramatic alteration of a message over the course of a campaign to best fit their needs at a given moment. The data shows a clear progression in the fluidity of each candidates' message, which is exacerbated by an increase in regularity of communication. Moreover, this increased frequency of communication between presidents and the American public has given rise to the postmodern president, that is, a president that focuses on cultivating a particular image in the public's eye as opposed to highlighting their policy preferences and goals (Miroff, 2003).

Franklin Roosevelt was the first presidential candidate to truly dominate a medium, which provided him with ample opportunity to discuss his policy platform while also highlighting the opposing party's mistakes. FDR also segmented his radio audience to more effectively speak to groups most affected by the Great Depression, which in turn expanded the Democratic electorate and mobilized a political base that supported his New Deal policies.

Although Roosevelt was critical of the Republican party and Herbert Hoover, he differs from the other presidents included in this analysis in that his rhetoric was primarily concerned with the prominent issues of his political moment.

Television broadened the capabilities of media as it relates to political advertising, providing candidates with the opportunity to address the public both directly and indirectly. Ronald Reagan realized this dual nature of television, and he balanced the general message of his campaign to attack his opponent with paid advertisements and to publicize his role in the economic prosperity America was experiencing at the time. The rhetorical analysis of the Reagan '84 campaign illuminates how the advent of new media increases the ability of presidential candidates to both attack and defend, whereas previous candidates typically only chose one.

Just as television provided candidates with more agency to curate their images and disseminate messages, Twitter's impact on the political realm has unforeseen applications and ramifications. Unlike the other two presidents, Donald Trump addresses the public multiple times a day, and given the fact that Twitter is free and uncensored, he has complete control over the content and timing of his messages. Twitter can also function in an intermedia capacity considering tweets have now become ubiquitous in our consumption of all forms of media. Trump uses the platform to disseminate official messages about policy initiatives and military action, attack or belittle his opponents (as demonstrated by the 5,889 tweets on record with blatantly vicious attacks), praise his supporters, and discredit media outlets when they are critical of him (Shear et al., 2019). Because of his multifaceted utilization of the medium, traditional media like print, digital, television, and radio are essentially required to include the president's tweets in their coverage. This need to include tweets is exacerbated by the Trump

Administration's lack of communication with media outlets exhibited by the record low number of press briefings. The Trump Administration has long been an advocate of fewer press briefings, opting for impromptu Q&A sessions with Trump on the White House South Lawn or a "direct" message from the president via tweet. The reasons for this lack of traditional presidential communication are uncertain, but given Trump's numerous attacks on media outlets, his focus on Twitter for reaching his supporters, and the dramatic decline in press briefings, it appears this is an attempt to consolidate power by diminishing the legitimacy of other sources of information. Due to this drastic shift in the media ecosystem, it has left the majority of Americans in a state of uncertainty regarding the trustworthiness of both their news outlets and their president.

The American people are witnessing the evolution of conventional politicking in real time, with the majority of political discourse centered around style rather than substance. Less than a century ago, political debate was focused on a hard-sell of a candidate's platform with some spectacular moments sprinkled in. The transition from Franklin Roosevelt, whose most popular speeches include his "Second Bill of Rights," to Donald Trump, whose most memorable message is a typo on social media, speaks volumes about the dramatic shift in the public's expectations of their presidential candidates' behavior and rhetoric. The rhetorical evaluations of these presidents, coupled with the analysis of the impact different forms of media have on presidential election communication, make a compelling case regarding the inevitable rise of the postmodern presidency.

Limitations

The research discussed in this paper ascertains the high frequency of message dissemination exhibited by Roosevelt, Reagan, and Trump. Their success in garnering support on their respective platforms alludes to their supporters' desire to hear from them directly. That being said, this research would benefit from a historical analysis of the political moment each president operates within and how the circumstances of that moment affect their ability to communicate with the public. Put differently, were the presidents discussed in this paper successful in their media campaigns due to their adeptness at their respective media, or is their success limited to the moment they come to power? An evaluation of the political, economic, and social conditions of each of these presidents' eras would provide more context to how and why their media campaigns landed them in the White House.

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